

LEVELED BOOK • Q

Ramses II



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Focus Question

Why is Ramses II known as Ramses the Great?

Words to Know

ancient
carvings
control
custom
duties

dynasty
historians
pharaohs
temple

Front cover: A statue of Ramses II sits inside a temple in Egypt.

Title page: A section of a wall carving shows Ramses II.

Page 3: Artwork shows what it might have looked like when Egyptians first built the temples in Egypt.

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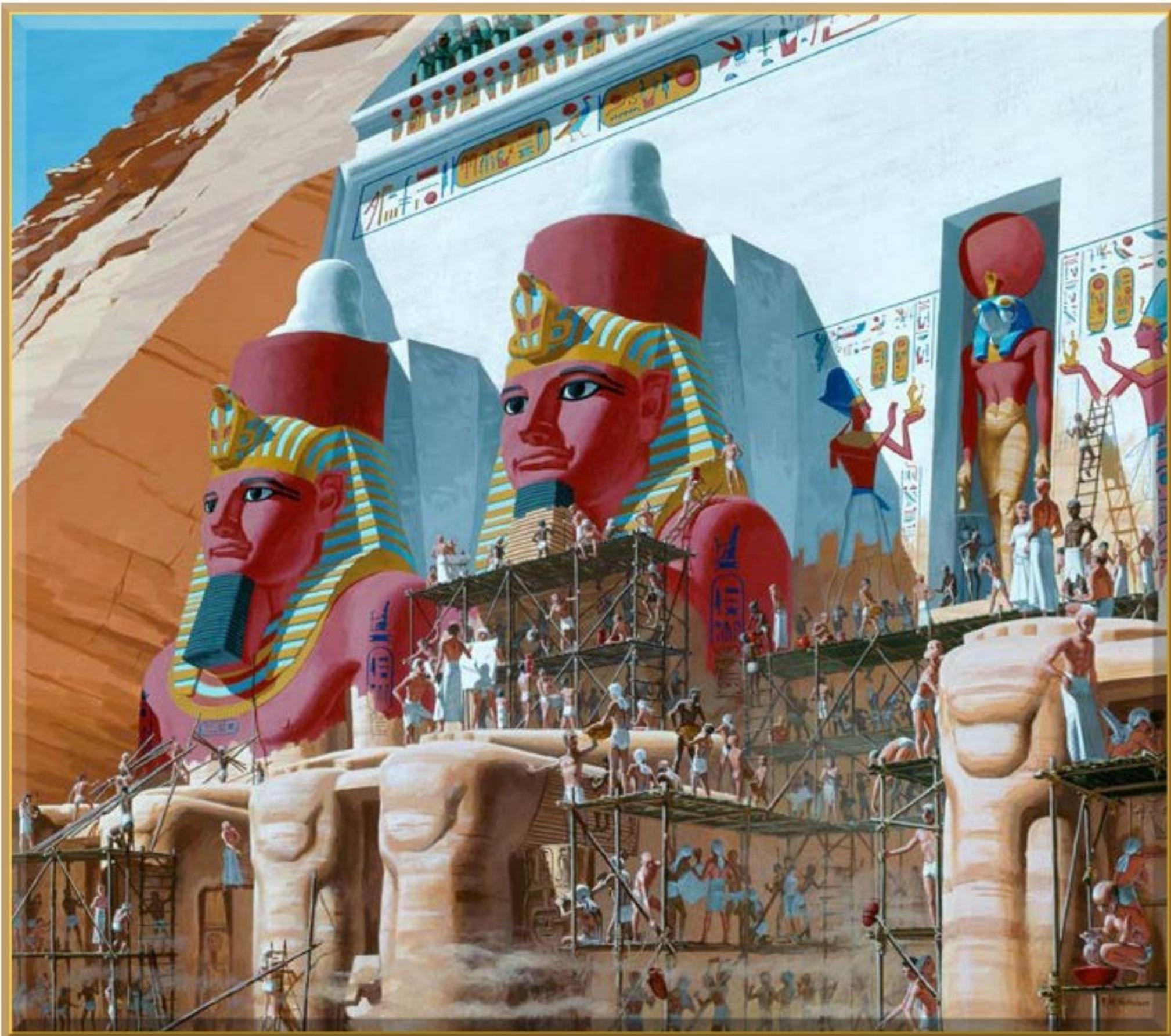


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This huge statue of Ramses II weighs 6.58 mt (7.25 t.). It is currently in the British Museum.

