

ANCIENT EGYPT: GODS AND PHARAOHS



Written by Robert E. Slavin and Kate Conway



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Ancient Egypt: Gods and Pharaohs

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INTRODUCTION

Marhaban! That's how you say hello in Arabic. Arabic is the language spoken today in Egypt.

Egypt is one of the oldest **civilizations** in the world. Many languages have been spoken in Egypt. The religions and people's traditions have changed too.

Thousands of years ago, Egypt was ruled by powerful kings called **pharaohs**. The ancient Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were gods. They also

believed in many other gods. The Egyptians built incredible pyramids, temples, and tombs to honor their gods.

Get to know the Egyptian Gods

The Egyptians had hundreds of gods. Some of the gods were part human and part animal. Here are some of their most important gods.



Anubis
God of the dead



Hathor
Goddess of love and joy



Ra
God of the sun



Isis
Goddess of motherhood



Sekhmet
Goddess of war



Thoth
God of writing



Many of the objects we use today come from ancient Egypt. The Egyptians invented the first form of paper, which was called **papyrus**. It was made from reeds. After the Egyptians invented

paper, they needed something to write with, so they invented the pen! The Egyptians also invented toothpaste and the toothbrush, makeup, wigs, marshmallows, and the calendar!

Researchers and scientists have been studying ancient Egypt for many years. Much of what we know about this ancient culture comes from the mummies and artifacts that they have studied.

This book will take you on a journey through their discoveries. Let's learn more about the land, people, and customs that shaped ancient Egypt.





THE LAND

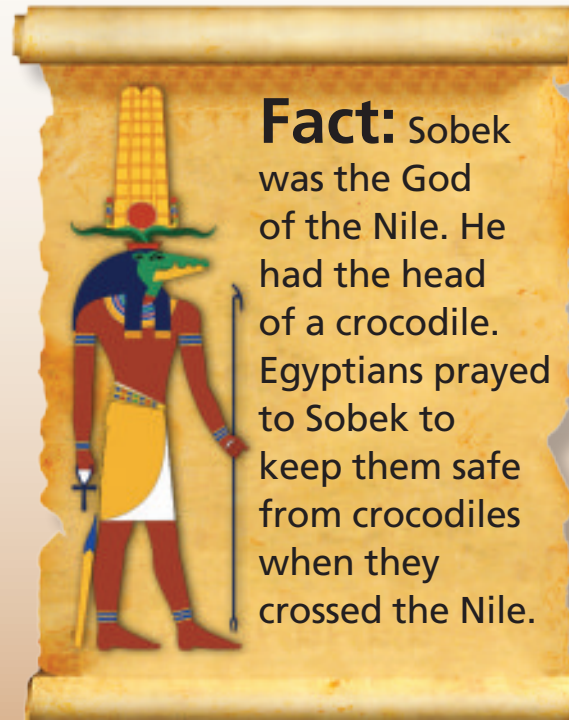
A huge river called the Nile flows through the middle of Egypt.

The Nile is the longest river in the world. It runs from south to north through Africa. At the north end, it breaks

into many smaller rivers in what is called a **delta**. The small rivers flow into the Mediterranean Sea.



Egypt is in the northeast corner of Africa. Part of Egypt is also in Asia. It is the only country that connects the two continents.



Fact: Sobek was the God of the Nile. He had the head of a crocodile. Egyptians prayed to Sobek to keep them safe from crocodiles when they crossed the Nile.

Ancient Egypt was split into two zones called Kemet and Deshret. Kemet, or the Black Land, was the land by the Nile. Every year, the Nile would flood and cover the land with rich dark soil that the

Egyptians could use for farming. Nearly all Egyptians lived in the Black Land. Deshret means the Red Land. The Red Land is the **desert** that covers most of Egypt.





PHARAOHS

Pharaohs ruled over Egypt for thousands of years. The Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were half-man and half-god.

A **ritual** was held when a pharaoh had been on the throne for thirty years. The pharaoh transformed into a full god.

The pharaoh was the most powerful person in Egypt. The pharaoh owned all the land and made all the laws. The pharaoh also led the Egyptian army in battle against other nations.

One of the most well-known pharaohs is Tutankhamun. He is sometimes called King Tut or the boy king. He ruled Egypt for nine years before he died when he was only eighteen.



Fact: In 1925, an Englishman found King Tut's tomb. It was filled with riches and covered in gold, silver, and jewels. The Egyptians believed that they took their riches with them to the afterlife. King Tut was buried with thousands of objects, including jewelry, statues, and a gold throne. You can still see the riches from Tut's tomb in Cairo, the capital of Egypt.



