

History
UNFOLDING

ANCIENT EGYPT



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

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Introduction

The Civilization of Ancient Egypt

More than 5000 years ago, a remarkable civilization arose on the banks of the Nile and in the Nile Delta in the northeastern part of Africa. The first remarkable thing about this civilization was the magnificence of its art, architecture, religion, science, and other accomplishments. From the pyramids to the tomb of Tutankhamun, from its written hieroglyphics to its rich and subtle religious mythology, ancient Egyptian civilization soared to amazing heights. Even today, its achievements are still breathtaking.

The second remarkable thing about ancient Egypt was its stability and incredible durability. It rose rapidly to greatness in its arts and sciences. And then it seemed to reproduce itself with little change, century after century. Of course, it is easy to exaggerate this stability by focusing on the broad course of a long 3000-year history. There were, after all, periods of war and civil war, empire and invasion. But if you compare, say, the art of the Old Kingdom (2600–2180 BCE) with that of the New Kingdom (1570–1075 BCE), the similarities far outweigh the differences. Year after year, life seemed to many in ancient Egypt to be unchanging.

The 12 illustrations in this booklet focus on several factors that may help account for these two features of ancient Egypt: its accomplishments and its solid, almost self-satisfied stability. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

The Nile

The central force in ancient Egypt was the huge river. Its annual floods kept the lands fertile, allowing the agricultural cycle to repeat itself century after century. The river, surrounded by deserts, united Egypt and kept it protected for much of its long history.

The World of Work

The illustrations in this lesson focus on the farming base of ancient Egypt's economy, and on Egypt's ability to devote huge amounts of effort to the great construction projects for which it is famous.

Society and Government

Egypt was able to build up its wealth and achieve its stability through the coordination provided by a strong central government. What gave that government its authority was a religion focused on the divine nature of its god-kings, the pharaohs.

This World and the Next

Ancient Egypt's religion did not exist simply to justify the power of the pharaohs. All of ancient Egypt's life was soaked through and through with religious meaning. The stability and satisfactions of life in this world only made Egyptians more confident that life in the next would be the same. The illustrations in this lesson focus on a number of key aspects in the Egyptian conception of the afterlife and its role in this one.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand the crucial role the Nile played in the birth and the flowering of ancient Egyptian civilization.
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The Nile

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The civilization of ancient Egypt arose over 5000 years ago. It grew from small farming villages located along the banks of the Nile River in northern Africa. And the Nile is first thing you need to know about to understand ancient Egypt. Most early civilizations grew up along big rivers. But the Nile was unusual in many ways. One major aspect of the Nile was its annual flood. This illustration shows the banks of the Nile after flood season, with the great pyramids of Giza nearby. A man here tends his animals much as ancient Egyptians would have. The Nile is about 4100 miles long. Each year, rains far to the south flood the river all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. The ancient Egyptians looked forward to these floods. That's because each year's flood left behind a new layer of rich soil. This meant the same lands could be farmed year after year, for many centuries—and they would never wear out.

Illustration 2

Along the Nile's banks, villages in ancient Egypt thrived. But not far from the rich soil watered by the Nile lay vast deserts. On either side of the big river, fertile land suddenly turns to desert. In some places, the desert is very close to the river (as in this photo). And usually, these desert lands stretch far away from the Nile for tens or hundreds of miles. The rich farmland along the river was able to feed many villages, and in time it came to support a huge civilization. Meanwhile, the deserts on either side were a natural barrier, protecting Egypt against attacks from enemies. For this reason, ancient Egypt was usually a safe and very comfortable world for the people living in it.

Illustration 3

The Nile also gave ancient Egypt a natural roadway. Villages could trade with one another easily up and down the river. Boats going downstream (north) floated with the current. Going upstream (south), they could use sails. Winds generally blew from the Mediterranean in a southerly direction, so it was fairly easy to sail up the Nile. After about 700 miles, boats would reach the first cataract, or set of rapids. It was harder to travel beyond the cataracts. But these also acted as barriers to anyone coming down the Nile to attack Egypt. This small model boat carrying a mummy was placed in a tomb around 1900 BCE.