A Royal Surprise

Thousands of years ago, in the year 1303 BC, Ramses II was born in Egypt. His father, Seti I, and mother, Mut-Tuy (MOOT TOO-ee), probably didn't expect their son to become king. They weren't even members of the king's family. Still, Ramses became one of the most famous leaders during a time in Egypt called the New Kingdom. In fact, Ramses II was one of the most important **pharaohs** in all of **ancient** Egypt.

Becoming the Pharaoh

Several years before Ramses, Horemheb was king. Horemheb liked Ramses's grandfather and made him next in line to the throne. When the king died, Ramses's grandfather became king. When he died a few years later, Ramses's father was king. Ramses was next in line.





Carvings show crown prince Ramses with his father roping a bull (top) and making an offering to the god Amun (bottom).



Ramses II learned the skills he'd need to rule Egypt by working with his father, the king. One surviving piece of art shows Ramses helping his father with religious **duties**. Another shows Ramses and his father roping a bull. Ramses needed strength to lead his army into battle. Things such as roping bulls and riding wild horses helped him prepare for his duties as king.

Ramses became a captain in the army when he was very young. Seti I gave Ramses titles and tasks as a leader to help prepare him to rule.

Ramses was thought of as an adult by the time he was a teenager. He traveled with his father to gain experience. He also had his own home. Ramses married his first wife when he was about fifteen.

At the time, it was common for rulers to marry more than one wife, and Ramses followed the **custom**. Many **historians** think Ramses married eight or more times. His first wife, Nefertari, remained his favorite.



Queen Nefertari

Ramses dedicated an elaborate building to Nefertari (left). He decorated it with huge statues of Nefertari, himself, and their children. Workers carved the building from solid sandstone (below).





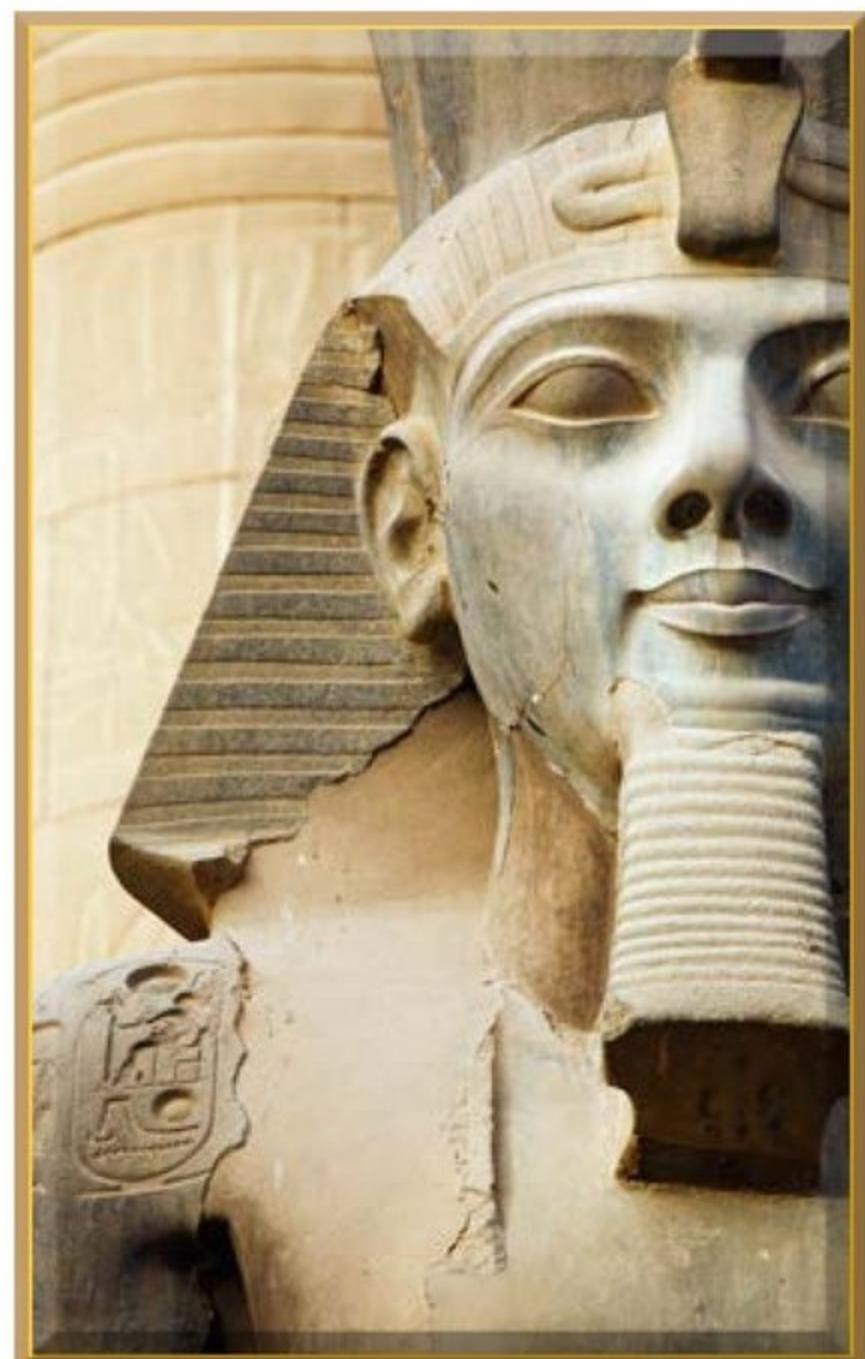
This scene from an ancient wall shows Ramses and his two sons in battle.

