

Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt refers to a civilization that existed in North Africa as early as 3,700 BCE. The civilization was one of the oldest in the world and showed an organized society with a stable way of life that lasted for thousands of years. The peoples of northern Africa gathered around coastal areas such as the Mediterranean Sea and the Nile River. The river provided the people with water for irrigation, transportation, and also played a role in their religion. It was called the Great River by the people and their entire life was centered around it. As farmers, they were able to produce a variety of crops and to transport these crops to other areas. Due to the Nile being a strong river with so much to offer, the society was stable and relied heavily on its resources.

Historians divide the history of the ancient Egyptians into time periods that are based on the rule of various kings called pharaohs. The three most important time periods are called the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom. During each of these periods, several pharaohs ruled Egypt. Besides the Nile River, the rule of the pharaoh was the second most important reason for the stability and success of the civilization. The pharaoh was seen as a connection between the world of the gods and the world of humans. The Egyptians thought that their pharaoh was almost superhuman and could control rainfall, flooding, crop growth, and also the health of the people. Because of this, they gave him their highest respect and honored him as if he were a god.

There were three social classes in ancient Egypt over which the pharaoh ruled. These groups were the nobility, the artisans, and the peasants. The first group (nobility) was those who were leaders over various cities and towns. They organized the people and farms and were closely connected to the pharaoh. The artisans were responsible for all writing, art, architecture, and religious duties. The peasant group consisted of the farmers and slaves who made up most of Egypt's population. The members of this group served in the military, worked in the mines, and were the laborers who built the buildings and palaces of the higher social classes.

Due to the civilization being so prosperous, the Egyptians also developed knowledge and learning at a very fast rate. They are credited with making the first major advances in mathematics, literature, and medicine. The Egyptians were very industrious, which means that they were hard workers and were skilled in many things. Much of their work still exists to this day. These works are studied by historians and archaeologists. They were the first culture to have such a substantial amount of writing. Their writing style is called hieroglyphics because it is based on a series of pictures and symbols which represented various objects, events, and sounds. A great deal of Egyptian pottery, architecture, jewelry, and sculptures is marked with their writing.

Name _____

Date _____

Ancient Egypt (Cont'd)

One of the most famous examples of ancient Egypt is the pyramids. The most famous pyramid was built for the important pharaoh named Cheops. It was built as his tomb and was, for thousands of years, the tallest man-made structure in the world. For normal purposes, Egyptians built bricks out of mud that came from the Nile and mixed the mud with chopped straw. They dried these bricks in the sun and used wood and stone to mortar the bricks together. However, the magnificent pyramids were built by huge stones that were uncovered in massive quarries and laboriously transported to the site of the pyramid itself.

Ancient Egypt was a highly developed civilization familiar with gold-making and woodworking. These skills enabled the Egyptians to live in relative comfort. Their diet was filled with birds, like pigeons, fish from the Nile, and meat from water buffalos. Their beds had wooden frames and they generally ate at stone tables. The Egyptian nobility wore leather sandals and were adorned with intricate jewelry made from ivory, gold, and bronze. Many wore a striped cloth on their head, which is a common image of the ancient Egyptian culture.

The ancient Egyptian culture is highly studied because it is oldest culture that left large amounts of relics and information behind. The artifacts that historians and archeologists are continuing to discover and examine serve to demonstrate the highly organized and stable civilization that lasted for such a long time.

Name _____

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Ancient Egypt Questions

True or False:

- _____ 1. Ancient Egypt had a civilization that was one of the oldest in the world and showed an organized society with a stable way of life that lasted for thousands of years.
- _____ 2. Ancient Egyptians rarely marked their pottery, architecture, jewelry, and sculptures with their writing.
- _____ 3. Historians divide the history of the ancient Egyptians into time periods that are based on the rule of various kings.

Multiple Choice:

4. Which one of the following was NOT one of the three social classes in ancient Egypt?
- a. nobility
 - b. artists
 - c. middle class
 - d. peasantry
5. Which one of the following was NOT one of the three most important time periods in ancient Egypt?
- a. The Old Kingdom
 - b. The Modern Kingdom
 - c. The Middle Kingdom
 - d. The New Kingdom
6. The ancient Egyptians relied heavily on this river:
- a. The Euphrates
 - b. The Tigris
 - c. The Niagara
 - d. The Nile

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Ancient Egypt Answers

True or False:

- T 1. Ancient Egypt had a civilization that was one of the oldest in the world and showed an organized society with a stable way of life that lasted for thousands of years.
- T 2. Ancient Egyptians rarely marked their pottery, architecture, jewelry, and sculptures with their writing.
- T 3. Historians divide the history of the ancient Egyptians into time periods that are based on the rule of various kings.

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