

MIDDLE & NEW KINGDOMS

1) Why did the middle kingdom decline?

Ans: Around 2300 B.C. government officials, jealous of the pharaoh's power took control of Egypt. Almost 200 years of confusion followed. Finally a new line of pharaohs took over and again brought unity. Out of this unity came a new period called the Middle kingdom.

The Middle Kingdom lasted over 300 years. It came to an end in 1650 B.C. when Egypt was invaded by the Hyksos, people from western Asia. The Hyksos crossed the desert in horse-drawn chariots and used weapons made of bronze and iron. The Egyptians had always fought on foot with weapons made of copper and stone. They were not used to the Hyksos weapons or style of fighting and were defeated. The Hyksos ruled Egypt for about 150 years.

They copied some Egyptian customs and tried to get the support of the Egyptian people. But the Egyptians hated them and worked to gain their freedom. Around 1600 B.C an Egyptian prince named Ahmose I using Hyksos weapons and style of fighting helped to drive the Hyksos out of Egypt.

2. What changes were brought about during the New Kingdom?

Ans: The Hyksos ruled Egypt for about 150 years. They copied some Egyptian customs and tried to get the support of the Egyptian people. But the Egyptians hated them and worked to gain their freedom. Around 1600 B.C an Egyptian prince named Ahmose I using Hyksos weapons and style of fighting helped to drive the Hyksos out of Egypt.

Ahmose I founded another line of pharaohs and began the period known as the New kingdom. During this time Egypt changed in many ways. It became richer and its cities grew larger. During the New Kingdom most pharaohs were

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interested mainly in war and conquest. They were no longer content to remain within the Nile Valley but marched their armies into lands to the east. It was during this period that the Egyptian empire was established.

One warrior-pharaoh, Thutmose III with an army of 20,000 archers, spear throwers and charioteers expanded Egyptian control into Syria and Palestine.

Ramesses the Great, was the third [pharaoh](#) of the [Nineteenth Dynasty of Egypt](#). He is often regarded as the greatest, most celebrated, and most powerful pharaoh of the [Egyptian Empire](#).^[7] His successors and later Egyptians called him the "Great Ancestor". Ramesses II led many successful military campaigns. The early part of his reign was focused on building cities, temples and monuments. He established the city of [Pi-Ramesses](#) in the Nile Delta as his new capital and main base for his campaigns in Syria.

3.What made Ramesses II an exceptional pharaoh?

Ans: **Ramesses the Great**, was the third [pharaoh](#) of the [Nineteenth Dynasty of Egypt](#). He is often regarded as the greatest, most celebrated, and most powerful pharaoh of the [Egyptian Empire](#).^[7] His successors and later Egyptians called him the "Great Ancestor". Ramesses II led many successful military campaigns. The early part of his reign was focused on building cities, temples and monuments. He established the city of [Pi-Ramesses](#) in the Nile Delta as his new capital and main base for his campaigns in Syria.

The deposed Hittite king, [Mursili III](#) fled to Egypt, the land of his country's enemy, after the failure of his plots to oust his uncle from the throne. [Hattusili III](#) responded by demanding that Ramesses II extradite his nephew back to [Hatti](#).^[34] This demand precipitated a crisis in relations between Egypt and [Hatti](#) when Ramesses denied any knowledge of Mursili's whereabouts in his country, and the two empires came dangerously close to war. Eventually, in the twenty-first year of his reign (1258 BC), Ramesses decided to conclude an agreement with the new Hittite king, Hattusili III, at [Kadesh](#) to end the conflict. The ensuing

document is the earliest known [peace treaty](#) in world history.^[35] The peace treaty was recorded in two versions, one in [Egyptian hieroglyphs](#), the other in [Akkadian](#), using [cuneiform](#) script; both versions survive.

After reigning for 30 years, Ramesses joined a select group that included only a handful of Egypt's longest-lived kings. By tradition, in the 30th year of his reign Ramesses celebrated a jubilee called the *Sed festival*, during which the king was ritually transformed into a god.^[43] Only halfway through what would be a 66-year reign, Ramesses had already eclipsed all but a few of the greatest kings in his achievements. He had brought peace, maintained Egyptian borders and built great and numerous monuments across the empire. His country was more prosperous and powerful than it had been in nearly a century. By becoming a god, Ramesses dramatically changed not just his role as ruler of Egypt, but also the role of his firstborn son, [Amun-her-khepsef](#). As the chosen heir and commander-in-chief of Egyptian armies, his son effectively became ruler in all but name.