Warrior and Pharaoh

Ramses was in charge of the army during Seti I's rule. He became known as a brave soldier. Stone **carvings** show Ramses going into battle with his two oldest sons. Historians think this battle took place in Nubia, a country south of Egypt at that time. Nubia had plenty of gold and other riches, so kings of Egypt and Nubia often fought for its **control**.

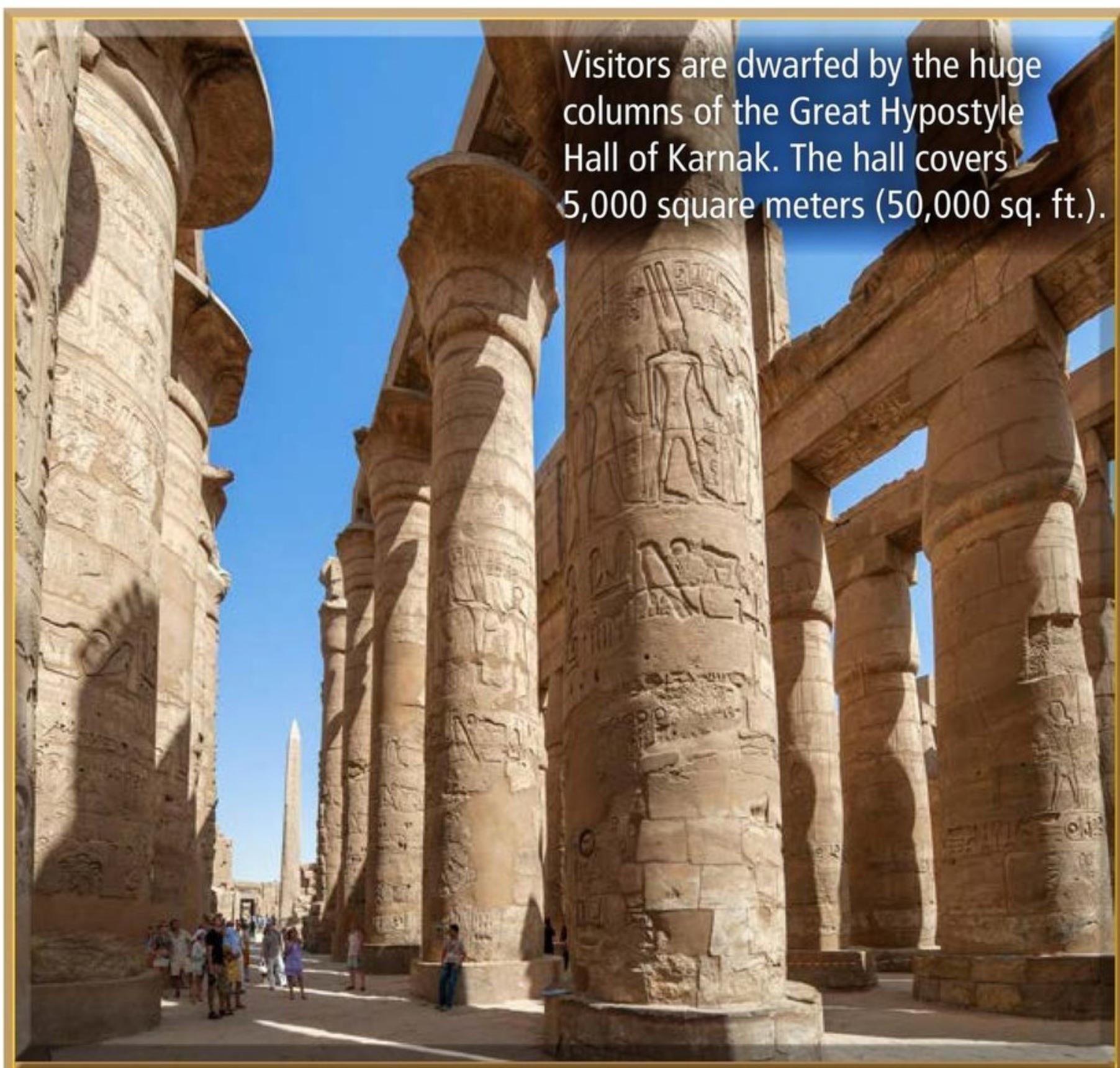
Ramses was about twenty-five when Seti I died, which made Ramses king.

