

The Egyptians

Grades 2-3

Written by Ruth Solski
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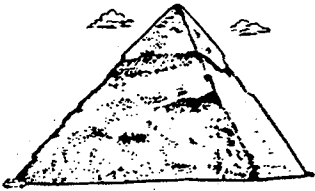
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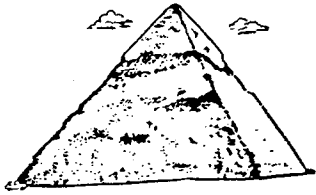
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During Akhenaten's reign, Egypt began to lose some of its power. He was more interested in his religious reforms than in the country's state of affairs. The Hittites were able to get control of many of the provinces of the Egyptian empire.

Akhenaten built a new capital city at Tell el Amarna. A great deal of unrest was felt throughout Egypt due to all of the religious changes.

The nineteenth dynasty replaced the family of Akhenaten. Seti I and Ramese II were able to restore Egypt's prestige but did not regain all of the provinces that had been lost.

Tutankhamen moved the capital back to Thebes and changed the religious views back to the old way of worshipping Amun.

Seti and Rameses built many temples and cities and transferred the capital to the delta. Thebes remained the center of worship for Amun and the kings were still buried there in the royal valley. The Nineteenth Dynasty collapsed as rival princes struggled for the throne.

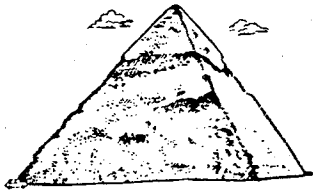
The next family to rule only produced one great pharaoh, Rameses III. He defeated the Philistine navy and army when they attacked Egypt. His country and its culture was saved. The following eight kings were weak rulers and the control of the country fell into the hands of their ministers and priests.

During Dynasty XXI to XXIV life in Egypt changed. There were many strikes, crimes and prices were very high. The royal tombs were frequently robbed and nothing was done to prevent it. The priests were so concerned that they gathered up the remaining royal mummies and buried them in secret hiding places. The country was ruled by rival kings which created unrest. Egypt became weak and divided and her empire was gradually disappearing and her prestige was shrinking.

A new era of peace and prosperity was enjoyed during Dynasties XXV to XXXI but Egypt's independence was doomed. They were conquered first by the Assyrians and then by the Persians.

Alexander the great of Macedon was welcomed by the Egyptians when he drove out the Persians, Egypt became part of his empire but it was short-lived. Alexander died and one of his generals, Ptolemy, took over the country. He became pharaoh and he developed a line of kings and queens who ruled Egypt for the next 300 years.

The last ruler to reign over Egypt was Cleopatra. She was a Macedonian not an Egyptian and was a worthy successor of the great pharaohs of Egypt. She married a Roman leader called Mark Antony who co-ruled Rome. He was very ambitious and wanted to be Rome's sole leader. Antony and Cleopatra combined their military forces to fight the Romans but they lost the battle in 31 B.C. The couple committed suicide the next year rather than be taken prisoner. Egypt became a province of Rome.



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Egypt Today

Egypt is located in the northeastern corner of the African continent. It is approximately the same size as Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas combined. The capital city of Egypt is Cairo with an estimated population of 6 452 000.

Arabic is Egypt's official language but English and French are also spoken. There are approximately 54 139 000 people living in Egypt. Ninety percent of the people are native Egyptians. The remainder of the people are Nubians, Bedouin Nomads, Greeks, Italians, Syro-Lebanese and Jews.

Egypt's Physical Features

Egypt is located in the northeastern portion of the African continent. It is bordered by Sudan to the south, Libya to the west, the Mediterranean Sea to the north and Israel, the Red Sea and Saudia Arabia to the east.

Egypt is home to the world's largest desert, the Sahara and the world's longest river, the Nile. The climate in Egypt is vastly different in certain areas. Ninety percent of Egypt is dry and arid while the Nile valley is fertile, green and lush. The temperaure in the summer can be as high as 38 °C (100 °F) and in the winter it can be as low as 4 °C (40 °F). Winter is usually mild, sunny and dry.

