

ANCIENT EGYPT

Aimed at Key Stage 2

circa **6000BC**

First settlers appear
in the Nile Valley

6000



Great Pyramid
of Giza built
circa
2560BC

Death of
Tutankhamun
circa

1327BC

Ramses II
born
circa

1304BC

circa
332BC
Alexander the
Great invades
Egypt

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National Curriculum subject links

The achievements of the earliest civilisations – Ancient Egypt

- The achievements of the earliest civilisations – Ancient Egypt

Coverage and links

This study of Ancient Egypt looks at two aspects of Ancient Egyptian civilisation – religion, and pyramids – and asks pupils to consider the ongoing significance of Ancient Egyptian influence. They will learn a wealth of factual detail – about the process of mummification and about the Rosetta stone, for example – and begin to assess the Ancient Egyptians against a set of criteria for judging historical significance.

After placing the Ancient Egyptians geographically on a map, and temporarily on a timeline, the enquiry starts by studying Egyptian religion, in many ways the aspect of Egyptian life that drove everything else that pupils will study in this unit. The first few films will introduce them to the main Egyptian gods and tell some stories about them. Pupils then learn about mummification – the reasons for it and the process of doing it.

The second part of the enquiry looks to the pyramids. Pupils will learn about the designing and building of them, and start to consider their ongoing importance in the world today.

The enquiry ends with a brief study of hieroglyphics, and then turns to the big question of the significance of Ancient Egypt. This unit is a companion unit to that of the Ancient Greeks, asking the same question of each. Whilst each can be done without the other – neither makes a mention of the other during the lessons as written here – a useful comparison could be made after teaching both. Pupils could be asked which civilisation has left behind the most, probably noting that whilst the Pyramids are still impressive, the Greeks gave us a system of government and the Olympic games. On the other hand, people are still living and farming along the Nile, some of them using irrigation methods established in Ancient Egyptian times.

On that note, this unit could lead into some Geography work on the Nile. An enquiry question like ‘Why have people lived along the River Nile for 5,000 years?’, combines the subjects and does something genuinely multi-disciplinary.

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Suggested learning outcomes

By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...

- Recount factual details about aspects of the Ancient Egyptian world
- Locate Ancient Egypt on a map and a timeline, noting key dates such as the building of the Great Pyramid at Giza
- Make tentative claims about the ongoing significance of Ancient Egypt against a set of given criteria.

Pre-lesson homework

To prepare for this sequence of lessons, pupils could be asked to find out something about an Egyptian artefact or monument, like the Pyramids, the Sphinx or the Rosetta Stone.

Lesson 1 – Egyptian religion

Films to use

- **Who were the ancient Egyptians?**
- **Egyptian gods**
 - part 1
 - part 2
 - part 3
- **Mummification**
 - part 1
 - part 2
- **Canopic Jars**

The **focus** of this lesson is on introducing Ancient Egypt, and investigating one of the aspects of Ancient Egyptian civilisation for which they are perhaps most famous – their religious beliefs that led to mummification.

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Lesson 1 – Egyptian religion ...continued

Start the lesson by showing **Who were the ancient Egyptians?** The film is told from the point of view of a Victorian explorer, who offers lots of factual detail about where Egypt is, about when the civilisation began and about some of their big achievements. Ask pupils to listen carefully and try to remember as much as possible about what the explorer says. At the end, make a list of these together and then watch again. Did you get everything?

The next activity is all about learning where and when the Ancient Egyptians existed. It would be useful to show a satellite photo of Egypt at night, **such as this one**, as it would show that still today almost all Egyptians live very close to the Nile. Ask pupils why they think this might be? Why have people lived alongside the Nile for more than 5000 years?

After this, pupils should place the key dates for the Egyptian civilisation on a timeline, either a whole class timeline, or one of their own. They should note that King Menes united the kingdoms of Egypt together in about 3150BC, and that after several invasions it finally fell to the Roman Empire in 30BC. You should ask lots of questions here that will encourage your pupils to think about the passage of time:

- **How long ago did the civilisation start and end?**
- **How long did it last?**
- **How long is that, if we look backwards from today?**

Remind them of how we use BC dates and how they're different to AD. Nudge pupils towards noticing that there is less time between us today and the end of the Egyptians than there was between its end and its start. If time allows, pupils could also record that the Great Pyramid was built between around 2580 and 2560BC.

Now show **Egyptian gods - part 1**, in which an Egyptian woman talks about some of the most important gods they worshipped and some of the stories people told about them. Then show **Egyptian gods – part 2**, where we see the Egyptian woman telling us a story about Osiris and his family. It involves jealousy, revenge and the underworld, so it should be appealing! At the end, we hear that Horus, The Avenger, became the Pharaoh of Egypt. Ask what this might mean? If a god became a pharaoh, what does that mean about the people who ruled Egypt? This is an idea to which you will return in the next lesson.