Nearly all the pharaohs were men. When a pharaoh died, his son, nephew, or grandson would become pharaoh. The queen would rule with him if the boy was too young.

One queen named Hatshepsut wanted all the power. Hatshepsut married Thutmose II, who had a son by another woman. Thutmose III was just a child when his father died. Hatshepsut, the boy's stepmother, acted as pharaoh while he grew up. She was the daughter of a popular pharaoh, and the people liked her.



However, when Thutmose III was old enough to rule, Hatshepsut decided to remain pharaoh. She made herself king. Everyone knew she was a woman, but she dressed like the male

pharaohs. She even wore a false beard. She ruled for nearly twenty-two years. When Hatshepsut died, the new pharaoh took his revenge. He had all references to his stepmother destroyed.

Fact: Women in ancient Egypt painted their fingernails! The color was determined by a woman's status in society. Hatshepsut wore black and red, the colors of royalty.

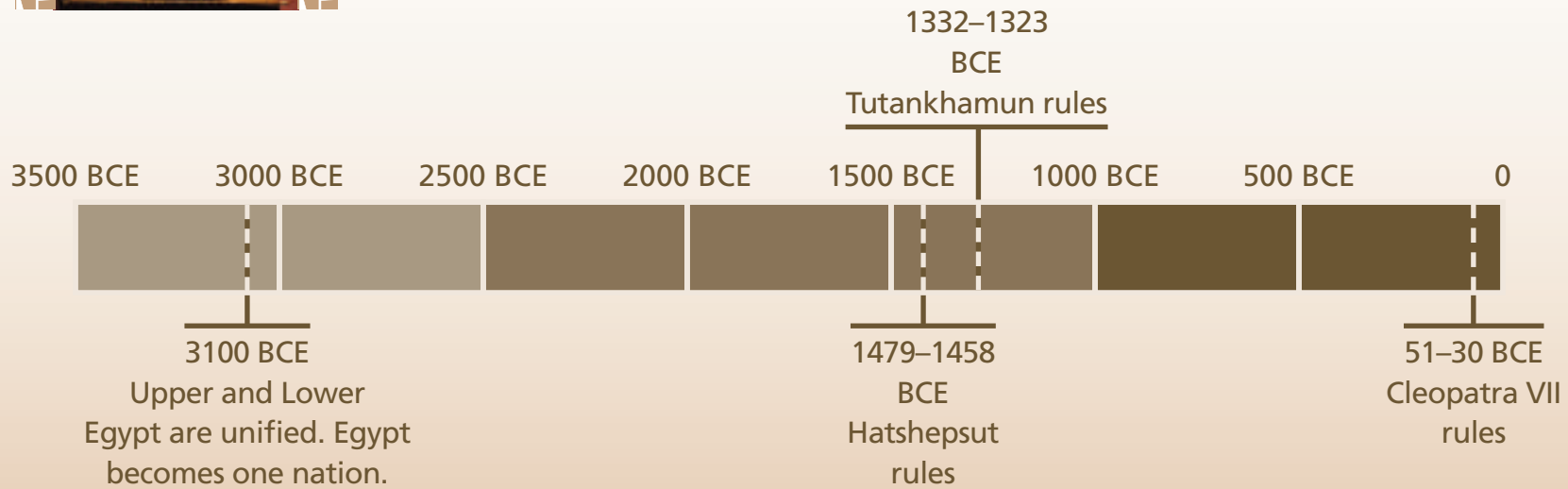
You can see Hatshepsut's feminine features, even though she is wearing a false beard.



Cleopatra's name
in Heiroglyphs

Another famous female leader of Egypt was Cleopatra VII. She was of Greek descent. The Greeks conquered Egypt in 305 BCE. Cleopatra and other Greek kings

and queens of Egypt respected Egyptian traditions and religion. They dressed like pharaohs and honored the Egyptian gods.



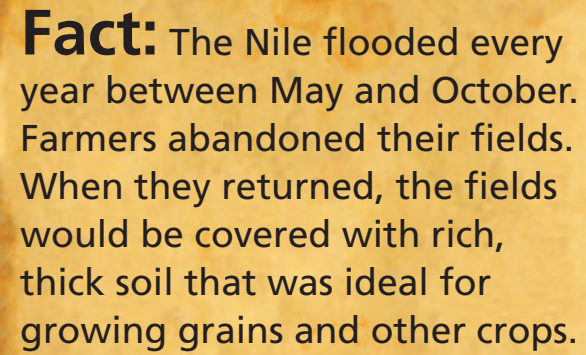


THE PEOPLE

Jobs

Men in ancient Egypt were expected to work to support their families. The women were expected to take care of the homes and children. Most men in ancient Egypt worked as farmers. They grew wheat and barley to

use as food and flax to use for linen clothes. Other men were priests, builders, artists, or **craftsmen**. Children spent their childhoods learning the jobs that they would need to do as adults.