The Nile River

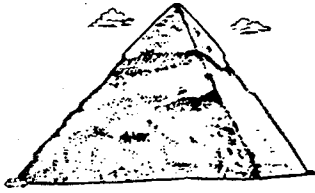
The Nile is the world's longest river and measures 6 698 kilometers (4 160 miles). Its width varies from 227.5 meters (250 yards) to 22.5 kilometers (14 miles). The Nile begins as two little rivers called the White Nile and the Blue Nile which eventually meet in Khartoum, Sudan.

Many Egyptians make their homes along the Nile's banks or along canals which extend from it. Most of the Egyptian farmers have their farms along the banks of this great river. An ancient device called a shaduf is used to move water from the Nile into canals that irrigate the land. A shaduf is made of a pole with a bucket on one end and a heavy weight attached to the other. A person pulls the bucket down into the Nile and when it is full, the heavy weight brings the water up to be emptied into a canal.

Rice, beans, fruits, grains, vegetables, sugar and corn are the main crops grown in Egypt. Egypt is the largest producer of cotton and the tenth largest producer of cheese. Almost half of all Egyptians are employed in agriculture.

The Suez Canal

The Suez Canal is a large man-made waterway which links the Mediterranean and the Red Seas. It is located in the north-eastern portion of Egypt. The canal was built to develop a better trade route between Europe and Asia. It provides a much shorter water route for many countries



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Egyptian Daily Life

Most Egyptians live in large cities or towns along the Nile River. Some live in cities or towns found on large oases such as Al-Faiyim. In an Egyptian household two or three generations of a family may live. Children are often raised by grandparents while the parents go out to work. Young adults usually stay with their parents until they are married. Aunts and uncles may live in the same house as well.

Egyptian parents must work hard and often hold down two jobs. In the cities, the parents may work in factories or offices or they may run family shops. In the villages, Egyptian parents may work long days in the fields. Some fathers may work in the oil fields far away from home to make extra money.

Although family members spend much of their day away from each other, they enjoy sharing meals, celebrating holidays and shopping together.

Older family members are highly respected and supported by their adult children. Adult Egyptians often turn to their parents for guidance to help them make major decisions even ones concerning who to marry. The father is the head of the family.

The children who live in the cities help out at home to make the household run smoothly. They help to set and clear the table, keep their rooms tidy and put away groceries. Quite often the children help out in the store at the bazaar. They may even learn to make beautiful boxes, leather and brass goods, weave carpets or make ceramic figures to sell.

Children who live in villages have many chores to do. They help look after the family's animals by feeding them seed cakes and clover and bringing them fresh water to drink. Girls are usually in charge of milking the cows and buffalo. Boys and girls help to gather crops such as cotton which is harvested in August during summer vacation. Children who live on an oasis often help to harvest dates and olives from the trees. They also make baskets from palm stems and clay pots used for holding and storing food.

Egyptian Homes

In the cities, Egyptians mainly live in high rise apartments. Many have balconies that overlook busy streets. Older apartments tend to have bigger rooms with higher ceilings. Some have quiet and beautiful courtyards where flowers bloom all year long.

In villages, the people live in houses that are usually low and flat which helps to keep them cool. The houses are built close together so that they use up as little farmland as possible. Fruit is dried and food for the family's animals is kept on the rooftops of the home.

In the early days, the homes were made of mud brick but today modern homes are built out of cement blocks because bricks made out of mud wastes too much water. Quite often there is a shed attached to the house to keep the family's animals in. Animals such as cows, buffalo, goats, chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons and rabbits could be kept in the shed. These animals provide meat, milk and eggs for the family.



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In Egyptian villages pictures are often painted on the outside walls of the houses. This is done to let everyone know that someone living in the house has been to Mecca, the holy city of the Islamic religion. The pictures may display scenes of the person's journey and Mecca itself. Verses from the Koran, the sacred book of Islam, may be included.

Egyptian Clothing

Egyptians who live in cities and have above average incomes wear western-type clothing. Children wear cotton shirts, jeans and sneakers for leisure time and uniforms to school.