Lesson 1 — The Nile

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

1. This photo shows the banks of a famous river with some very old pyramids in the background. What were the pyramids?
2. The Nile is over 4000 miles long. Ancient Egyptian civilization grew up along this huge river. What kinds of things do historians have in mind when they call a society a great civilization?
3. Many early civilizations grew up along big rivers. Why do you think this is so? How does this photo help to show the important role the Nile played in ancient Egyptian life?
4. This photo shows the Nile after its yearly flood. The flood season lasts from June to September. It is caused by spring rains high in Ethiopia's mountains. This yearly flood was probably the most important thing about the Nile to the ancient Egyptians. That's because of what the flood did to the land around the Nile. Can you explain what the flood did and why that was so important to the people of ancient Egypt?

Follow-up Activities

1. In some years, the Nile flood was much larger than normal. In other years, it was smaller. Make two lists. On one of them, list all the problems a farming village might face if the flood were larger than normal. On the other, list all the problems it would face if the flood were smaller than normal. Share these lists in a class discussion about this problem.
2. The rains in Ethiopia did not fall in ancient Egypt itself. For that reason, the Egyptians never knew for sure how large or how small the yearly flood would be. So how did they plan for the flood each year? Read your history textbook or other sources to find the answer to this question. Pretend you are an official in ancient Egypt. It is early July, and the flood season has just begun. Your job is to tell the farmers in your village what the flood will be like this year. Make a list of questions you think they will ask you about the flood. Then make a second list of the things you could do to find the answers to these questions. Share your list with the class.

Lesson 1 — The Nile

Illustration 2



Graham Harrison

Discussing the Illustration

1. This photo shows something of great importance about the Nile. The upper left half of the photo shows the Nile and the rich farmlands near it. These lands are a part of the Nile floodplain. What is a floodplain?
2. What sudden change in the land do you notice as you look to the right of the river and its floodplain?
3. The photo shows a village on the edge of the dry lands. Why do you think the Egyptians built most villages on these dry lands just above the floodplain?
4. From what you know about Egypt and the Nile, what kind of land would you expect to find on the other side of the floodplain from this spot?
5. The floodplain in the Nile Delta was generally much wider than it is here. Can you explain why?
6. Except in the delta, desert lands often stretched away from both sides of the river for tens or hundreds of miles. This was actually a big help to the leaders of ancient Egypt. Why might that have been so?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Your group's job is to draw four maps showing certain geographical features. Make maps of the following rivers and the areas around them:

The Nile River
The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
The Indus River
The Yellow River

Your maps should show the rivers, the places where there are falls or rapids, and the most important geographical features of the land around these rivers (e.g., deserts, fertile lands, mountains, jungles, other rivers). As a group, use your maps in a class discussion about the importance of rivers to early civilizations. Have the discussion center on this one question: "If you lived 5000 years ago, which of these four river systems would you most want to live near?"

Lesson 1—The Nile

Illustration 3



Graham Harrison

Discussing the Illustration

1. This is a small model boat that was placed in an Egyptian tomb around 1900 BCE. It resembles the skiffs often used on the Nile by ancient Egyptians. Boats like this skiff were much more useful for travel on the river than in open seas, such as the Mediterranean Sea. Why do you think that was so?
2. A skiff like this one would have made northern travel on the Nile much easier than going south. Can you explain why?
3. Winds from the Mediterranean Sea blow steadily inland. For this reason, a small sail would make it easy for this skiff to go south on the Nile. Why?
4. It was easy to sail south on the Nile for about 750 miles. At that point, a boat would reach the first of several cataracts. What are these cataracts?
5. Travel was easy on the lower Nile, but much harder further upstream because of cataracts. Both of these aspects helped ancient Egypt develop into a strong and secure civilization. Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Use your history textbook or other history books to find pictures of boats from ancient Egypt. Your teacher or librarian should be able to help you find such books. Look for pictures of boats from early in the history of ancient Egypt (3000 BCE to 2000 BCE). Then find some pictures of boats from later in Egyptian history (1500 BCE to around 500 BCE). If you are able to make copies of the pictures you find, use them in a bulletin-board display called “Ancient Egypt’s Sailing Vessels.” Write your own descriptions of each ship. Describe how it worked and what it was mainly used for.
2. Find a detailed map of Egypt. The map should show the Nile, the fertile lands near it, desert lands, major bodies of water, minerals and other resources, major cities, and other societies. Pretend you are an adviser to an Egyptian ruler who wants to build a new city. Choose a place for this city. Write a letter to your ruler explaining why you picked this spot.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand the key role of agriculture and agricultural surpluses in making Egyptian civilization possible.
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The World of Work