Fact: The Nile flooded every year between May and October. Farmers abandoned their fields. When they returned, the fields would be covered with rich, thick soil that was ideal for growing grains and other crops.





There were very few schools. Only boys from royal or wealthy families attended school. These boys were taught to be **scribes**. They studied reading and writing. It

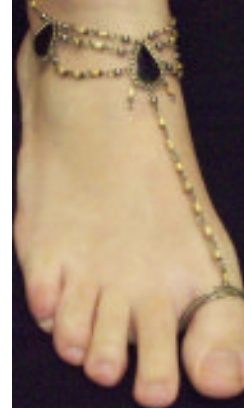
took several years to learn to read and write the complicated symbols that the Egyptians used to communicate. Being a scribe was one of the best jobs in Egypt.



Fact: The Egyptians used symbols called hieroglyphs.

Clothing and Dress

Egypt has a very hot and dry **climate**. Clothing in ancient Egypt was often made from linen, which is a very light fabric. Most men wore short skirts or loincloths. Women wore simple dresses. Children often did not wear clothing until they were about six years old.



Jewelry was very popular. Men and women wore brightly colored necklaces, earrings, bracelets, anklets, and rings. Jewelry was often made from gold, silver, and precious stones.

The poor made their jewelry from colored beads. Egyptians had many superstitions. They believed that certain actions could bring good luck or bad luck. People often wore good luck charms on their jewelry.





Cleanliness was very important to the Egyptians. Many shaved their heads to protect themselves from lice. Children's heads were shaved except for a small section of hair on the side of the head, called a side lock. Adults often wore wigs. The wigs were worn for fashion and also protected their heads from the hot sun.





THE AFTERLIFE

The Egyptians believed in life after death. They thought that when they died, they would go to another world and live a new life there.

Many people were buried in the desert when they died. Food and drink were left near the body for the spirit in the **afterlife**.

Wealthy people were buried in **tombs**. A rich person's body was treated with salts and spices to preserve it as a **mummy**.

The body was wrapped in long linen bandages and then put in a fancy box with jewels and gold decoration.

Turning a body into a mummy took a long time. Sometimes it took more than two months before it was ready to be put in a tomb! It also cost a lot of money.

Fact: The Egyptians put the dead person's stomach, intestines, lungs, and liver in special jars. They left the heart in the person's body, and they threw away the brain. They did not think the brain was special.



Ancient Egyptians loved cats. They thought they were **sacred** animals. Some cats were even turned into mummies when they died. Pharaohs