4.Do you think that Egyptian women were better off than their Sumerian Counterpart?

Ans: I think that Egyptian women were better off than their Sumerian Counterpart.

Sumerian Women: The Sumerian families were dominated by the eldest male member. Sons could inherit property in equal shares. The schools in Sumer were only for the sons of the rich. Poorer boys worked in the fields or learned to trade. Only the Sumerian males went to school but the females had rights too. They could buy and sell property. They could run business, including taverns. They were allowed to own and sell slaves. Although woman could handle her husband's affairs when he was away, the husband was the head of the household. Monogamy prevailed and marriages were bound by contract. The husband could divorce his wife by saying, "You're not my wife." If he needed money he had the right to sell or rent his wife and children for up to 3 years.

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Egyptian Women: Contrary to popular belief, women were not treated as secondclass citizens in ancient Egypt. In fact, there were oftentimes treated as **equals** to men. They were allowed to own their own property, testify in court and even conduct business dealings just like men could. More than once did a woman rule Egypt as the pharaoh as well.

Still, even though women were treated better than other women in other parts of the world at that time, they were still seen as the primary **caretakers** of the home and children. Their primary responsibilities were still to overseeing the duties of the home, such as raising the children and preparing meals for the family.

5. Who was Hatshepsut?

Ans: Queen Hatshepsut holds the title of the longest reign of a female ancient Egyptian ruler. She lived from 1500-1458 BC and ruled over Egypt for 21 of those years.

A **timeline** of Queen Hatshepsut's life indicates she was born the daughter of King Thutmose I and one of his queens. When the king died, the throne was inherited by his son, [Thutmose II](#). In keeping with traditional Egyptian standards, the new king married his father's oldest daughter. This meant that he married his half sister, Hatshepsut, and they had a female child called Neferure. Thutmose II died at a relatively **early age**, and upon his death his son by another wife, [Thutmose III](#), became pharaoh. The child was too young at the time to rule the great nation of Egypt, so Hatshepsut took over on his behalf, as regent. Hatshepsut ruled as regent for six years. In 1473 B.C. Hatshepsut decided she had had enough of ruling on behalf of the child and declared herself pharaoh.

To further instill the idea in the ancient Egyptians' minds that she was no less a king than any other, she dressed up in **men's clothing** and wore a false beard. She also insisted that people address her as "King" and "His Majesty". She is

known for her peaceful reign and for the building of many monuments, including the mortuary complex at Deir el-Bahri. She was one of the few pharaohs who was not interested in conquest. Her main interests were trade and building of temples. During her rule Egyptian traders sailed along the coast of east Africa and brought new wealth into Egypt.

When Thutmose III came of age, she appointed him the leader of her armies. He became a brilliant **military leader**, and was named the "Napoleon of Egypt" by a group of Egyptologists who studied his military dominance in many of his major battles.

Because of her success in leading Egypt, Hatshepsut enjoyed a long reign, in spite of the **pressure** exerted by Thutmose III to ascend to pharaoh. Once he did become pharaoh, he began a campaign of erasing images and references to Hatshepsut in an effort to cancel out a female link in the long chain of the male pharaohs of the day. It has been speculated that he had her killed when he became old enough to rule on his own.

6.What were the main features of Egyptian economy?

Ans: Egypt was basically based on agriculture. It traded with Crete Island and Lebanon. It exported gold, wheat and linen fabrics. It imported silver, ivory and lumber. Egypt manufactured pottery, glass and textiles in factory. They also did shipbuilding and division of labor. They had great contribution over accounting and bookkeeping, deeds contracts and wills. Their dealings were based on barter but sometimes gold or copper rings were used as currency.

7.What kind of religion did the Egyptians follow?

Ans: The ancient Egyptians believed in the gods and goddesses of Egyptian mythology. Their religion was **polytheistic**, but towns and villages would often

claim a particular god as the one they worshiped most. The religion was filled with rituals, rites and other special practices and ceremonies, and many [temples](#) were built in honor of specific gods and goddesses.

Most Egyptians believed that the gods had the bodies of humans and the heads of animals. Two of the most important gods were the river god Hapi and the sun god Re. They were important because the Egyptians depended on river and the sun.

The river brought them water and fertile soil. The sun helped their crops to grow. Another important god was Osiris the god of the harvest and of eternal life. According to Egyptian myths Osiris was an early pharaoh who gave his people laws and taught them farming. He and his wife Isis ruled over the dead. The Egyptians believed that the souls of the dead went to the underworld. There they were weighted on scale. If a person had a good life and knew certain magic spells the scales balanced. Then Osiris would grant the person life after death. To learn the correct magic spells the Egyptians studied a special book called the Book of the Dead.

Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and his queen Nefertiti abandoned the traditional Egyptian polytheism and started worshipping Aten, god of the Sun disk. This happened during the sixth year of his reign, and he ordered all of the icons for gods other than Aten removed.

Aten was the **sun god** worshipped by [Pharaoh Akhenaten](#) and he comes from an unknown origin. Those hymns written to him that have survived show that his worship was a joyful experience. Aten had no humanoid shape; instead his depictions show him as a sun disc with rays extending from him that has hands on the end of each ray.

Many ancients **did not accept** the monotheistic religion that Akhenaten promoted. They were unwilling to accept one god as opposed to the hundreds that they were used to worshipping. Their old gods were **touchable and practical**, whereas Aten which is essentially, light, was too unearthly a concept for them to

grasp. The ancient Egyptians also began wondering about the **stability of their afterlife**, since the old gods were not being worshiped.

After his death pharaoh Tutankhamen restored polytheism.

8. Briefly narrate the writing system in ancient Egypt.

Ans: The term **hieroglyphics** refers to a system of writing using ancient **Egyptian symbols**. The hieroglyphics involved a series of 'picture' words. Consisting of several hundred words, this system of writing was intensely complex and very labor intensive. The first hieroglyphics were used on buildings and tombs. It is believed that the Egyptians first began developing this system of writing about **3000 BC**. The word **hieroglyph** means “god's words”. The ancient Egyptians believed hieroglyphs were **sacred**. For this reason, they carved hieroglyphs on sacred structures, like temples. Hieroglyphs were also used to write sacred books, like the Book of the Dead. The Hieroglyphic developed gradually in three stages: Pictographic, Syllabic and Alphabetic.

9. How developed was ancient Egyptian art and architecture?

Ans: Much of what makes Ancient Egypt such a memorable time and place is its architecture. The Ancient Egyptians left behind some of the most impressive buildings of the ancient world. Among them, of course, are: [mastabas](#) (Mastabas were **tombs** and they began as burial sites for royals, including pharaohs, back in the earliest dynasties of ancient Egypt. As the Old Kingdom commenced, the pharaohs started to be buried in pyramids instead of mastabas. Commoners continued using the mastaba as a burial house for over a thousand years.), the Great Pyramids of **Giza** (also known as the **Pyramid of Khufu** or the **Pyramid of Cheops** is the oldest and largest of the three [pyramids](#) in the [Giza pyramid complex](#) bordering what is now [El Giza](#), [Egypt](#). It is the oldest of the [Seven](#)

[Wonders of the Ancient World](#), and the only one to remain largely intact. It was built by Pharaoh [Khufu](#). His burial chamber was in the center of the pyramid rather than underneath the pyramid. Egyptologists discovered two boat burials beside the pyramid and restored one of them. Khufu built three pyramids for his queens on the plateau beside his tomb.) and [the Great Sphinx](#) (the **Great Sphinx of Giza** is the largest structure created from a single piece of stone. The statue sits in a reclining position, with the **lion's body** and paws facing forward. The creature's **human head** is generally thought to be the likeness of Pharaoh Khafre.) All of these structures were built from stone.

10.What were the scientific inventions in ancient Egypt?

Ans: Much can be attributed to the ancient Egyptians, even some of the earliest forms of technology and inventions that we still use today. They were innovators in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, language and even architecture. In fact, the list of inventions in ancient Egypt can be quite a lengthy document.

Papyrus: Papyrus was the first form of **durable** sheets of paper to write on, and the ancient Egyptians were the ones to develop it. The material was termed “papyrus” because it was made from the papyrus plant.

The ancient Egyptians primarily used papyrus for recording religious texts and other important documents. Papyrus was **mass produced** in Egypt and sold to other ancient civilizations, such as Ancient Greece, for their record keeping.

Papyrus had other uses too. It was made into baskets and sandals. It was tied in bundles to make columns for houses. Even rafts and riverboats were made of papyrus.

Ink: One of the inventions in Egypt was, surprisingly, **black ink**. The Egyptian people were very talented at creating not only black ink, but many multi-colored types of ink and dye. The process and depth of color utilized in the Egyptian

invention of ink and dye was so marvelous that these brilliant hues of colors can still be seen today, thousands of years later.

Mathematics: The great pyramids that the ancient Egyptians built required some knowledge of mathematics, especially of **geometry**. Mathematical principles were applied in the invention of simple machines, as well as for transactions and record keeping.