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The most important daily activity in ancient Egypt is shown in this wall painting. This painting is from the tomb of a wealthy Egyptian. It shows him plowing the earth while his wife follows behind sowing seeds. Wheat and barley were the two biggest crops in Egypt. They were mainly used to make bread and beer. Vegetables were often raised in small household gardens. Reeds grew naturally. They were used in a great many ways, to make baskets, rope, rafts, and papyrus (an early kind of paper). Peasants labored for wealthy landowners on large estates, where cattle and other livestock might also graze. But many smaller farms also existed.

Illustration 2

To make use of the Nile, people all along it had to work together. They built dikes to hold back flood waters from towns. They built basins to store water during dry periods. And they dug ditches and canals to carry water to the fields. Farms and villages upstream had to work closely with those downstream. It took a strong government made up of thousands of officials to ensure that all this was done correctly. A wealthy upper class of such officials grew up, along with others who were not farmers, such as priests, architects, craftsmen, doctors, and soldiers. A large surplus crop had to be produced to feed them all. This relief in the tomb of a top official shows food being prepared for a nobleman. Servants grind grain at top left; at top right a breeder with a drop of milk on his tongue weans a pig. The scene on the bottom shows some fishermen with a variety of fish and a crocodile.

Illustration 3

The season of Nile flooding was known as the “Inundation.” During that season, the government could demand that rural workers help out on huge projects, such as building pyramids or temples. Some of this work took place all year round. The Egyptians had only simple tools and depended mainly on human muscle power. To build the great pyramids, thousands of workers had to pull huge blocks of stone up long ramps. This is a close-up of the massive stone blocks of King Cheops’ pyramid. Sometimes, slaves were used on these projects. But mainly, ordinary laborers were used during periods when they were not needed on the land.

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

1. This is part of a wall painting in a tomb, showing a well-off Egyptian farmer and his wife plow and sow seeds of wheat. Wheat and barley were Egypt's two most important crops. What were some important uses of these two crops in ancient Egypt?
2. Many Egyptian paintings show various stages of planting, harvesting, and storing crops; building; fishing; and pulling up reeds. Reeds and grasses from along the Nile could be used to make baskets, rope, mats, and other goods. But the papyrus reeds were the most important of all. What key product was made from them, and why was it so important?
3. What do the details of this scene show you about farming, technology, and daily life in Egypt? What do they show about family life and the roles of men and women in it? (Keep in mind that Egyptian art is not realistic. It shows people and other objects in only a few set ways, no matter what they actually looked like. But paintings like this can still help you learn things about daily life in ancient Egypt.)

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Plowing was only one of many steps in growing crops such as wheat and barley. For example, land had to be watered, fields tended, crops harvested and stored, etc. As a group, learn more about all the steps in growing and storing crops in ancient Egypt. Your teacher or librarian will be able to help you find books or articles about this. Then create a mural. Use the drawings shown here as a guide for creating this mural. That is, copy this couple harvesting their wheat. Then use the same Egyptian style of drawing to show all the phases of growing, harvesting, and storing grains. Use other books on Egyptian art to guide you in coloring your mural as the Egyptians might have.
2. Ask your teacher or librarian to help you find books describing the life of well-off farmers in ancient Egypt. Then give a brief talk to the class and answer these two questions: In what ways does the above drawing seem to fit with what you have learned? In what ways does it not fit?

Illustration 2



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Discussing the Illustration

1. The rich soils left each year by the flood were not that hard to plow and seed. So Egypt's farmers usually could produce more wheat and barley than they and their own families needed. Historians say it is this ability to produce a surplus that makes civilization possible. What do you think they mean?
2. This relief in the tomb of a top official shows various sources of food being prepared. Men are grinding grain, one is caring for a pig, others are catching fish. What in this relief suggests that these men are not themselves wealthy, but are servants of a wealthy nobleman?
3. Among those who depended on others for their food and clothing were thousands of government officials. Yet they also played a role in producing the surplus since it took a strong central government to make sure the Nile was used most efficiently? Can you explain how the central government did this?