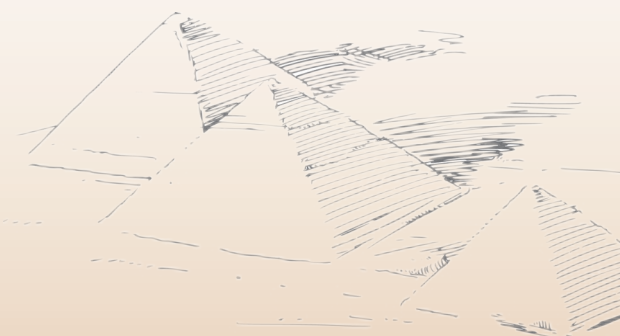
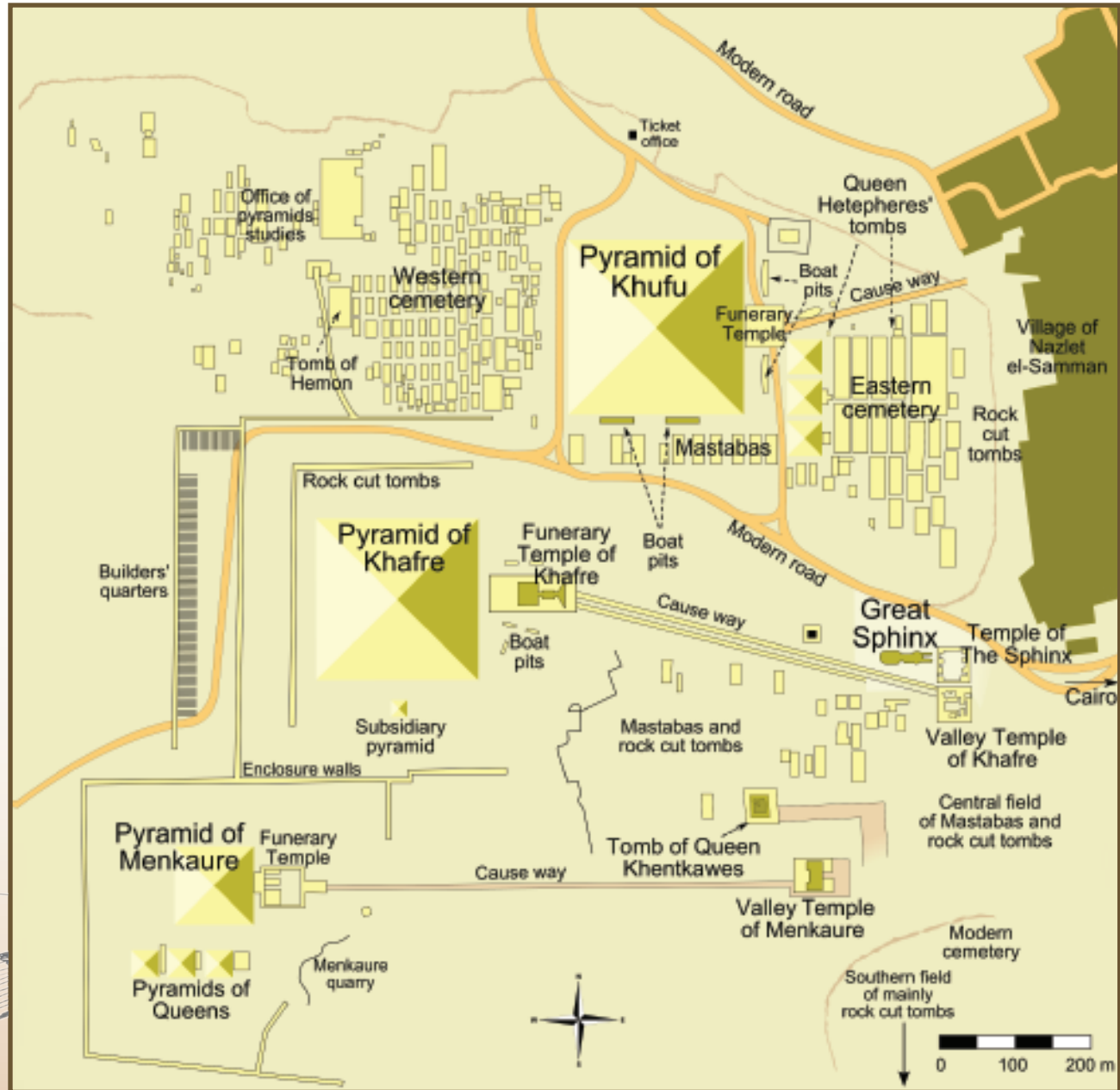


had huge tombs built for their **afterlives**. They thought the cats would need their belongings in the afterlife. They had carved food, animals,

and games put in their tombs. Some even had carvings of hundreds of servants to serve them after death! The tombs were decorated with beautiful paintings and statues.



The biggest tombs were called **pyramids**. These were huge triangular buildings. Many of them still stand today. Many of the royal tombs have been found in two valleys. The Valley of the Kings is home to the tombs of many of the pharaohs. Queens, princes, and princesses were buried in the Valley of the Queens.

