

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt was one of the earliest civilizations. It was located in northeast Africa and began about 5,000 years ago along the **Nile River**. Ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for about 3,000 years, from 3100 to 332 B.C.E.

Ancient Egypt was called the “**Gift of the Nile.**” Egyptians depended on the river for food and work. The people worked together to build irrigation systems to bring water from the Nile to other for their crops.

The Egyptians were the first people to make paper, and theirs was the first civilization with a written history. Paper was made from **papyrus** reed. Ropes, mats, and even boats were also made from papyrus reed. Egyptians were also excellent engineers and builders. They forced thousands of slaves to work on these buildings.

The Egyptians language was based on **hieroglyphics**. The Egyptians wrote laws, books, prayers, and hymns calendar.



Egyptian Hieroglyphs



Papyrus Plants

The Nile River

The Nile River was the center of life for the Egyptians. It is the longest river in the world. It starts in central Africa and flows 4,000 miles north to the Mediterranean Sea. Ancient Egyptian civilization began in the **Nile Delta**, where the river enters the Mediterranean Sea and forms a marshy plain of river mud.

Every year the Nile River flooded and left a rich layer of soil that was good for growing crops. This rich soil that was good for growing crops. This rich soil was very important to the Egyptians since there is a desert on both sides of the Nile, where little rainfall occurs.





Daily Life of Egyptians

Farming was the chief work in Egypt, and people learned to work the ground to produce wheat, barley, and vegetables. They used donkeys for heavy labor. The men also hunted wild animals and fished. Families lived in houses made out of mud, brick, and wood. They often kept small farm animals, like goats and geese. Some raised cattle and sheep for food. Women wove linen and wool for clothing and cooked the meals. Bread and beer were main items in every home. Children helped in the farming and with the household chores.

Some people made crafts such as jewelry, tapestries, pottery dishes, and metal objects. Others were scribes, the only people who knew how to write. They wrote with pens made from reeds on paper made from papyrus. Scribes usually worked for officials.

The king was regarded as a god and was very powerful. In Egypt the king was called the **pharaoh**. He (and, at least twice, she) was considered the earthly leader of the gods. Egyptians worshipped many gods. Egyptians worshipped many gods and built temples of brick and stone for them. The great pyramids were built as tombs for the pharaohs. When they died, the pharaohs and their treasures were put in the pyramids.

The Kingdoms of Egypt

Before 3000 B.C.E., Egypt was divided into the kingdoms of Lower Egypt, in the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt. **Menes**, a king from the south, conquered and joined the two lands. Menes was the first pharaoh. His dynasty was called the First Dynasty. A **dynasty** is a series of rulers from the same family.

Thirty dynasties ruled Egypt for 3,000 years. Most of the pharaohs were men. Usually, the only women who had important titles were priestesses. However, there was a female pharaoh—**Queen Hatshepsut**. She was the daughter of **King Thutmose I**. He was determined that she follow him, and he instructed the nobles of the royal court that she would be the next ruler. Hatshepsut became queen upon the death of her father, about 1500 B.C.E. She later took a husband, **Thutmose II**. After his death, she crowned herself King Hatshepsut and became pharaoh. During her reign, Egypt rose to great power and wealth. It was a golden age of peace and prosperity.

Because Egypt's history is so long, historians divide it into three periods—the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.



Queen Hatshepsut

PERIOD	DATE	HIGHLIGHTS
Old Kingdom	2700–2200 B.C.E.	The capital was Memphis and then Heliopolis. The great pyramids and the Sphinx, a large statue with a head of a man and body of a lion, were built.
Middle Kingdom	2100–1800 B.C.E.	Egyptian civilization reached great heights. Engineering projects such as irrigation ditches and canals were built. Egypt was conquered by invaders but then recovered. There were several capitals during this era, including Thebes and Memphis.
New Kingdom	1700–1100 B.C.E.	This era also called the Empire, and the capital was Thebes. Egypt conquered many areas during this time. About 1100 B.C.E., its great power had begun to decline.



Queen Nefertiti was married to Pharaoh Akhetaton. Many scholars believe she was elevated to the role of co-pharaoh and ruled along side her husband until his death.

AKHENATEN: The Pharaoh Who Worshiped One God

The pharaoh Amenhotep IV wanted the Egyptians to stop worshipping many deities (gods and goddesses). He wanted them to worship only one god, the sun god, Aten. He closed the great temple of Amon. To prove he was serious Amenhotep changed his name to Akhenaten, which means "spirit of Aten." he even created a new capital city devoted to Aten. He named the city Akhetaton; it is known today as Tel el Amama.

Akhenaten, whose reign was roughly from 1370 to 1362 B.C.E., was one of the first people ever to believe in only one god. His people followed him, but the pharaohs, after his death, restored the old deities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE EGYPTIANS

1. They made paper from the papyrus reed plant.
2. They invented a calendar.
3. They built the Great Pyramids.
4. They invented the shadoof, a crane like device for lifting water from the Nile.
5. They used a loom to weave cloth for clothing.
6. They invented hieroglyphics, a system of writing using characters in the form if pictures.