A giant statue of Ramses II in Luxor, Egypt



Ramses II's Buildings

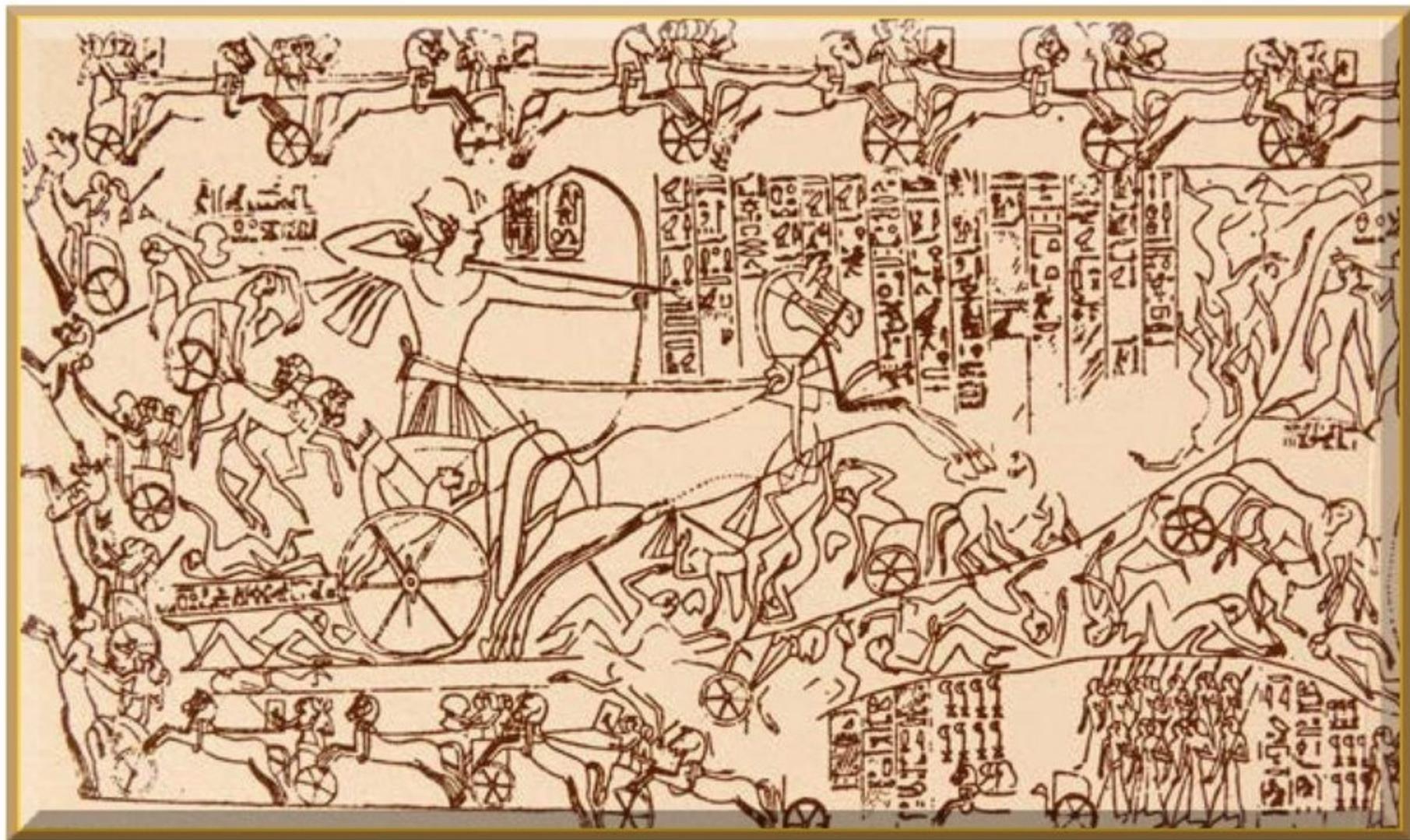
Before his death, Seti I had begun building a huge hall at the **temple** at Karnak containing 134 tall columns. Artists decorated its walls by carving away backgrounds and leaving behind raised pictures. Ramses soon directed workers to carve images directly into the stone. This made the carvings easier and faster. He may have ordered the change to speed things up. He doubled the rate of building and ended up building more temples than any other king.