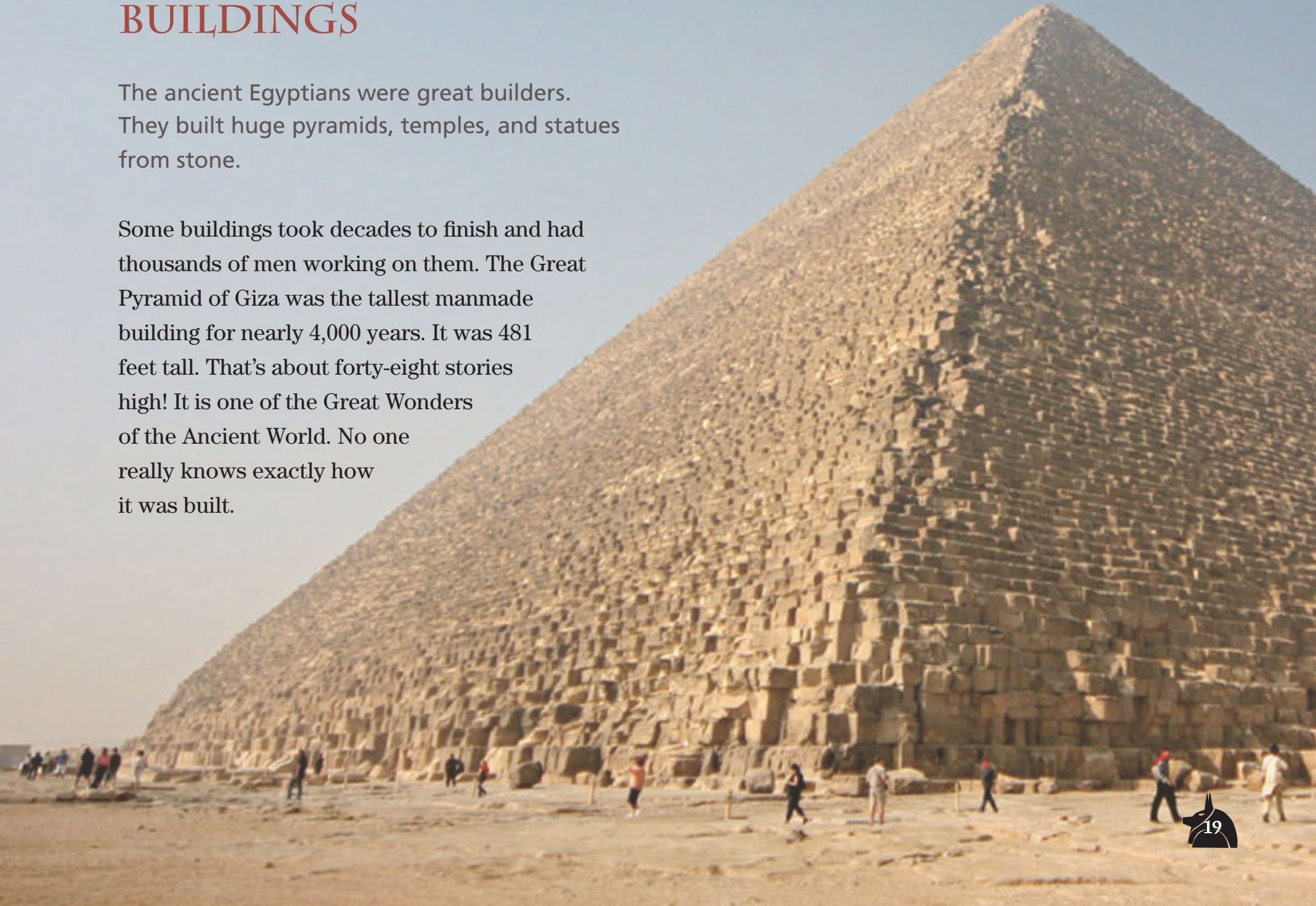


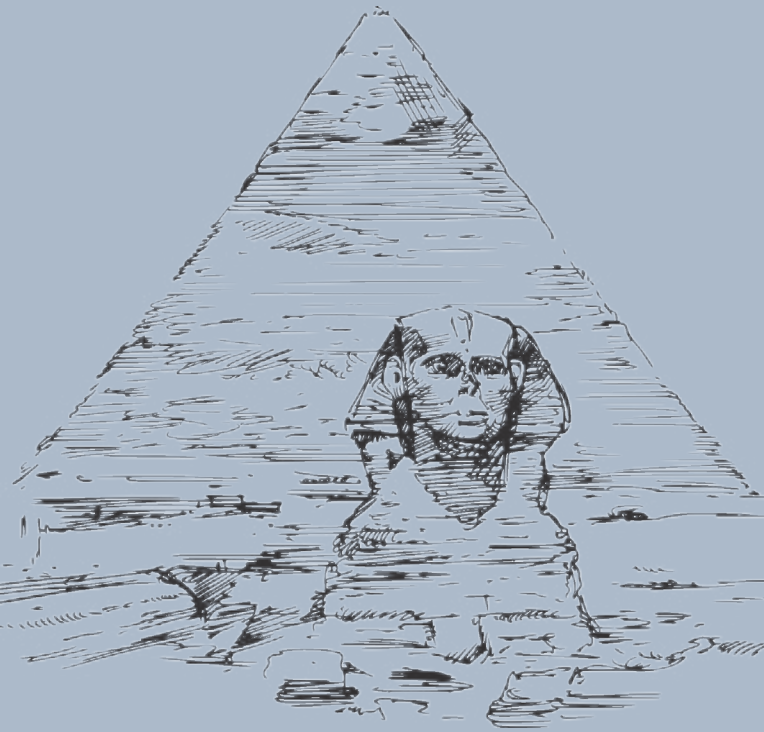


BUILDINGS

The ancient Egyptians were great builders. They built huge pyramids, temples, and statues from stone.

Some buildings took decades to finish and had thousands of men working on them. The Great Pyramid of Giza was the tallest manmade building for nearly 4,000 years. It was 481 feet tall. That's about forty-eight stories high! It is one of the Great Wonders of the Ancient World. No one really knows exactly how it was built.





