

Ancient Egyptians



Quick summary

For 3000 years, Ancient Egypt was home to some of the most influential inventions and discoveries in history. The Egyptians developed systems for writing (including hieroglyphics) and mathematics; they used paper (papyrus) and wrote texts on religion, astronomy and medicine. The Egyptians built magnificent buildings, temples and tombs, decorating them with pictures, paintings and carvings. This great civilisation continued until the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE when Egypt fell to the Roman Empire.



Main events

- c.2560 BCE:** Great Pyramid at Giza completed
- c.2200 BCE:** end of the pyramid era
- 1799:** Rosetta Stone discovered
- 1897:** Narmer Palette discovered
- 1922:** Tomb of Tutankhamun discovered
- 1925:** Burial mask displayed in Cairo



Artefacts

Tutankhamun was a boy-king whose burial tomb, in the Valley of the Kings had gone untouched for thousands of years until it was opened by the famous **archaeologist** Howard Carter. Once inside the tomb, Carter found treasures, paintings, canopic jars and a **sarcophagus** containing the king's preserved **mummy**. The most famous artefact from Ancient Egyptian times, Tutankhamun's burial mask, was still in place.

One of the most significant artefacts from Ancient Egypt is the Rosetta Stone, which was found in 1799. The same text appears on it in three different types of writing, which has helped historians to **decipher** hieroglyphics and to understand Ancient Egyptian diaries and accounts.



Beliefs

When a person of wealth or importance, like a **pharaoh** or nobleman, died, their body was **embalmed** to prevent it from decaying. First of all, the brain and internal organs were removed and placed in special **canopic jars**. The body was then treated with a mineral called natron to help **preserve** it. The preserved body was then wrapped in layers of bandage made from linen. The final stage was to put a funeral mask over the face. Embalming was a lengthy process that could take up to 70 days. Once it was complete, the funeral could take place, and the body would be left in the tomb with all the objects and treasures needed in the **afterlife**.

There were several things you had to do before you were allowed to enter the afterlife. Above all, you had to have a light heart, which was only made possible by completing lots of good deeds during your lifetime.



Society

Only pharaohs were buried in pyramids and magnificent tombs. Very wealthy people could afford to be buried in **mastabas**. Poorer people were also able to go to the next world, after death, but they were buried in the sand.



Settlements

The pyramids were built to bury Ancient Egyptian pharaohs. They were designed to be a comfortable place to enjoy the afterlife, and also acted as a display of power and wealth. Often taking decades to build, the pyramids were not built by slaves. They were made by peasant farmers who provided labour for the king in return for food, oil and cloth. The building work usually took place when farmland was flooded.



Vocabulary

- afterlife:** a life some people believe begins when you die
- archaeologists:** people who study the past by examining remains and objects
- canopic jars:** containers holding organs from a body
- decipher:** work out what something says
- embalmed:** preserved with special substances
- mastaba:** an underground tomb with a flat-roof structure made of mud bricks
- mummy:** preserved body
- pharaoh:** king or queen
- preserve:** protect from decay or damage
- sarcophagus:** decorative container for a body



Settlements



Beliefs



Culture and pastimes



Location



Main events



Food and farming



Travel and exploration



Conflict



Society



Artefacts