Follow-up Activities

1. Use the library to find books on ancient Egypt with pictures of that civilization's art. Study some of this Egyptian art closely, and think about the style typical in its paintings and relief sculptures. Choose five pictures of ancient Egyptian art that best show this style. Bring the books or copies of the paintings, statues, or relief sculptures to class. Use them in a class discussion about Egyptian art. Talk about how realistic the art is and how dependable you think it is as evidence of daily life in ancient Egypt.
2. Do the same assignment as described above for Activity 1. However, instead of sharing ideas about Egyptian art in class, create your own "Egyptian" version of one of the photographs in this booklet. Include all the parts of the scene in the drawing, but redraw them as you think an artist in ancient Egypt would have.

Illustration 3



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Discussing the Illustration

1. Egypt's food surpluses meant that many laborers could be put to work on huge projects such as the one shown here. What huge project is shown here?
2. It took thousands of unskilled laborers years to build a pyramid. Many skilled workers were also needed. Using this photo of King Cheops' pyramid, describe the kinds of skills you think the ancient Egyptians would have needed to plan and build a pyramid with technology available to them then? Refer to details in the photo to back up what you say.
3. The pyramids were actually just huge tombs for the pharaohs. Who were the pharaohs?
4. Egyptians built many huge pyramids, other tombs and temples for the pharaohs. Sometimes, slaves may have helped build the pyramids. But usually, peasants did this work when they were not farming. Often they did it gladly. They saw such buildings as helpful to all of Egypt, not just the pharaohs. Why do you suppose that was so?

Follow-up Activities

1. Some drawings from later times show slaves building the pyramids. Some written accounts suggest that the Hebrew people were forced to build pyramids when they were slaves. Your task is to decide what, if anything, is accurate about such drawings and written accounts. To do this, read more about how the pyramids were built, when they were built, when the Hebrews were supposedly slaves in Egypt, and what kind of work they did in Egypt. Report what you learn in a brief talk to the class.
2. Find other photographs of the Egyptian pyramids and other Egyptian architectural achievements. Look for photos offering odd or unusual views of these structures, such as the photograph shown here. Find other photos that seem more typical of what you generally find in textbooks and encyclopedias. Share copies of the photos with the class and discuss what can be learned from each group, including the photo here.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand some of the factors that helped ancient Egypt develop a highly centralized and very efficient government.

Society and Government

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

These two huge statues of the pharaoh Ramesses II stand outside his temple at Abu Simbel. The pharaohs were ancient Egypt's all-powerful rulers. But their power was not just of this world. They were said to be divine. They are often called "god-kings." After death, they supposedly became one with Egypt's main gods. The pyramids were the tombs of early pharaohs. Later pharaohs had their tombs buried deep in cliffs to keep robbers out. These tombs ensured the dead pharaoh an easy passage to the next life. This was important not only to the pharaoh, but to all of Egypt. The pharaohs were the link between the natural world and the spiritual realm of the gods. Without them, disorder would spread everywhere. Naturally, this view of the pharaoh greatly added to his and his government's power and importance.