Fact: It takes a lot of math to build a pyramid!
 The ancient Egyptians did not have a number system like we do today. Instead, they used symbols to count and build the pyramids.

Egyptian Heiroglyphs for Numbers



stroke 1	heelbone 10	coiled rope 100	lotus flower 1,000	pointed finger 10,000	frog 100,000	kneeling god 1,000,000
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The Egyptians did not have symbols for each number. The number 1,234 would look like this.



Pharaohs built huge **temples** to their gods. One temple had columns that were seventy feet tall! Another great structure was the Great Sphinx, a huge half-man, half-lion near the large pyramids.

The Egyptians often covered the walls of their buildings with stories. Some stories are told through paintings, and others are told through writing. We know a lot about ancient Egypt because of these stories.





HIEROGLYPHS

Egyptians invented an advanced kind of writing called **hieroglyphs**.

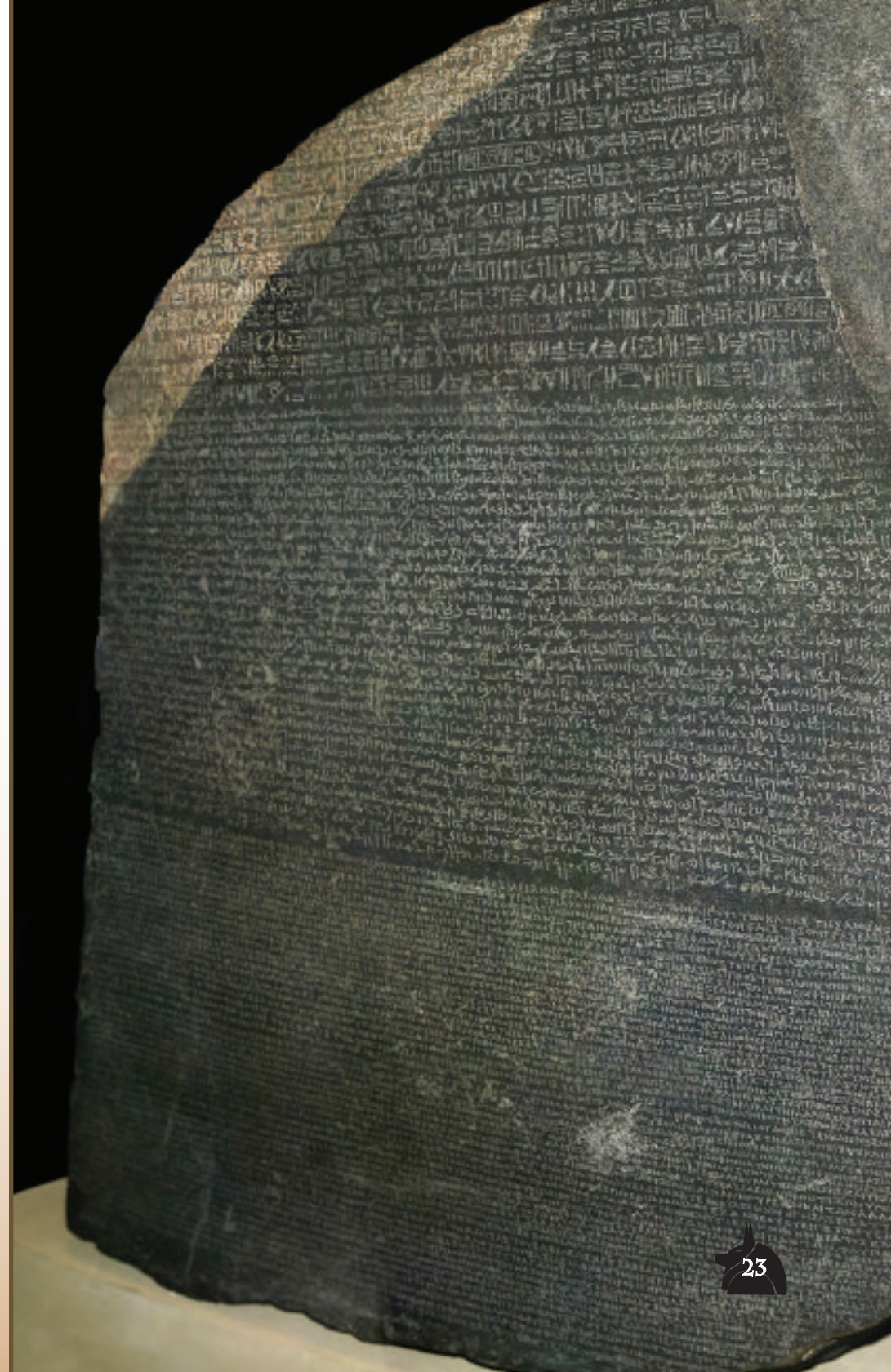
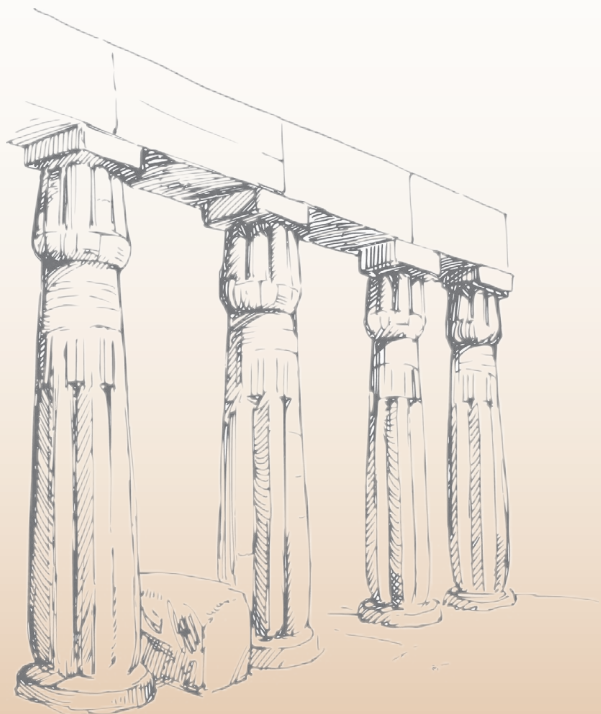
A hieroglyph is a small picture that symbolizes a sound or idea. Some hieroglyphs looked like birds, snakes, or ropes. There are more than 700 hieroglyphic signs! It took many years of study for scribes to learn all the signs.

