

Key Knowledge

The ancient Egyptian civilisation began 5,000 years ago when people started building villages next to the River Nile in north Africa. It lasted for 3,000 years and was ruled by Pharaohs.

The River Nile

The River Nile was an important source of water in a hot and dry desert landscape. It enabled the ancient Egyptians to grow lots of crops and farm animals. Papyrus also grew along its banks and was used to write on.

Religion

Ancient Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses who ruled different aspects of their lives. Some gods carried an ankh (a symbol of life) and some gods carried a sceptre of power. They also believed in a never-ending afterlife.

After Life

Ancient Egyptians believed that when they died, they would make a journey to another world and begin a new life. Rich Egyptians paid to have their bodies specially preserved so they could make this journey. This was called mummification. The pyramids were built as tombs for the Pharaohs.

Construction

Ancient Egyptians were experts in building. They built the pyramids and the Great Sphinx of Giza. The Great Pyramid at Giza is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Tutankhamun's Tomb

Tutankhamun reigned for about 10 years and died at the age of 18. His tomb in the Valley of the Kings was hidden for many centuries but was discovered by the British Egyptologist Howard Carter in 1922. It contained many amazing artefacts, including Tutankhamun's famous golden death mask.

What should I already know?

Egypt is a country in the continent of Africa.
The climate of Egypt is different to that of the UK.
Some geographical features of Egypt.
What life was like in prehistoric Britain.



Hieroglyphics

The Ancient Egyptians used a writing system of pictures and symbols called hieroglyphics. They are found in special monuments and temples.

Tutankhamun's Death Mask

After a Pharaoh's body was mummified, a death mask was created so its soul would recognise it in the afterlife. Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's amazing golden death mask inside the young Pharaoh's sarcophagus.



This tomb painting shows the journey to the afterlife. The god Anubis weighs the dead person's heart to find out if they have been good in life. Good people can enter the afterlife but bad ones get eaten by a demon goddess!

Key Vocabulary

AD	used for dates after the birth of Jesus.
BC	used for dates before the birth of Jesus.
afterlife	a life that some people believe begins when you die.
ancient	from the very distant past and before the end of the Roman Empire in 410 AD.
archaeologist	someone who studies the past by exploring old remains.
artefact	an object from the past that shows evidence of what life was like.
chronology	the order of events in time.
civilisation	a human society with its own social organisation.
Egyptologist	a person who studies ancient Egyptian artefacts and history.
hieroglyphics	symbols in the form of pictures which are a type of writing.
mummification	the process of preserving a dead body.
papyrus	a tall water plant that grows in Africa.
pharaoh	a king or queen of ancient Egypt.
preserve	making sure that something remains as it is.
pyramid	an ancient stone building with four triangular sloping sides.
sarcophagus	a large, decorative container made to hold a dead body.
society	a large, organised group of people.
tomb	a large grave that is above ground.

History Skills

Use evidence to ask and answer questions about the past.
Use several sources of evidence for historical enquiry.
Place events and artefacts on a time line using dates.
Use dates and historical terms to describe events.
Use literacy, numeracy and computing skills to a good standard to communicate about the past.

Timeline

3,100 BC People settle near the River Nile.	3,500 BC First use of hieroglyphics.	2,500 BC Great Sphinx and Giza pyramids built.	1,500 BC Tombs built in the Valley of the Kings.	332 BC The Greek ruler, Alexander the Great conquers Egypt.	30 BC Queen Cleopatra dies and the Romans conquer Egypt.	43 AD The Romans invade and occupy Britain.	1922 Howard Carter discovers the tomb of Tutankhamun.
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Where is Egypt? Where is Ancient Egypt placed in history?

Egypt sits in northern Africa, bordering the Gaza Strip, Israel, Libya and Sudan, with its boundaries also encompassing the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt consists mainly of desert plateau, although the eastern part is cut by the Nile River Valley. Ancient Egypt existed from around 3100 BC to 30 BC. It was one of the greatest and most powerful civilisations in the history of the world and has a fascinating 3,000-year history.

What was Ancient Egyptian society like?

Most people in ancient Egypt were farmers. They lived with their families in houses made of mud bricks near the Nile River.

Women in ancient Egypt usually had the same rights as men. They could be scribes, priests, and doctors and own their own homes and businesses.

Pharaohs were the most important people in ancient Egyptian society. Pharaohs were so important that they were considered to be half god and half man.

What is mummification?

Mummification is a process to preserve a dead body to make it ready for the afterlife. Mummification is a complex and long process that needs to be completed in a certain order. Embalmers were the people whose job it was to mummify corpses in Ancient Egypt.

Who are the main Egyptian gods?

The Ennead or Great Ennead was a group of nine deities in Egyptian mythology worshipped at Heliopolis: the sun god Atum; his children Shu and Tefnut; their children Geb and Nut; and their children Osiris, Isis, Set, and Nephthys.

What are hieroglyphics?

The ancient Egyptians invented one of the earliest known writing systems used from around **3000 BC**.

The symbols they used were called **hieroglyphs**, which comes from a Greek word meaning '**sacred carving**'.

The ancient Egyptians believed that hieroglyphs had been **invented by the gods**.

Some signs were **pictorial** or **symbolic** and stood for whole words. Some signs were **phonetic**, which means they stood for sounds.

Also covered in Art, English and theme day:

- Who is Tutankhamun? Why is he significant?
- What are the achievements of the Ancient Egyptian civilisation?
- How does art inform historians of Ancient Egyptian society?