Illustration 2

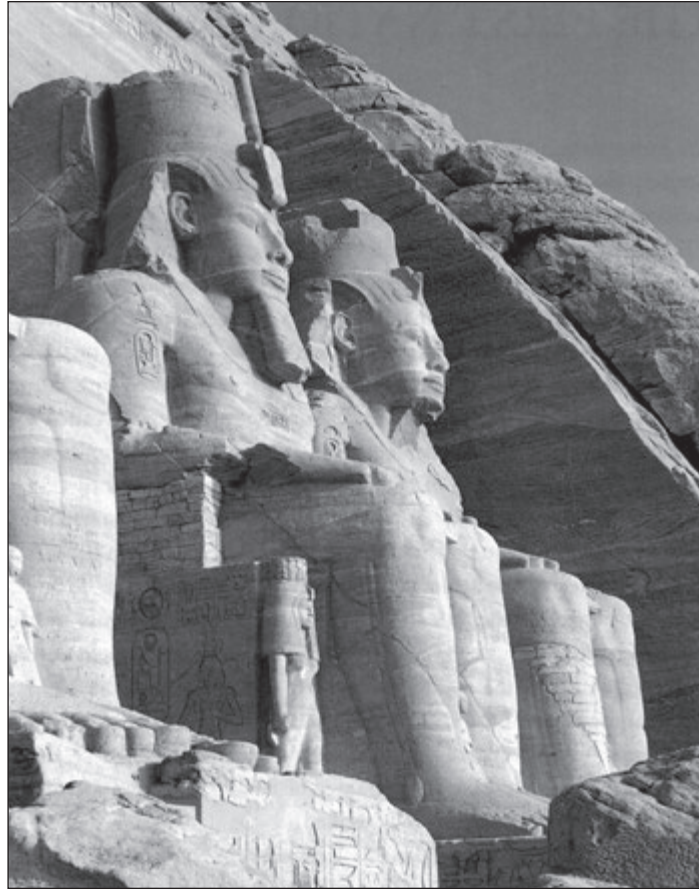
The pharaohs had great power. But they could not have ruled as they did without one very important invention—writing. Here carved in relief is a picture of some scribes keeping records. They are using reed pens to write on scrolls of papyrus. To control a vast area, a ruler needs to know many details about it. Written records gave the pharaoh that knowledge. Many scribes worked for him directly. All local officials also made use of scribes, as did the major temples for all of Egypt's gods. Egypt had a complicated written script called "hieroglyphics." Later, a somewhat simpler script developed. But learning to write it still took many years. Becoming a scribe was one of the few ways a poor Egyptian might rise to a position of importance.

Illustration 3

The pharaoh and his officials needed written records of many things. They especially needed records about land, crops, farm animals, and other key forms of wealth. Egyptians had to pay a share of this wealth to the government in taxes. Tax collectors could take payment in the form of goods such as grain, meat, clothing, etc. Avoiding taxation could result in harsh punishments. Some who could not pay, or who were in debt for other reasons, might even be made slaves. Ordinary Egyptians had very little say in their government; slaves had even less. This relief shows a slave being punished for his misdeeds.

Lesson 3—Society and Government

Illustration 1



Graham Harrison

Discussing the Illustration

1. Egypt had a very powerful central government. The main reason for this had to do with the pharaoh. This photo shows two huge statues of a pharaoh named Ramesses II. What ideas or feelings about the pharaohs do these statues give you? Why?
2. The pharaohs were the top leaders of ancient Egypt's government. In what ways were they like our own presidents? In what ways were they not like our presidents?
3. The pharaoh was head of the government. He was also the top religious figure in ancient Egypt. But this still does not give a complete idea of how great his power was thought to be. The pharaohs were often called "god-kings." What do you think the Egyptians meant in calling the pharaoh a god-king?
4. The pharaohs ruled ancient Egypt off and on for about 3000 years. Why do you think they were able to keep control and win the loyalty of their people for so many centuries?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** The statues of Ramesses II shown above are huge. The ceremonial beard on the statue on the left, for example, is as tall as a person. The United States has one large statue like these, the Statue of Liberty. Read more about both the Statue of Liberty and Ramesses II. Talk about the different ideas and ideals expressed by the Statue of Liberty and the statues of Ramesses II. Use what you learn to create small bulletin-board display called "Carving Ideals in Stone." Use photos of the Statue of Liberty, Ramesses II, and any other items you think will help show the different ideals expressed by these statues.
2. One of the most unusual pharaohs in ancient Egypt was Akhenaten. Read more about this unusual ruler. Also read more about Ramesses II. Based on what you find out, give a brief talk in class comparing the two rulers. In your talk, explain to the class why Akhenaten would not have wanted a statue of himself like the one above of Ramesses II.

Illustration 2



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Discussing the Illustration

1. The pharaohs and nobles were very powerful. But they could never have ruled all of Egypt as well as they did without the groups of workers shown here. Can you name this group of workers?
2. The invention of writing was important in helping Egypt to become a powerful empire. Writing did this by giving the pharaohs great political, economic, military, and religious power. Explain how writing and written records might have helped the pharaohs and other officials in all four of these areas.
3. Egypt invented an early kind of writing called “hieroglyphics.” From what you know about this kind of writing, can you explain why it took years of study to become a scribe? This relief actually shows two groups: the scribes and some messengers waiting to carry letters for their master. Can you tell which group is which? What else can you learn about Egyptian scribes and Egyptian writing from this relief sculpture?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Hieroglyphics are pictorial designs that stand for whole words or individual sounds. Our own alphabet has only 26 letters. But there were hundreds of hieroglyphs. It took a long time to learn all of them and even longer to learn to use them in writing. A simpler script called “hieratic” was used in many documents. In your library, look through books on ancient Egypt. Find examples of hieroglyphics and the hieratic script. Use what you learn to create a chart showing some English sounds or words and the hieroglyphics or the hieratic script for the same words or sounds. Use your chart in a class discussion about the difficulty of learning these forms of writing.
2. Some people say scribes were as important to ancient Egypt as computer programmers are to our society today. Find out more about what computer programmers do. Do you think they are as important today as scribes were in ancient Egypt? Write a brief report answering this question.

