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## Ancient Egypt

Over 5,000 years ago, one of the world's oldest and greatest civilizations developed in Egypt in north Africa. Egypt's prosperity was based on the River Nile, which made farming possible. The Egyptians invented a system of writing and became great scholars and artists. Ancient Egypt is famous for its magnificent temples and tombs.

### The Nile

The Greek scholar Herodotus called Egypt "the gift of the Nile." The river watered the strip of land along its banks, transforming desert into green fields. The Nile also acted as a watery highway and provided food such as fish.



The land of Egypt

### FACT

Every year, the Nile flooded, depositing rich mud that made the land fertile.

### Early history

By 3200 BCE two kingdoms had grown up along the Nile: Upper Egypt in the south, and Lower Egypt in the north. In 3100 BCE King Narmer united the two. Egyptian history is divided into three main periods, called the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms. In between were times of unrest.

### FACT

Early Dynastic Period (c. 3100–2686 BCE). This era began when King Narmer united Egypt.

King Djoser of the Old Kingdom



### Later history



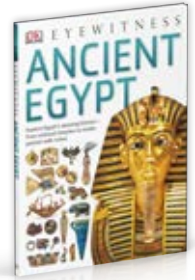
Tutankhamun ruled briefly in New Kingdom times

At its height the Egyptian Empire stretched from Nubia in the south all the way to modern Iraq. However after 747 BCE Egypt was often ruled by foreign empires. In 30 BCE it was conquered by Rome.

### FACT

Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650–1550 BCE). A time of unrest, when Egypt was conquered by the Hyksos.





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## Everyday life

Egyptian families were quite large, with many children. Death in childhood was common, so parents needed many children to carry on their work. People wore light clothing which was suited to the hot climate. Most people ate a healthy diet.

### Families



A noble family talk while seated on finely carved chairs

The father was head of the household in ancient Egypt. The oldest son was his heir. However women were well respected and had certain rights. They could own property and do business. Pharaohs often had several wives.

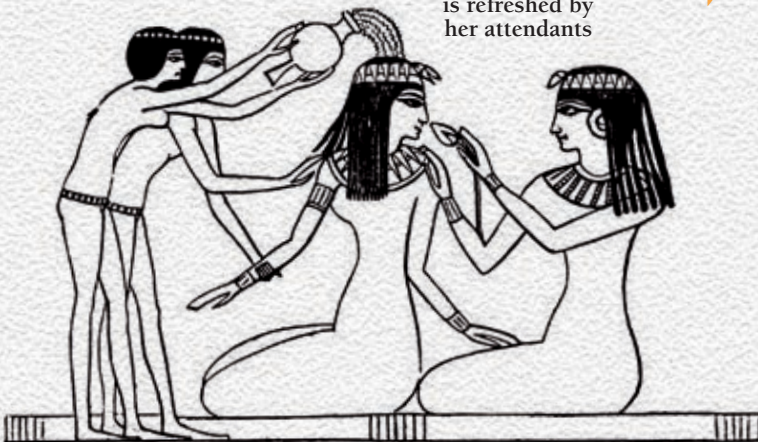
### Clothing and beauty

Light, cool clothing was essential in Egypt's hot climate. Men wore kilts, and women wore simple tunics or dresses with shoulder straps. In later years pleats became fashionable. Cloaks were worn in cool weather. Children are usually shown wearing nothing but jewellery.

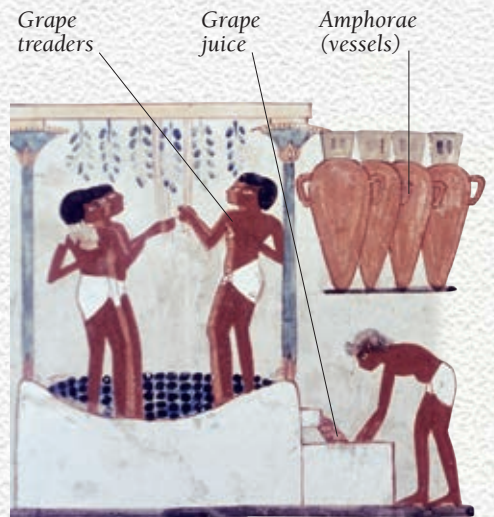
#### FACT

Wealthy people wore clothes made of fine linen. Poorer people's clothes were of coarser linen.