Poor people and rural villages wear more traditional dress. Men and boys wear a long-sleeved loose fitting shirt called a *galabijah* (gal-a-bia) which reaches the ankles. Underneath the *galabijah*, long white trousers are worn and a *felt skullcap* is worn on the head. Women wear a hooded black robe called a *mylaya* (mi-la-ya) which covers their hair and bodies but not their faces. Girl's wear a *fustan* which is a long, colorful dress. These clothes are cool and comfortable and provide good protection from the hot rays of the sun. The women and girls often wear jewelry made of gold and silver decorated with beads and semi-precious stones such as *lapis lazuli*.

Egyptian Food

Mutton, buffalo and **poultry** are the central ingredients of many dishes. The meat is served with rich sauces that may be sweet or highly spiced. The national dish is called *foul* (*fool*) or *foul medammes*. It is made from dried beans that are cooked, mashed and mixed with oil, lemon and spices. Foul may be eaten for breakfast, in a sandwich for lunch, and often for dinner as well.

Bread in Egypt is round, flat and tasty. It is used for folded sandwiches or dipped into spicy meat sauces. Hot spicy sliced lamb called "*shawerma*" is sold by street vendors as well as "*semeet*", twists of bread that look like giant pretzels and sweet mint or cinnamon tea. Children drink milk and tea while the adults enjoy small cups of strong, sweet turkish coffee.

Bean paste, called "*falafel*" is rolled into balls and is fried in olive oil. *Kabobs* of lamb or beef are roasted on a stick. These two dishes are quite popular for the main meal of the day. The main meal is often held at midday when the whole family is home from work or school in cities. In villages the main meal is at dusk when workers return from the fields. Fresh fruit and delicious sweets end the last meal of the day. Two favorite desserts are "*baklava*", a crisp pastry stuffed with nuts and drenched with syrup and "*halvah*", a type of cookie made of sesame seeds and honey.

Egyptian children also enjoy modern food such as burgers, soft drinks and ice cream as well.

Egyptian Religion

The principle religion in Egypt is Islam which follows the teachings of Muhammed, the Prophet of Allah who lived over 1400 years ago. Muhammed preached peace and freedom



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and love for all people especially the poor. People who follow these teachings are called *Muslims*.

The churches are called *mosques* and have domed roofs. Five times a day, a man called a *muezzin* climbs to the top of the mosque's *minaret* or tower to call Muslims to prayer. When they hear his voice, all Muslims stop what they are doing and turn toward *Mecca* to pray for a few seconds. Mecca is the holiest city for Muslims all over the world and the birthplace of *Muhammed*.

Muslims celebrate many holy days. *Muharram* celebrates the first day of the year. *Milad-an-Nabi* is the birthday of Muhammed. *Ramadan* is one of the most important holy days. It lasts for a month and begins with the sighting of the new moon on the first day of the ninth month of the Muslim year. Adults fast during Ramadan or go without food from sunrise to sunset. They fast so they will know what it is like to be poor. Each day adults have only two meals each day. *Sufur* or breakfast is eaten before the sun comes up and at sunset *iftar* or the evening meal is enjoyed. Everyone loves this meal and sometimes children go from house to house carrying colored lanterns and singing Ramadan songs.

Teacher Input Suggestions

Advance Preparations:

1. Notify your teacher-librarian well in advance that you plan to do a thematic unit on Egypt so that he/she can collect the necessary materials for you.
2. Collect as many of the following materials as you can.
 - photographs, illustrations of buildings found in Egypt today and in the past
 - photographs, illustrations of various artifacts found in Egypt
 - maps of Egypt in the present and past
 - fiction and non fiction books
 - films, videos, filmstrips on Egypt
 - unusual foods from Egypt e.g. dates, figs, pomegranates

Suggested Introductions:

Use any of the introductions below to introduce the topic.

1. Read the biblical story about Joseph and his coat of many colors and how he came to live in Egypt. The biblical story about Moses' life as a baby and his boyhood in Egypt could be shared with the class as well. Both stories will help to depict life in Ancient Egypt. Since these are religious stories and they may infringe on the religious rights of others, try to treat them as you would any other story.
2. Prepare a bulletin board display of pictures of various buildings or artifacts that were found in Egypt during that time period to arouse student curiosity. Perhaps captions and questions could be displayed as well.
3. Plan to visit the closest museum that has a good display of Egyptian artifacts.