Hieroglyphs were etched into the rock walls of many buildings. Some tell about great victories in war. Others praise pharaohs and gods.

Fact: The word *hieroglyph* comes from two Greek words: *hieros*, which means holy, and *glyph*, which means writing.



For a long time during the modern era, no one knew how to read hieroglyphs. In 1799, French soldiers found the Rosetta Stone. The Rosetta Stone is a big piece of rock with a message written in three different languages. The message was written in two languages that experts could read and one in hieroglyphs. A French scholar used the other languages to figure out what the hieroglyphs meant.



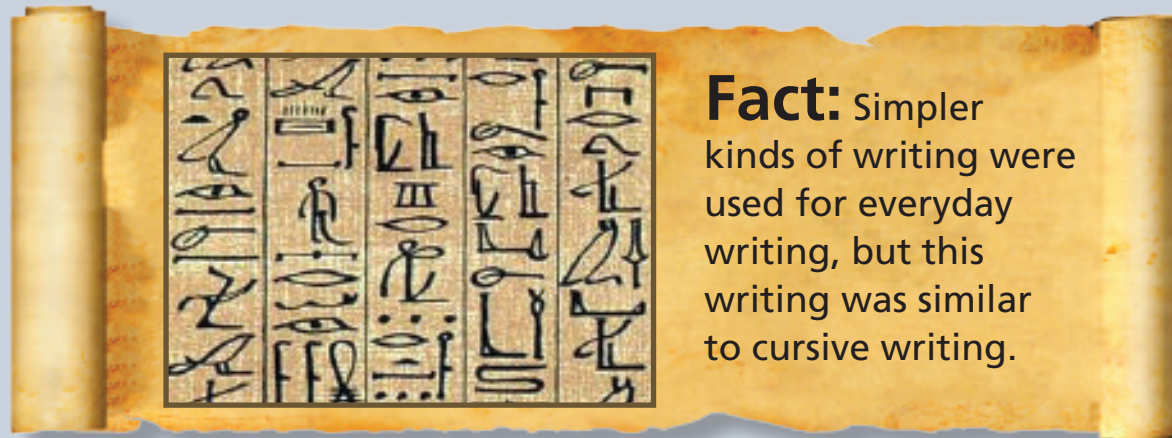
When we read in English, we read from left to right. Hieroglyphs can be read several different ways! Sometimes they are read in lines from left to right. Other times, they are read from right to left. How do you know which way to read hieroglyphs? If the symbols that look like animals, birds, or people are facing left, you read from left to right. If they are facing right, you read from right to left.

Which way?

Read from left to right.



Read from right to left.