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Lesson 1 – Egyptian religion ...continued

The story that pupils heard in that film becomes the basis for the following activity. Divide the class into groups and ask them to create a freeze frame for one part of the story of Osiris from the film. You could cut out the slips in [figure 1], each one being a different part of the story. Of course, you could divide story differently, depending on your class. This activity could be quite short – each group shows its scene that leads to a little discussion around the class – or it could be made somewhat bigger. Each scene could be photographed and then made into a class display with each group responsible for labelling its scene.

The story mentions mummies, leading neatly on to **Mummification – part 1**. In this film a high priest talks about how and why Egyptians would mummify bodies. As pupils watch this, **Mummification – part 2** and **Canopic Jars** they should note down details about the process of mummification.

- **What does the priest do to the body?**
- **How much cloth does he use?**
- **What is the body buried with?**
- **What goes into the Canopic Jars?**

Challenge them to record as much detail as possible.

To end the lesson, give each pupil a picture of an Egyptian mummy. There are plenty of images available that you might use, some more grisly than others. It would be better to have an image of the body in bandages, rather than exposed, or indeed one where the body is encased in the full coffin. Using what they have learned about mummification and the Egyptian gods, pupils should annotate the picture.

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Lesson 2 – Pyramids and their construction

Films to use

- **Pyramids**
- **Pyramids of Giza**
- **Planning a pyramid**
- **Building a pyramid**
 - **Part 1**
 - **Part 2**
 - **Part 3**
- **Pyramid worker**
- **Pyramid town**

Start the lesson by asking pupils what we learned about the Pharaohs in the last lesson. Their bodies were preserved for the afterlife and buried with a huge array of artefacts that would make their journey there easier.

Most importantly, the Egyptians thought that their Pharaohs were gods on Earth; remind them of the story of Horus, The Avenger. Then show a picture of the Great Pyramid at Giza and ask if they can imagine what it might have been used for? What would a Pharaoh want such an imposing building for?

Of course, someone in the class may well already know, but speculation is good at this stage. If nobody gets there, tell the class that the pyramid was in fact a tomb for the Pharaoh Khufu, sometimes called Cheops. At this point, show **Pyramids**, in which we see a High Priest talking about pyramid construction, followed by **Pyramids of Giza**, which adds details about the Great Pyramid. After you've shown both films, ask the class about any fascinating details they noticed.

Now tell pupils that later in the lesson they are going to imagine that they are one of the workers involved in building the Great Pyramid. Experts think that there were probably something like 200,000 workers used to build it and that it took about 20 years.

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Lesson 2 – Pyramids and their construction ...continued

As they watch the next few films, they should listen carefully to how a pyramid was planned and built. For this activity, pupils could make some of their own notes, or you could record details together as a class, perhaps even have groups keeping notes on sugar paper together. Show **Planning a pyramid**, the three parts of **Building a pyramid Part 1**, **Building a pyramid Part 2**, **Building a pyramid Part 3**, **Pyramid worker** and **Pyramid town**, ending each one with some time for recording details and discussion about what they've heard. There are some ideas in the films that might need some explanation – architect, archaeology, papyrus, for example. Take time to make sure everyone is clear on what these terms and ideas mean.

Pupils are now going to write a short passage from the point of view of a pyramid worker. This could take many forms and, of course, will be dependent on the year group of your class, but some useful activities would be:

- A diary entry for a day when he is working on the Pyramid
- A description of the work he does
- A storyboard of a day in his life
- The script for another 60 Second History, where the worker summarises the most important details from all the films in this section.

At the end the lesson, show again the enquiry question; what's left of Ancient Egypt? You'll get lots of responses about mummies and the knowledge of how they were made, and of the pyramids and everything that was in them. Now ask why all that has been left behind? Why are the pyramids still there? Why are there so many Egyptian mummies and other artefacts in museums around the world?

Films to use

- **The Rosetta Stone**
- **Hieroglyphics**

Start this lesson by looking at some Egyptian hieroglyphs. There are plenty of great images available, such as that at source 1. Some pupils will immediately recognise the symbols as hieroglyphics, but go further and ask pupils to see if they can work out what sort of writing this is. Can they work out what any of the hieroglyphs are? They might see birds, a few people, maybe some tools or utensils.

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Lesson 3 – What's left of Ancient Egypt?

The point here is that even though we might recognise a few pictures, we have no way of knowing what the writing actually says.

Now show **Hieroglyphics** in which the High Priest explains how they work and the difficulty in producing them. Ask pupils how on earth we could ever understand this writing? How could we ever hope to work out anything about Ancient Egypt when we had no way of understanding their writing? Any speculation here is good; some might restate the problem and that is also useful, but of course you might get someone saying that you need some way to translate it. When that happens, you're ready to show **The Rosetta Stone**. Here the explorer tells us how this remarkable tablet was found and explains just how important it has been in helping experts to translate hieroglyphics. At the end, you might show a picture of it in place at the British Museum. Ask pupils now to think about what we wouldn't know now without the Rosetta Stone; this is a useful way for them to recap some of the things they've learned in the last few lessons.