Illustration 3



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Discussing the Illustration

1. Scribes were only one of many kinds of government officials in ancient Egypt. The pharaohs, nobles, and top officials formed the highest, most powerful part of Egyptian society. The figure being punished here is a member of the lowest, least powerful part of Egyptian society. Which part do you think that is?
2. Historians are not at all certain what slavery was like in ancient Egypt or if it was even slavery in the sense that we use term. How would you define the term “slave”?
3. Sometimes Egyptians were sold into slavery because they could not pay their debts. In some cases, they even did this willingly. Why do you think someone might do this?
4. Captives in wars were often enslaved, as were people being punished for serious crimes. What, if anything, do you think the illustration shown here can tell us about slavery in ancient Egypt, or about any other aspect of its social system?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Slavery became more common in Egypt during the New Kingdom (1570–1075 BCE). Read more about slavery in ancient Egypt. Answer these questions: How did Egypt get its slaves? What jobs did they do? Which slaves were worse off or better off than Egypt’s peasants? How was slavery in Egypt like or unlike slavery in the U.S. before the Civil War? Discuss your findings with the class.
2. Here are some sins from a longer list that Egyptians expected to be punished for after death:

Committing evil against men; mistreating cattle; blaspheming a god; doing violence to a poor man; defaming a slave to his superior; making someone sick; killing; weakening the plummet of the scales; building a dam against running water

Compare this list to the Ten Commandments that Christians and Jews believe in. As a class, discuss what the lists show about differences or similarities in these cultural traditions?

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will appreciate the overwhelming importance of religion in ancient Egypt.
2. Students will better understand the constant attention the Egyptians paid to preparations for life after death.

This World and the Next

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The ancient Egyptians spent a great deal of time thinking about death. But that does not mean they feared it. Death for them was a passage to the next life. And they were sure they could prepare for that next life and make it a joyful one. A key task in doing this was to make the person's corpse into a mummy. Egyptians said a part of a person's life force, called ka, left the body after death. But the ka could not survive without the body. So the corpse was embalmed and made into a mummy to keep it from decaying. This photo shows a mummy from about 1000 BCE wrapped in linen and lying in a case, or sarcophagus.

Illustration 2

Egyptians believed in many gods and told many myths about these gods. Prayers and spells of all kinds were used to gain their help in this world and the next. Among the most important spells were those to be used after death during the "Weighing of the Heart," the ceremony shown here. In this ceremony, a dead person is judged by the god Osiris. Here, the deceased is being brought in on the left. The jackal-headed god Anubis is helping to weigh the heart on a scale against the feather of Ma'at, the goddess of truth. Thoth, the ibis-headed god of scribes, records the results. If the heart weighs the same as the feather, the person is found worthy and goes before Osiris (far right). If not, the sinner will be punished and perhaps be eaten by a horrible monster.

Illustration 3

This is the inside of the tomb of a wealthy Egyptian. Such tombs were filled with many things, including spells written on the walls, furniture, and other goods for the dead person to use in the next life; the Book of the Dead, a guide to the next world; etc. Wall paintings showed the daily activities of the deceased—which were also scenes of what he or she hoped life in the next world would be like. These were not just decorative scenes. They were thought to have a power to shape the person's life in the next world. Statues of that person and others had a similar ability. As with many things in ancient Egypt, words and images had magical power. It was hoped this power could keep Egypt's traditional way of life alive, both in the natural world and the spiritual realm for all eternity.