Ramses certainly seemed eager to speed up his father's building program. He built two temples at Abu Simbel. One was for him, and a second smaller temple was for Nefertari. He built a temple in Thebes known as the Ramesseum. He even built a new capital city. The city placed Ramses closer to his long-standing enemies, the Hittites. They lived in an area now known as Syria.



The Ramesseum was built to honor Ramses II and keep the memory of him alive forever.



Artwork shows Ramses on his chariot. The Hittites alone had about 2,500 chariots in the battle.

Battles

Soon after Ramses II became king, he successfully battled and took back lands that had been taken by the Hittites. Later, the Hittites captured Kadesh, an important trade city in Syria. Ramses led about twenty thousand soldiers and two thousand chariots to take the city. This battle became one of the most famous events of Ramses II's rule. It holds the record as the world's largest chariot battle.

Ramses claimed that he faced the enemy alone. The battle was reported as a clear Egyptian victory. From looking at Hittite records, though, scholars think the battle was a draw.



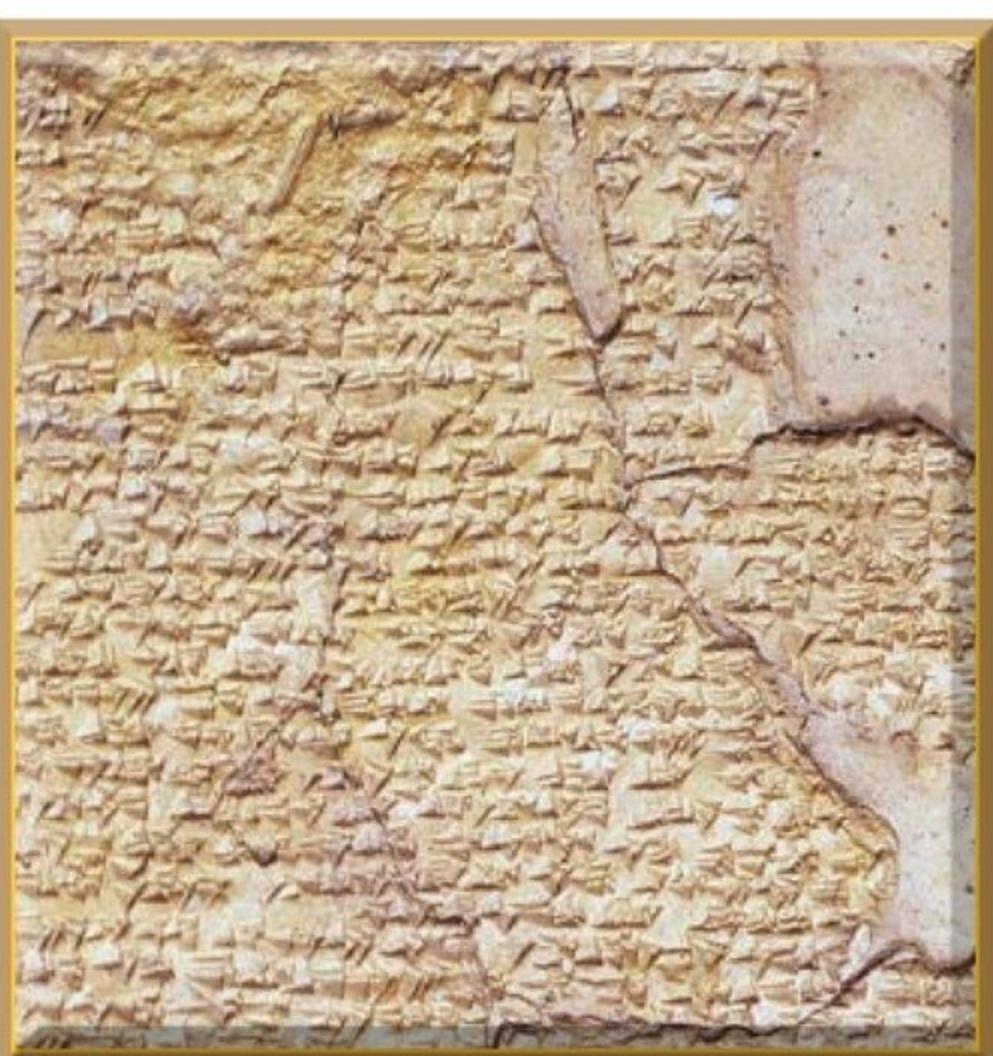
Many carvings and other works show the battle of Kadesh, but the details of the battle vary between the Egyptian and Hittite accounts.