A well-off lady is refreshed by her attendants



### Food and drink



Treading grapes to make wine

Egyptians generally ate a balanced diet with vegetables such as onions, leeks, and lettuce. The staple food was bread, made from wheat. People also ate pulses such as beans and lentils, along with fish, eggs, meat, and dairy products. However, poor people did not eat much meat.

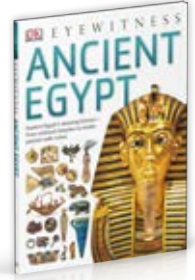


Figs were also used to make wine

#### FACT

The main drink was beer, brewed from barley. Wine was also made, from grapes, figs, or dates.





Content taken from

## Farming along the Nile

Egypt's prosperity was based on farming. But the climate was hot and dry. Without the Nile, Egypt would have been a desert. The river's annual flood spread rich dark silt across the fields. This allowed farmers to grow crops such as wheat, barley, and flax. The farming year began with the flood.

### Complete the farming calendar

Match the three seasons of the farming year with their descriptions. Use the information on this page to help you.

**Growing season      Inundation      Harvest**

1. ....  
The time of flood when no farming work was done.

2. ....  
Crops were sown at this time, then sprouted and ripened over winter.

3. ....  
Ripe crops were cut in spring. The grain was then threshed and winnowed.



Ripening wheat



Farmers sowed their crops in fields ploughed by oxen.

### Colour the map

The annual flood deposited fertile black mud. The Egyptians called the narrow strip of land watered by the Nile Kemet ("the Black Land"). The barren land on either side was called Deshret ("the Red Land").

Colour in the map using black for the flooded area and red for the desert. The map on the first page will help you.



The land of Egypt showing the River Nile

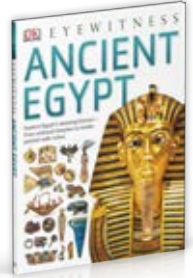
### Farming facts

- The farming year was divided into three seasons: the flood or inundation, the growing season, and the harvest.
- The floods lasted from June to September. No farm work could be done. Farmers helped build the pyramids and tended their animals.
- When the floods went down in October, farmers ploughed their fields using oxen. Crops such as wheat were sown, and then ripened until February. A device called a shaduf raised river water to irrigate crops.
- Crops were harvested from March to May, before the floods returned. Farmers cut the crop using sickles.
- Farmers drove their cattle over the cut crop to separate the grain from the stalks. This is called threshing.
- The grain was then tossed in the air so that the husks blew away. This is called winnowing. The processed grain was stored in granaries.





Content taken from



## Hieroglyphs

Egyptian picture writing, or hieroglyphs, is one of the world's oldest scripts. Each hieroglyph or picture-symbol stands for an object, sound, or letter. There are over 700 symbols in all. After 400 CE, hieroglyphs were no longer used. Their meaning was lost for 1,400 years. Then, in 1822, the French scholar Jean-François Champollion discovered how to read hieroglyphs.



Part of an inscription in hieroglyphs



Hieroglyphic alphabet

### Write in hieroglyphs

Using the hieroglyphic alphabet above, write your name and a secret message for your friends.

Your name: .....

.....

A message: .....

.....

### Crack the code

Can you decipher this word using the hieroglyphic alphabet?



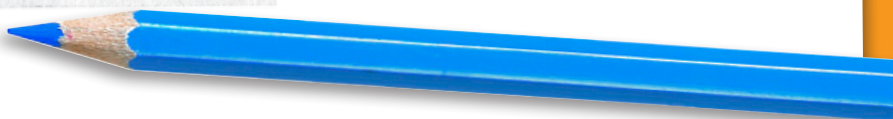
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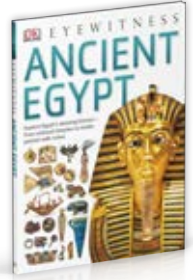
### Did you know?

Champollion used the Rosetta Stone to decipher hieroglyphs. The Stone was discovered in 1799. It shows the same message written in three scripts: Egyptian hieroglyphs, Demotic, and Ancient Greek. Champollion could read Greek, so he looked for repeated words matched by repeated hieroglyphs.