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

1. This photo shows the corpse of an Egyptian who died thousands of years ago and whose body was made into a mummy. What is a mummy?
2. Making a corpse into a mummy was a complex and careful procedure. How can you tell from this photograph what effect mummification has on the body?
3. Ancient Egyptians believed in something called the ka. The ka was a part of a person's soul or spirit that left the body at death. But it still needed the body, even after that. How does this belief about the ka help to explain the practice of turning corpses into mummies?
4. In what ways do you think the Egyptian belief in the ka was like religious beliefs about the soul common in our own society today? In what ways was this belief different from common religious beliefs about the soul today?

Follow-up Activities

1. Preparing a mummy was a complicated process. Read more about how it was done. Then create a series of at least five drawings or diagrams showing the entire process of preparing a body as a mummy. Use the illustration as one of these five drawings. Arrange your drawings on a large wall poster or chart called "Mummification in Ancient Egypt." Write detailed descriptions of each of the drawings you create. Show your chart to the class and give a brief talk about it.
2. The Egyptian god Anubis was the god of mummification. Anubis often appears in paintings from ancient Egypt as a jackal or a man with the head of a jackal. Ask your teacher or librarian to help you find books about the gods of ancient Egypt. Learn more about Anubis. Try to decide why the Egyptians chose to show Anubis as a jackal. Based on what you learn, give a brief talk to the class about Anubis.

Lesson 4—This World and the Next

Illustration 2



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Discussing the Illustration

1. This illustration shows another important Egyptian belief about life after death. In it, a person who just died is being judged to see if he has led a good life. That person is on the left. How can you tell that he is in the presence of a number of gods?
2. The judgment ceremony is called the “Weighing of the Heart.” Egyptians believed the heart was where a person’s thought, feelings, and memories were located. Why do you think Egyptians believed this? How does this belief differ from what people today commonly believe?
3. In the illustration, the dead person’s heart is placed on a scale and weighed against the feather of Ma’at, the goddess of truth. The person wants the scales to balance. What do you think this would show about that person?
4. If the person is not worthy, he is punished or destroyed. If he is worthy, he is brought before the god Osiris. Can you tell which figure is Osiris?

Follow-up Activity

1. The above illustration shows several important Egyptian gods. The jackal-headed god Anubis is helping to weigh the man's heart on the scales. Thoth records the results as this man's heart is weighed against the feather. If the man is found to have lived a good life, he will be led by the god Horus into the presence of Osiris. Osiris is one of the most important gods. One of Egypt's best known myths, or stories, is about Osiris, his sister-wife Isis, his brother Seth, and Horus. Read more about this myth. Create a series of drawings like the one above that you can use to tell the rest of the class the entire story of Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Horus. After you show the class the drawings and tell the story, guide the class in a discussion about the myth. As a class, try to decide why this myth was so important to the ancient Egyptians.

Illustration 3



Graham Harrison

Discussing the Illustration

1. This is the tomb of a wealthy Egyptian. The wall paintings show scenes from this person's daily life. At the same time, they also show what he wanted his life in the next world to be like. The wall paintings would help to make this wish come true. Many tombs had such paintings, and for this same reason. What does this show about Egyptians, their feelings about life in this world, and their hopes for the next?
2. Wealthy Egyptians often spent many years and much wealth building their tombs. They filled them with furniture and other useful items, as well as with jewelry and other beautiful objects. Why do you think they spent so much time building their tombs and filling them up with these kinds of things?
3. You might think it is sad that the Egyptians spent so much time planning for death. But many historians say the views of the ancient Egyptians about death actually show how happy they were about life. What do you suppose these historians mean? Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. In ancient Egypt's New Kingdom period, the pharaohs built huge tombs under ground in an area called the "Valley of the Kings." Where was the Valley of Kings? What were the tombs there like? What kinds of objects were left in them? Read more about the Valley of the Kings. Create a map of the valley. Bring in books with photos of the tombs in it. Use these to give a brief talk to the class about the Valley of the Kings.
2. **Small-group activity:** Egyptians expected or hoped life in the next world would be the same in many ways as the life in this world. Some historians say this shows they were basically happy with life as they knew it. These historians say this may also be why life did not change all that much in ancient Egypt for 3000 years. Do you agree with these views? As a group, review all 12 illustrations in this booklet. Using these as evidence, discuss the views of these historians. Then share your group's thoughts about this with the rest of the class.