Ramses thought the Hittite army was still many miles north, so he divided his forces to capture Kadesh. One group went ahead of him as scouts. Another group followed a day behind. A third group circled around to attack from the far side. When Ramses learned that the Hittite army was much closer than he thought, he sent for help. The Hittite army then attacked Ramses's men.

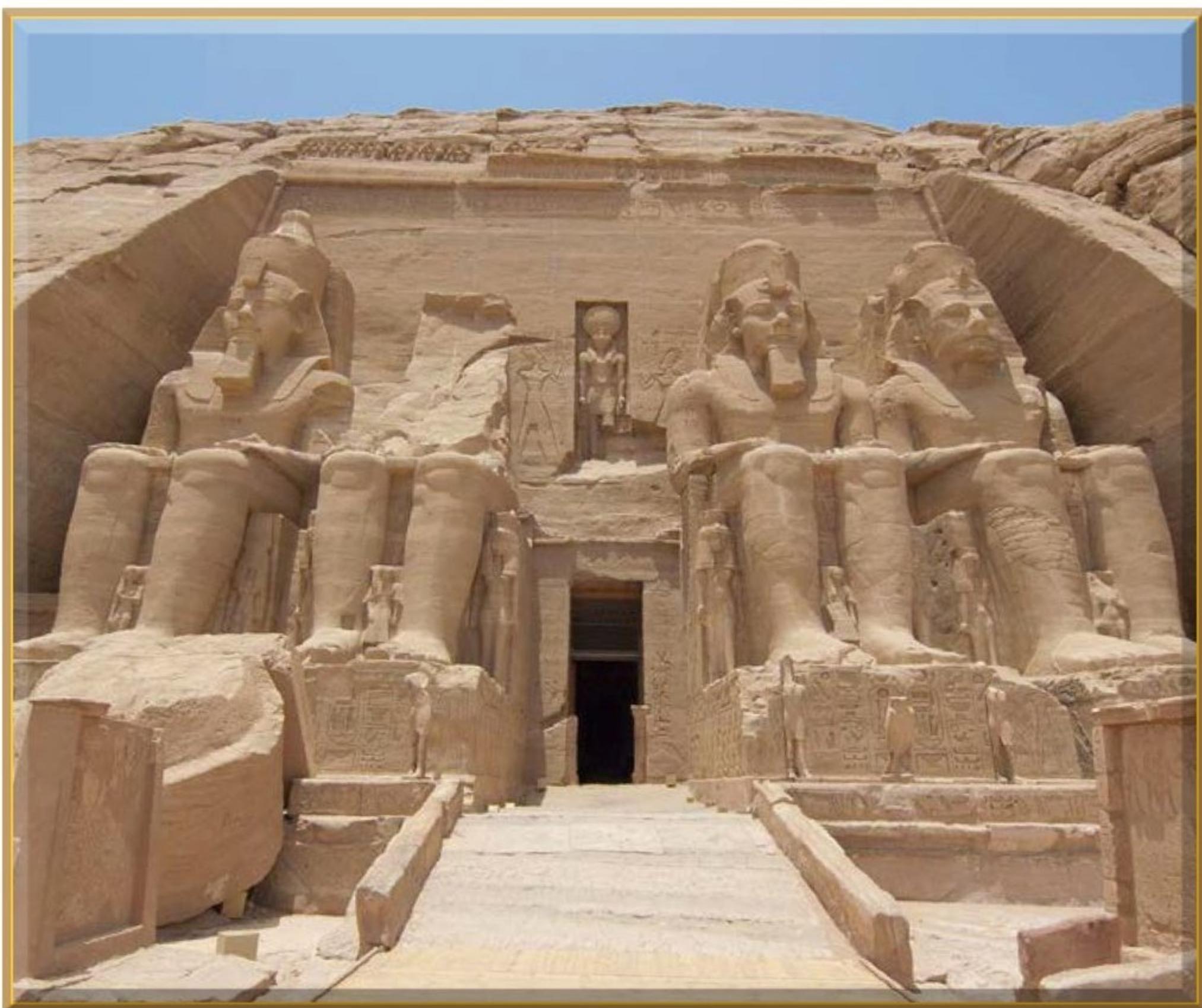
As Ramses reported, he held off the enemy by himself while the rest of his army fled. Other records say that part of Ramses's army arrived just in time to save the king. Both sides suffered heavy losses. The two kings stopped fighting, and Ramses and his army went home.

