The shape of ancient Egyptian pyramids is thought to have been inspired by the spreading rays of the sun.

The famous Great Pyramid at Giza was built as a burial place for King Khufu (2589-2566 B.C.) and took more than 20 years to build. It is built from over two million blocks of limestone, each one weighing as much as two and a half elephants. It stands about 460 feet (149 m) high—taller than the Statue of Liberty. The base of the Great Pyramid takes up almost as much space as five football fields.

Egypt has the largest Arabic population in the world.

For ancient Egyptians, bread was the most important food and beer was their favorite drink. Models of brewers were even left in tombs to ensure that the deceased had plenty of beer in the next world.

Pharaoh Pepi II (2246-2152 B.C.) had the longest reign in history—94 years. He became Egypt’s king when he was only 6 years old.

Pharaoh Pepi II allegedly would smear naked slaves with honey to attract flies away from him.

Fly swatters made from giraffe tails were a popular fashion item in ancient Egypt.

On average, only an inch of rain falls in Egypt per year.

The literacy rate for Egyptian men is 83% and 59.4% for women.

Ramses II (1279-1212 B.C.) is often considered the greatest pharaoh (“great house”) of the Egyptian empire. He ruled Egypt for 60 years and was the only pharaoh to carry the title “the Great” after his name. He had over 90 children: approximately 56 boys and 44 girls. He had eight official wives and nearly 100 concubines. He also had red hair, which was associated with the god Seth.

Ancient Egyptians believed that mummification ensured the deceased a safe passage to the afterlife.

Ancient Egyptians mummified not only people but animals as well. Archeologists discovered a 15-foot- (4.5-m-) long mummified crocodile. The crocodile is known as the “devourer of human hearts” in the ancient Book of the Dead.

In Egypt, both men and women wore eye make-up called kohl, which was made from ground-up raw material mixed with oil. They believed it had magical healing powers that could restore poor eyesight and fight eye infections.

The ancient Egyptians worshiped more than 1,000 different gods and goddesses. The most important god of all was Ra, the sun god.

The Sahara Desert at one time was lush grassland and savannah. Overgrazing and/or climate change in 8000 B.C. began to change the area from pastoral land to desert.

A priest often wore the jackal-headed mask of the god Anubis when making a body into a mummy.

Ancient Egyptians associated Anubis (the god of the death) with jackals because jackals would uncover bodies from Egyptian cemeteries and eat them.

To stay cool and avoid lice, both men and women in ancient Egypt shaved their heads and often wore wigs. In fact, because wigs indicated social status, they became one of the most important fashion accessories in ancient Egypt. Rich people wore wigs made from human hair, while poor people wore wigs made from wool or vegetable fiber.

Over its long history, Egypt has been known by many different names. For example, during the Old Kingdom (2650-2134 B.C.), Egypt was called Kemet or Black Land, which referred to the dark, rich soil of the Nile Valley. It was also called Deshret, or Red Land, which referred to Egypt’s vast deserts. Later, it was known as Hwt-ka-Ptah or “House of the Ka of Ptah.” Ptah was one of Egypt’s earliest gods. The Greeks changed Hwt-ka-ptah to Aegyptus.

The ancient Egyptians were the first people to have a year consisting of 365 days divided into 12 months. They also invented clocks.

Egypt’s Nile River is the world’s longest, running 4,135 miles (6,670 km).

In an attempt to control the annual flooding of the Nile, one of the largest dams in the world was built in Egypt in 1971: Aswan High Dam. Unfortunately, the rich silt that normally fertilized the dry Egyptian land settled in Lake Nasser after the building of the dam, forcing farmers to use one million tons of artificial fertilizer every year.

Ancient Egyptians believed the tears of the goddess Isis made the Nile overflow each year. They celebrated the flood with a festival called the “Night of the Tear Drop.”

Just 150 years ago, Americans and Europeans believed that mummies had great healing powers. They ground up the mummies into powder and used it as medicine for all kinds of diseases.

The Great Pyramid at Giza has vents pointing to the constellation of Orion so the mummy’s spirit could fly straight up to the gods.

The pyramids of Egypt are not only the oldest of the seven wonders of the ancient world, they are the only ones to survive today. An Arab proverb captures the pyramids endurance: “Man fears Time, yet Time fears the pyramids.” The other six wonders are (1) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, (2) the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, (3) the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, (4) the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, (5) the Colossus of Rhodes, and (6) the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

The oldest death sentence recorded is found in ancient Egypt. Found in the Amherst papyri, a teenage male in 1500 B.C. is sentenced to kill himself by either poison or stabbing for practicing magic.

Medical examinations reveal that parasites such as worms were a problem for ancient Egyptians. One common parasite, the Guinea worm, would mature into a three-foot long worm inside the body and then painfully exit through the skin after a year.