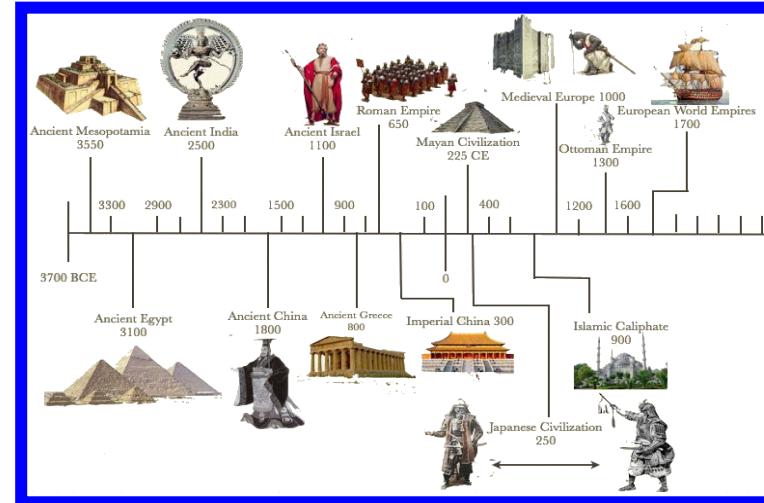


# ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PYRAMIDS

## When were the pyramids built?

The pyramids are much older than you might think! The peak era of pyramid building for the ancient Egyptians was in their third dynasty, around 2868 BCE and it continued for hundreds of years. This is around the time of the early Bronze Age in Europe.

The ancient Egyptian era lasted for over 30 centuries, so many of the pyramids were already ancient history to the people we would think of as ancient history today, like the Romans and the Greeks!



## Why were the pyramids built?

Originally, the ancient Egyptians buried their dead in the ground. The hot, dry desert naturally mummified some of the bodies they buried, which influenced their religious beliefs. The ancient Egyptians believed you needed to preserve the body to reach the afterlife. They believed that if the pharaoh's body could be mummified after death the pharaoh would live forever. They also believe that once in the afterlife, you would need the things you used in life too, so these were buried with the mummies & the tombs were designed to protect the buried pharaoh's body and his belongings with so they could carry them into the afterlife. Originally this was done with mud mounds, these grew and developed over the generations to end up as the pyramids we see today.



Pyramids of Giza, built: 26th Century BCE



Egyptians were buried with a variety of objects like clothes and jewellery, food and drink, oils and ointments and sometimes even methods of transport like boats and chariots!

At first, the pyramids were built using stacks of stone and they had a stepped appearance like the Pyramid of Djoser, one of the early pyramids to be built. Later pyramids had smooth sides & the oldest and largest of the 3 in Giza, the Great Pyramid, was built between 2580 - 2560 BCE

Pyramid of Djoser, built: 27th Century BCE

# ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PYRAMIDS

## Why was a pyramid shape chosen?

The pyramid's smooth, angled sides symbolised the rays of the sun and were designed to help the king's soul ascend to heaven and join the gods, particularly the sun god Ra.

A pyramid gives the most stability for the least amount of material. This was important when building on sandy, unstable soil and because they needed to transport lots of stone via the nearby river Nile. The yellow limestone used to build the inside of the pyramids was quarried near Giza, just outside Cairo, so many pyramids were built in this area. The white limestone used for the exteriors, which was later stolen & used for other buildings, was quarried further up the River Nile and had to be carried a long way.



Ra-Horakhty is a combined deity of Horus and Ra, and is usually depicted as a falcon-headed man wearing a sun disk on his head

Did you know that in building a pyramid shape, you use two thirds of your materials in the first third & by half way up, you will have used 80% of the stone you'll need?

## How big are the pyramids?

There were over 100 pyramids built in Egypt, though only a few survive today. They were built in different styles and in different sizes. The Great Pyramid is the largest and most famous of the pyramids and was built for Pharaoh Khufu. It is over 140 metres high, used approximately 2.3 million blocks of stone and took 20 years to build!

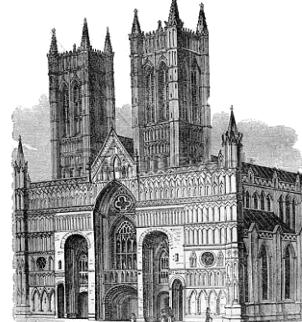
It remained the tallest structure on earth for almost 4000 years until the tower of Lincoln Cathedral was built in 1311. After the tower at Lincoln collapsed, it regained its title as the tallest building until the Eiffel Tower was finished in 1889!



The Eiffel Tower



The Great Pyramid



Lincoln Cathedral

140m tall