Jean-François Champollion

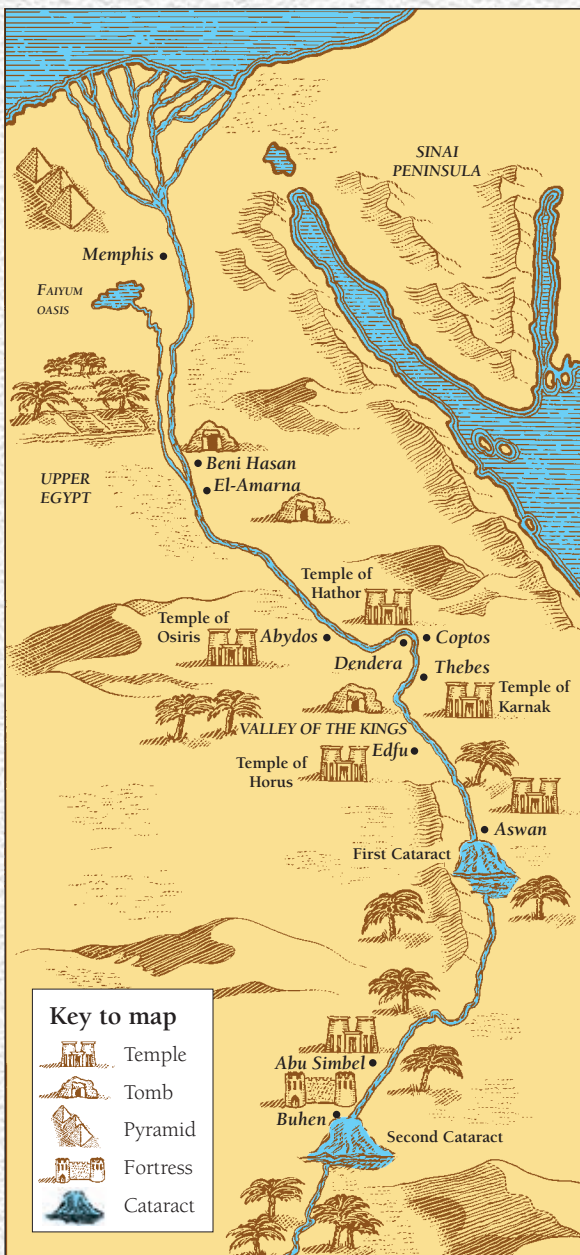




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## Temples and priests

The Egyptians built many magnificent temples, some of which survive today. The temple of Amun-Re at Karnak, near Thebes, was the largest of all. It had more than 100 columns, each 24 m (80 ft) tall. Temples were built not as public places of worship, but to house and honour the gods. Every day, processions of priests offered incense, food, and holy water to statues of the gods.



### Temple teaser

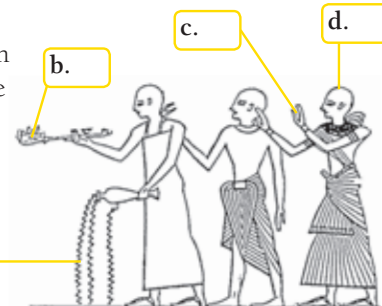
The map shows the location of some of Egypt's temples. Use the map and the information on this page to answer the questions below.

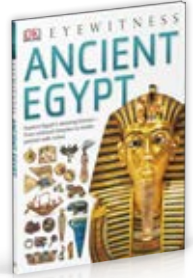
1. Which goddess was worshipped at Dendera, close to Thebes?  
.....
2. Which famous burial site lies north of the Temple of Horus, near Edfu?  
.....
3. Who was the chief god worshipped at Karnak, near Thebes?  
.....
4. Which temple complex lies close to the Second Cataract in Nubia, in the far south?  
.....
5. Which god had his cult centre at Abydos?  
.....

### A priestly procession

This illustration shows a procession led by a priest holding an incense burner and scattering purifying water. Can you number the illustration to match the descriptions?

1. Priests shaved their heads to ensure cleanliness.
2. The priest scattered water in a purifying ritual.
3. An incense burner purified the air with a pleasant fragrance to attract the god's attention.
4. Hands were raised in prayer.





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## Answers

### Farming calendar

- 1 Inundation
- 2 Growing season
- 3 Harvest

### Hieroglyphs – crack the code



R O S E T T A

### Temple teaser

- 1 Hathor
- 2 Valley of the Kings
- 3 Amun-Re
- 4 Abu Simbel
- 5 Osiris

### A priestly procession

- 1 d
- 2 a
- 3 b
- 4 c