Over the following year, Ramses ordered many wall carvings of the battle. All of them showed him as a hero.

Fifteen years later, the two nations were about to go to war again. This time, though, Ramses decided against another war so far to the north. Ramses II and the Hittite king agreed to make peace.



Two versions of the peace treaty survive today, one written in Egyptian hieroglyphs (left) and the other in the language of the Hittites (right).



Giant sculptures of Ramses II are on either side of the main entrance to the temple at Abu Simbel.

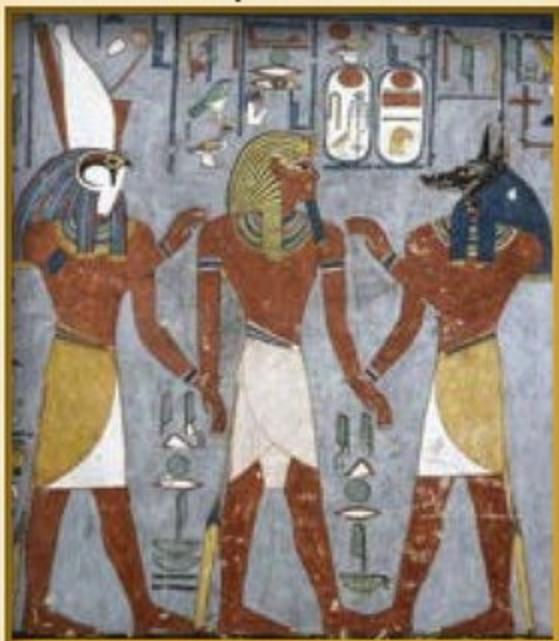
Ramses the Great

Ramses II died of natural causes at the age of ninety-one. His thirteenth son became king. However, the **dynasty** was nearly over. One hundred fifty years after Ramses's death, the New Kingdom came to an end.

Today, Ramses II is known as Ramses the Great. We know more about the people of his time thanks to the art, buildings, and records he left behind.

