

## How much did the Ancient Egyptians achieve?

In this unit, children will explore who the Ancient Egyptians were, what they did and discuss whether Ancient Egypt deserves its reputation as one of the most important early civilisations.

Year 4  
Autumn Term

### Background Information

Ancient Egypt existed some 5,000 years ago. Although the actual end date is uncertain, it is estimated that it lasted around 3,000 years as the leading nation in the Mediterranean world. It owes much of its success to the River Nile, whose flooding cycle and controlled irrigation allowed for fertile land and prosperous agriculture.

There is a reasonable amount of surviving evidence through structures such as pyramids, temples, artefacts – especially grave goods – as well as writing. The Egyptians had a system of writing called hieroglyphics.

The Egyptians had a well-structured and stratified society with pharaohs at the top, nobles, scribes and priests, but most were farmers. There were also slaves. The status of women was relatively high in Egyptian society, with some becoming pharaohs. There were a number of famous pharaohs including Rameses III, Akhenaten and Tutankhamun.

Religion was really important to the Ancient Egyptians, with a strong belief in the afterlife – as evidenced by the often elaborate burial processes.

In this unit, the children will:

- Know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world, the nature of ancient civilisations, the expansion and dissolution of empires
- Understand the achievements of the earliest civilisations through an in-depth study of Ancient Egypt
- Understand historical concepts and use them to make connections, contrasts, frame historically valid questions and create structured accounts.



### Enquiry Skills and Concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- Select and use terminology and concepts
- Select sources as evidence for a particular answer
- Compare and contrast different themes, periods and people
- Refine responses in the light of new evidence
- Communicate in appropriate and effective ways including written, pictorial and orally.

### Key People

- **Narmer** – said to be the first pharaoh of all Egypt around 3150 BCE. Also known as warrior Menes.
- **Khufu** – pharaoh responsible for the building of the Great Pyramid at Giza
- **Hatshepsut** – first and longest-reigning female pharaoh
- **Tutankhamun** – youngest pharaoh, famed for his burial tomb in the Valley of the Kings
- **Ramses II** – often known as Ramses the Great, his mummy still rests in Cairo's Egyptian Museum.

### Key Content

- Egypt is a country in northeast Africa.
- Cairo is its largest city today.
- Egypt has hot summers and cool winters.
- It is one of the hottest and sunniest countries in the world. It has little rain.
- The River Nile divides the country into two unequal parts.
- Egypt was extremely important a long time ago.
- The River Nile is 4 162 miles long and it was very important in Ancient Egypt.
- The Nile was used for trade, soil fertility, transport, water. There were better temperatures near the water and the rest of the land was inhospitable.
- The Ancient Egyptians recognised three seasons: flooding, planting, harvesting.
- Every year when the Nile flooded it saturated the land with water and helped farmers grow crops. They thanked the god Happy for this.
- There were a lot of different roles in society, including: pharaoh, engineer, nobleman, peasant, doctor, vizier, priest, slave, farmer.
- Farming was the role most Ancient Egyptians carried out.
- Food they ate: emmer wheat, barley, melons, pulses, grapes, cattle, sheep, pigs, fish, bees.
- Priests cared for gods and goddesses.
- Farmers wore the same clothes every day: rough linen sheets.
- Rameses II was a pharaoh who reigned for 67 years. He had over 100 children.
- The Egyptians lived in mudbrick homes.
- The Egyptian Creation Myth was that a hill grew out of dark waters. Atim stood on the hill. He coughed and spat out a god and goddess who had two children. These children had more children including Osiris and Isis. Seth became jealous of Osiris. Horus defeated Seth. Horus became king of Earth and Osiris became king of the Underworld.
- They worshipped over 2000 gods and goddesses including Re and Amun.
- Egyptians believed in the afterlife.
- The Book of the Dead contained what Egyptians hoped life would be like in the afterlife.
- Not all Egyptians were mummified – it depended on wealth.
- Objects involved in mummification – canopic jar, shabti, Book of the Dead, grave goods, sarcophagus, food and drink.
- Canopic jars stored intestines, stomach, lungs and liver.
- The heart was left in the body as they believed it contained the soul.
- After dying, they believed your heart was weighed. To enter the afterlife, you had to have a light heart showing that you were good.
- Khufu at Giza is the world's tallest pyramid at 146.7 metres.
- Pyramids were made from stone.
- The Egyptians positioned the pyramids facing N, S, E, W. They used the stars as a guide.
- Most pharaohs were buried in pyramids with their possessions.
- Egyptians wrote on paper made from papyrus reeds.
- The Rosetta stone helped us to work out how to translate hieroglyphics into English.
- Egyptians used decimals. They could add, subtract, multiply, divide and use fractions.

### Timeline of Key Events:

All dates below are approximate

**Old Kingdom:** 2600 BCE - 2100 BCE  
**Middle Kingdom:** 2000 BCE - 1650 BCE  
**New Kingdom:** 1540 BCE - 1075 BCE

- 7500 BCE** First settlers in Nile valley
- 3500 BCE** First use of hieroglyphic symbols
- 3100 BCE** Narmer unites regions of Lower and Upper Egypt.
- 2650 BCE** First step pyramid built
- 2550 BCE** Pyramids at Giza built
- 2335 BCE** Pyramid texts written (magical spells to protect pharaohs)
- 1472 BCE** Hatshepsut becomes caretaker ruler. (Later declares herself pharaoh)
- 1336 BCE** Tutankhamen becomes pharaoh
- 1279 BCE** Ramses II becomes pharaoh
- 1100 BCE** Upper & Lower Egypt split
- 332 BCE** Alexander the Great conquers Egypt
- 196 BCE** Rosetta stone carved
- 30 BCE** Egypt becomes a Roman Province
- 1922 CE** Carter discovers Tutankhamen's tomb

### What did the Ancient Egyptians do for us?

- **Hieroglyphs** - a precursor to more modern forms of writing relating to spoken sounds. Related to this, the Egyptians were the first to form writing material in the form of papyrus.
- **Farming** - some of the earliest ploughs were used in Ancient Egypt, and the first ploughs drawn by oxen too.
- Egyptians also invented the **first key-operated locks**.

### Key Vocabulary:

- Amulet:** an object to protect its owner from harm or danger
- Book of the Dead:** a book of magic spells
- Hieroglyphics:** a type of writing using pictures and symbols
- Mummy/mummification:** a dead body that has been specially preserved/the process of making a mummy
- Papyrus:** a plant from the banks of the Nile used to make paper, boats, sandals, baskets and rope
- Pharaoh:** the supreme ruler of all of Ancient Egypt, considered a god
- Pyramids:** monuments providing tombs for pharaohs
- Sarcophagus:** a large stone coffin for a mummy
- Scarabs:** amulets, often in the form of beetles
- Sphinx:** a mythical creature with the body of a lion and the head of a pharaoh