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Word List

Djoser (ZHOE-suhr) The Pharaoh who built the first great stone pyramid.

drought (drowt) A time when no rain falls and crops are damaged.

Giza (GEE-zah) A city in ancient Egypt where the biggest and longest-lasting pyramids are.

Herodotus (hah-ROD-uh-tuhs) An ancient Greek writer who wrote about the Great Pyramid.

Imhotep (im-HOE-tep) Builder of the greatest mastabas.

Khufu (KOO-foo) Sneferu's son and the Pharaoh who built the greatest pyramid of ancient Egypt.

ma'at (muh-AHT) The divine order of the universe.

mastaba (mahs-TUH-buh) A huge brick building shaped like a rectangle, with a flat top.

Nile River (nyuhl) The longest river in the world, found in Egypt.

papyrus (puh-PIE-russ) A plant used to make a

kind of paper and whose reeds can be woven into a rope.

Pharaoh (FARE-oh) Another name for any of the kings who ruled ancient Egypt.

pi (pie) The symbol π . In math it represents the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.

Plateau of Giza (plah-TOE of GEE-zah) A high, flat, wide area of land in Egypt, home of the Great Pyramid of Khufu.

pyramid (PEER-uh-mid) A tomb that the ancient Egyptians built for the Pharaoh.

pyramidion (peer-uh-MID-ee-on) A stone block covered with sheets of gold that went on top of the pyramid.

pyramidologist (peer-uh-mid-AHL-uh-gist) A person who studies pyramids.

Ra (rah) The sun god and most important Egyptian god.

sarcophagus (sar-COFF-uh-gus) A king's stone coffin.

Sneferu (SNEF-uh-roo) The Pharaoh who built the first pyramid.

zaa (zah) A group of about a hundred workers.

Chapter 1

For thousands of years, anyone who has traveled in the Egyptian desert has seen an amazing sight. Most of the desert is nothing but burning-hot sand, but people still come to see the greatest monuments ever built--the pyramids (PEER-uh-midz).

Like a sleeping giant, the largest pyramid rises almost 500 feet above the desert floor. At sunset, it shines golden in the setting sun. The Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza has stood the test of time. For centuries, the monument has impressed people from all over the world.

The mysteries of the pyramids make us ask many questions. Why were the

pyramids built? Who built them? How did each of the heavy stones get put exactly where it belonged? How did the ancient people of Egypt know how to build the pyramids so perfectly, long before modern machines and information? How have the pyramids affected the lives of people to this day? What great secrets have they held for so long—secrets that are just now being discovered? How have the pyramids survived so long while other monuments have disappeared? Will we ever know all the secrets hidden in the pyramids?

To solve some of these mysteries, we need to go back, long before the great pyramids were built.