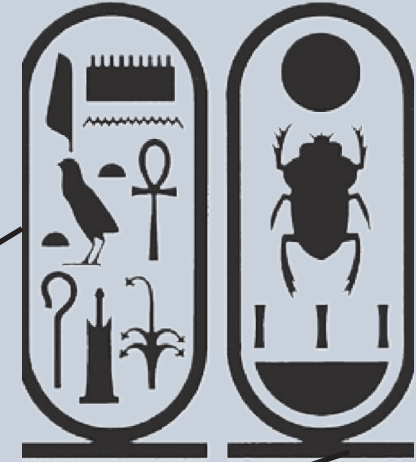


Fact: Simpler kinds of writing were used for everyday writing, but this writing was similar to cursive writing.

It was very important to Egyptians to have their name written down somewhere. They believed that if your name was written

down, you would not disappear after you died. Names were often written in hieroglyphs. The names of pharaohs and other important

people were written in ovals. This kind of nametag was called a cartouche. This is King Tut's cartouche.





EGYPT TODAY

Egypt has been ruled by many nations and powers. Today Egypt is an independent country. Its official name is the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Egypt is one of the biggest countries in the world. More than 83 million people live there. That's more than all the people in Canada, Australia, and Greece combined!



Almost all Egyptians still live in the Nile Valley—the flat, fertile land along the Nile River. Some people live in cities, and others live in villages. Cities such as Cairo and Alexandria

have tall apartment and office buildings made from glass and steel, like those in the United States. Other people live in villages that have houses made from mud bricks.



Nearly all of Egypt's major cities are located in the Nile Valley.

Hieroglyphs are no longer used to communicate in Egypt. Arabic is the country's official language, but many people also speak English and other languages. Schools are not just for wealthy boys now, but are now open to all children. Boys and girls are required to attend school from ages six to fourteen.

Like American children, Egyptian children enjoy playing sports, listening to music, and watching movies. Many movies are made in Cairo. It is sometimes called the Hollywood of the Middle East.

Egypt is a popular tourist destination. Visitors can tour pyramids and take a boat cruise down



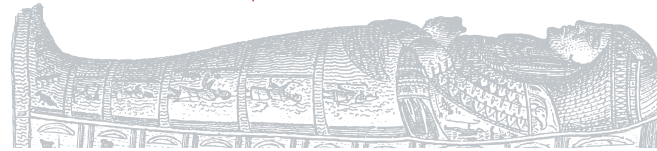
the Nile. You can even ride a camel through the desert. There are many museums to visit too. The museums are filled with art and objects from ancient

times. Scientists are still working to uncover more of Egypt's past. This fascinating country holds many treasures yet to be discovered.

Fact: Soccer is one of the most popular sports in Egypt. The national soccer team is nicknamed The Pharaohs.



GLOSSARY



afterlife: Life after death.

civilizations: Groups of people who live in a socially developed culture.

climate: The average weather conditions of a place.

craftsmen: Skilled workers.

delta: A triangle of sand and soil at the top of a river.

desert: A very dry region with little rain and few plants.

Egyptologists: Scientists who study ancient Egypt.

Egyptology: The study of ancient Egypt.

hieroglyphs: Writing that uses pictures and symbols.

mummy: Preserved body wrapped in cloth.

papyrus: Paper made from the papyrus plant.

pharaohs: Rulers of ancient Egypt.

pyramids: Large structures with square bases and four triangular sides.

ritual: Customs or traditions.

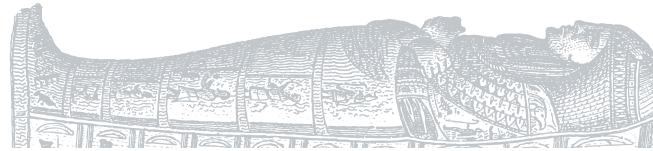
sacred: Holy.

scribes: Writers.

tombs: Burial chambers.

temples: Buildings for worship.

INDEX



Africa	5	Isis	2
Alexandria	26, 27	Kemet	6
Anubis	2	Mediterranean Sea	27
Arab Republic of Egypt	26	Middle East	7, 28
Asia	5	Nile River	6, 27
Australia	26	Nile Valley	6, 27
Cairo	8, 26–28	Ra	2
Canada	26	Rosetta Stone	22
Cleopatra VII	11	Sekhmet	2
Deshret	6	Sobek	5
Egypt	2–4, 6–9, 11–17, 19–21, 26–28	Thoth	2
Great Pyramid of Giza	19	Thutmose II	9
Great Sphinx	21	Thutmose III	9, 10
Great Wonders of the Ancient World	19	Tutankhamun (King Tut)	8, 11, 25
Greece	7, 26	United States	27
Hathor	2	Valley of the Kings	18
Hatshepsut	9–11	Valley of the Queens	18