Ramses II

1298 BC: Ramses I becomes pharaoh

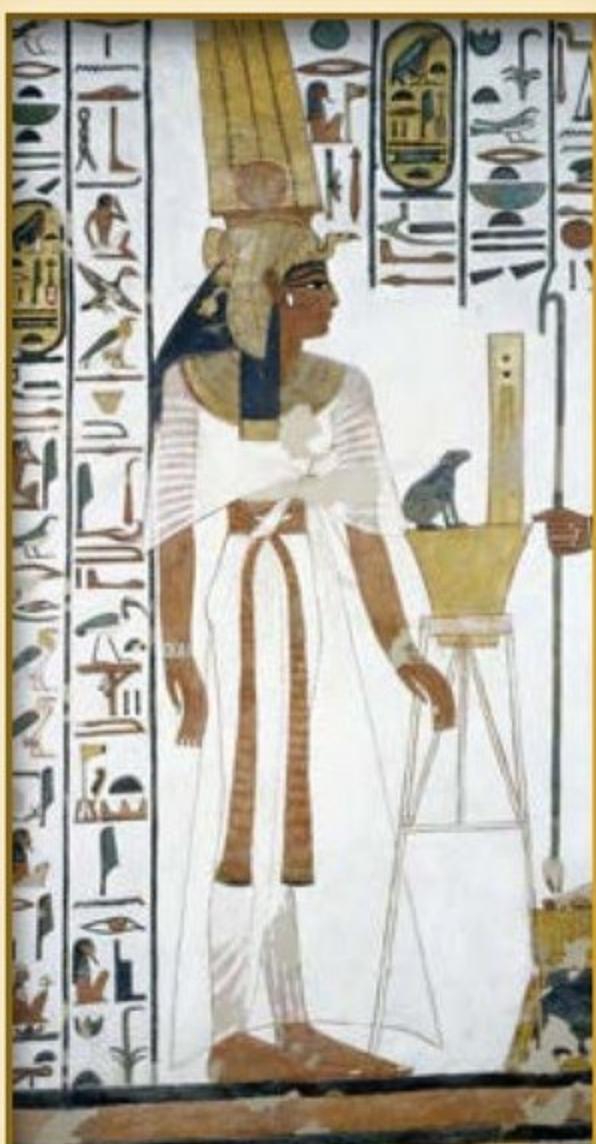


1289 BC: Ramses II marries his first two wives

1281 BC: Ramses II puts down revolt in Nubia, taking his two oldest sons into battle

1259 BC: The Ramesseum is completed

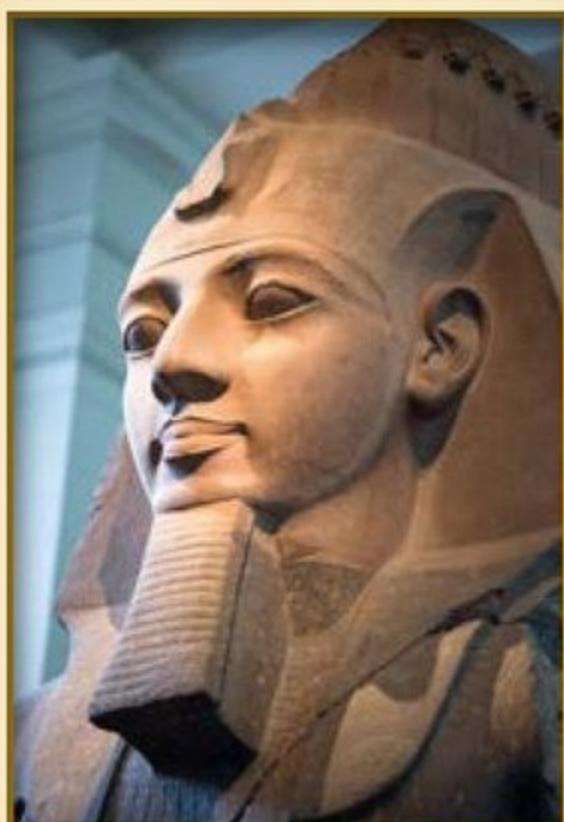
1252 BC: Nefertari dies



1303 BC: Ramses II born

1291 BC: Seti I becomes pharaoh

1279 BC: Ramses II becomes pharaoh; construction of Ramesseum starts around this time



1274 BC: Battle at Kadesh

1264 BC: Construction of Abu Simbel begins around this time

1258 BC: Peace treaty with Hittites

1244 BC: Isetnofret (second wife) dies; Ramses II marries first Hittite princess; construction at Abu Simbel is completed around this time

1231 BC: Marries second Hittite princess

1213 BC: Ramses II dies at age ninety-one

Glossary

ancient (<i>adj.</i>)	from a very long time ago (p. 4)
carvings (<i>n.</i>)	objects made of materials such as wood, stone, or clay that have figures or designs cut into them (p. 8)
control (<i>n.</i>)	the power to influence or restrict a situation or someone's behavior; the ability or power to manage an object (p. 8)
custom (<i>n.</i>)	a traditional way of doing something in a culture (p. 7)
duties (<i>n.</i>)	jobs, responsibilities, or obligations (p. 6)
dynasty (<i>n.</i>)	a series of rulers from the same family in a country (p. 14)
historians (<i>n.</i>)	experts on history (p. 7)
pharaohs (<i>n.</i>)	rulers in ancient Egypt (p. 4)
temple (<i>n.</i>)	a building that is a place of worship (p. 9)

Ramses II

A *Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Book*

Word Count: 840

Connections

Writing

Imagine being ten years old and becoming a captain in the army like Ramses II. Write a journal entry detailing your feelings about your new role.

Social Studies

Create a map of modern-day Egypt. Then, label where Ramses II's kingdom was along with important landmarks from that time. Include a compass rose and map key.

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