Math and numbers were used to record business transactions, and the ancient Egyptians even developed a **decimal system**. All their numbers were factors of 10, though, such as 1, 10, 100 and so on. Therefore, in order to denote 3 units, they would write the number “1” three times.

Calendar: The ancient Egyptian calendar was invented more than 5,000 years ago and was originally based on the **12-month lunar cycle**. They grouped the months into three seasons of four months that seemed to coincide with the Nile River.

However, this calendar wasn't accurate enough. They soon noticed that although the river would flood every year around the end of June, the flood occurred within a range of **80 days**.

Therefore, after noticing that the river's flooding and rising matched with the heliacal rising of the star **Sirius**, they based their year on the cycle of this star's reappearance, effectively applying astronomy principles to develop a more accurate calendar by which to track the days of the year. We still use ancient Egyptians' calendar model in our tracking of the days today.

Clock: Ancient Egyptians were also one of the first groups of people to divide days into equal parts through the use of **timekeeping** devices. Some of the earliest forms of clocks were sundials, shadow clocks, merkhets and [obelisks](#).

Generally, the passing of the day was determined by the **position of the sun**, and the passing of the night was determined by the rise and fall of the stars.

There is even evidence of **water clocks** in ancient Egypt. These were shaped like bowls and had a small hole in the bottom of them. They floated atop water and were allowed to fill up in a way so that the rising water represented a number of hours passing.

Water clocks were mostly used by **priests**, as they allowed a way to measure time independently of the sun and were more accurate gauges of time for performing special religious ceremonies.

Medicines: Some of the **earliest** developments in [medicine](#) were made by the ancient Egyptian people. They had a variety of medicines and cures for both humans and animals, along with much knowledge of anatomy, as they practiced mummification and preservation of the dead.

The Egyptians were the first medical specialists as dentists, eye doctors, veterinarians and surgeons. The Egyptians were the first to use splints, bandages and compresses. They were expert at sewing up cuts and at setting and splinting broken bones. They treated less serious problems too such as indigestion and baldness. For indigestion they used castor oil. For baldness they used a mixture of dog toes, dates and donkey hoof.

One of the earliest accounts of **medical texts** originates in ancient Egypt. It attempts to describe and analyze the brain, providing the earliest insight into neuroscience. Although they had many “cures” for various ailments, some of their medicinal practices were questionable at best.

For instance, they used honey and human brains to cure eye infections, a cooked mouse to cure coughs and applied cow dung to wounds and piercing to ward off infections. There are indications that the use of such practices was one of the leading causes of people developing **tetanus** in ancient Egypt.

Because the ancient Egyptians were highly spiritual people as well, it should come as no surprise that they also accompanied many of their cures with **spells** that were supposed to ward off the evil spirits that were making patients sick.

Ramp: Egyptians used to drag stone blocks on sledges over the ramp.

Lever: It was a remarkable invention of the Egyptians. They used lever for moving an object or in applying a force to an object.

11. Why did the ancient Egyptians practice mummification?

Ans: The Egyptians believed that part of a person's soul, returned to the body every night after death. Preserving the body was, therefore, crucial to the soul's survival in the afterlife.

Egyptians mummified a variety of **animals**. There were four different reasons for this:

1. People mummified their pets because they loved them.
2. Other animals, like ducks, were meant to provide food for the dead.
3. Egyptians sacrificed, mummified and offered animals, like cats and baboons, to the gods.
4. Priests mummified sacred animals, like the Apis bulls, after they died.

Mummification began four days after a person's death. Families took the body to the Nile's West bank, where the embalmers worked outdoors. First, the embalmers cleaned the body. Then, they made a slit on the left side of the body and removed the stomach, intestines, lungs and liver. During most periods, embalmers placed each organ in a **Canopic jar**, with a natron solution. Natron is a natural composite of salt and baking soda that dried the organs. The four sons of [Horus](#), Hapy, Duamutef, Qebhsenuf and Imsety, guarded the organs. Most Canopic jars had lids shaped like the heads of those four gods. The Egyptians placed no value on the brain, as they believed it was unimportant for the body's function. The embalmers removed it through the nose with a hooked rod. The heart, however, was considered the **center of knowledge**, and they left it in the body. Sometimes, embalmers put packets of natron in the body cavity. The body was then placed in a tray and covered with dry natron. 40 days later, it was **removed** from the natron and the embalmers spent 30 more days wrapping the body and readying it for burial. The Egyptians buried the left over embalming tools in front of the tomb.