Image Close-ups

The Nile Illustration 1



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The Nile Illustration 2



Graham Harrison

The Nile Illustration 3



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The World of Work
Illustration 1



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The World of Work
Illustration 2



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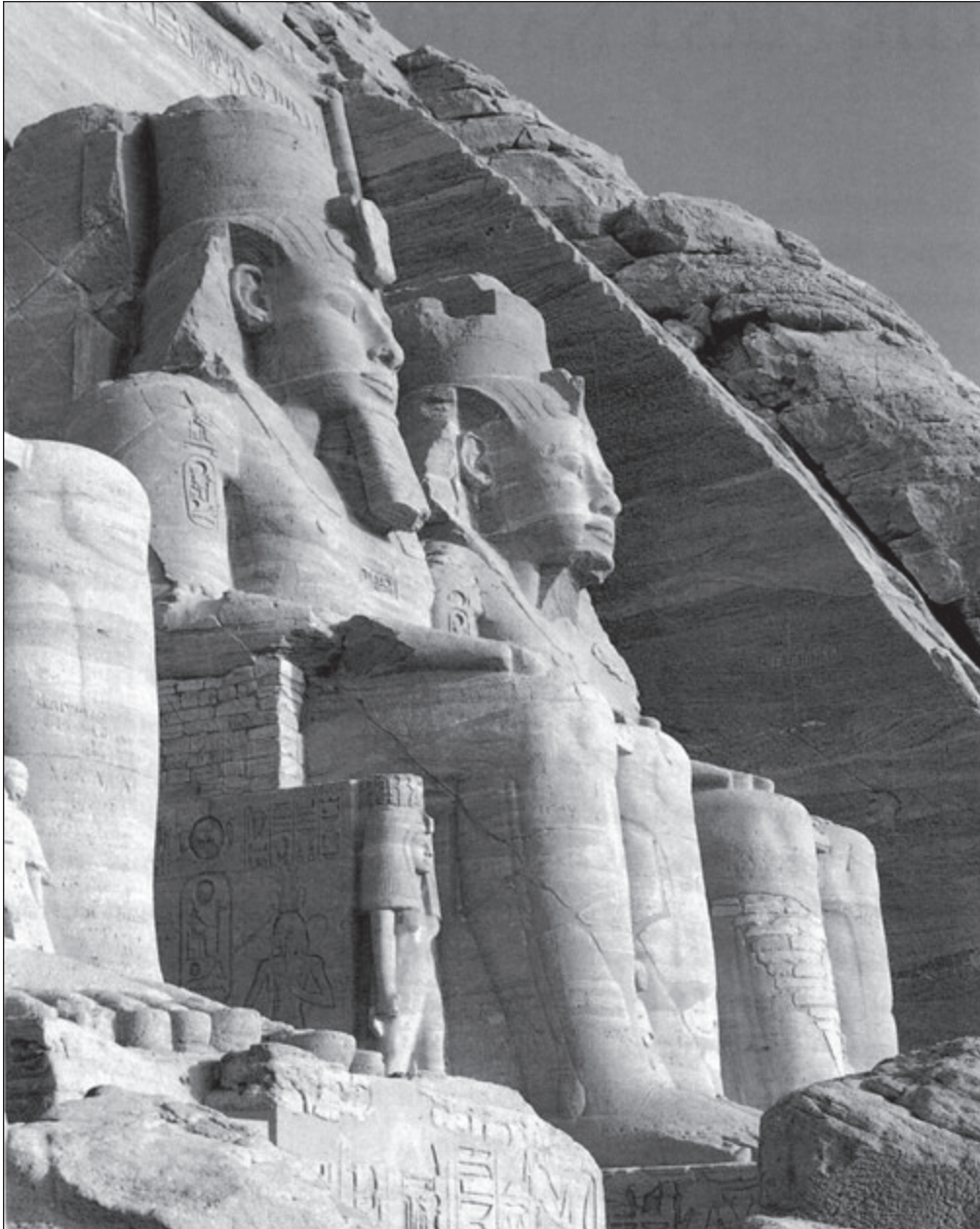
The World of Work
Illustration 3



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Society and Government

Illustration 1



Graham Harrison

Society and Government

Illustration 2



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Society and Government
Illustration 3



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This World and the Next
Illustration 1



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Illustration 2



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This World and the Next
Illustration 3



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