In the second part of the lesson, pupils will draw their learning in this unit together by making their own hieroglyphs to communicate some of what they've learned. Challenge them to come up with 10 symbols that represent something in Ancient Egypt. Some will be easy – a pyramid might just be a triangle. Others might be harder; how might they represent 'god'? Or names of gods? The next level challenge would be to combine two symbols to make a whole new one. 'Man' and 'spade' together might mean 'builder'. This task could go further still with some pupils tackling a longer piece of text using their symbols.

At the end, please return to the enquiry question; what's left of Ancient Egypt? Talk about physical remains and the writings that we can now understand. But now ask if we've inherited any ideas, any ways of doing things, from the Egyptians? If you've already done the Greeks, draw on them as a comparison. From the Greeks we have inherited such ideals as democracy and philosophy, as well as such day-to-day fundamentals as olive oil. We still read Greek myths and legends, and our grand public buildings are still sometimes built with pillars like theirs were. Why might it be different with the Egyptians?

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Differentiation, assessment and reflection

Extension

There are opportunities in each lesson to extend pupils thinking.

- In the first lesson, challenge could be offered with the final task to annotate the mummy. Pupils could be asked to add a larger number of labels or to make those labels more detailed.
- In lesson 2 the piece of writing might be extended with a lower word limit, for example.

Scaffolding

- During lesson 1, some pupils could be given the details from the mummification clips and as they watch, they tick them off.
- In the second lesson, the writing task could be shorter or scaffolded with sentence starters.
- In the final lesson, some pupils might be given hieroglyphs to write sentences with.

Formative assessment opportunities

- As pupils make their timelines in lesson 1, use the opportunity to check pupils' knowledge and understanding of the passage of time and what this means in terms of years and centuries.
- In lesson two there is a lot of factual detail to take in, so this could be checked and secured with a short answer quiz done before the final written task.
- Pupils own hieroglyphs will provide evidence of their thinking and learning.

Reflection

At the end of the unit pupils could write a short, final reflective piece, summarising what they've learned and saying why they think that the Egyptian ideas haven't lasted as long as those of other ancient civilisations.

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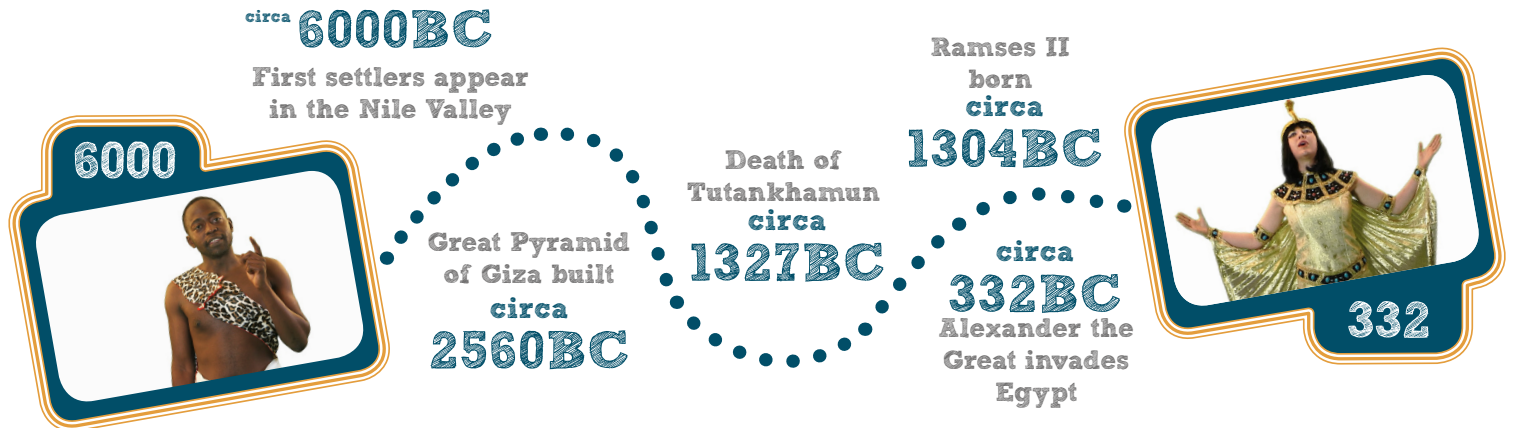


figure 1 – A story about Osiris and his family

1. Osiris taught man about farming and created the first cities in Egypt
2. Set was jealous of Osiris and tricked him into climbing into a coffin
3. Set sealed the coffin and chopped it up, scattering the pieces all over Egypt
4. Isis, Osiris' wife, searched Egypt for all the parts with the help of Nephthys
5. When Isis had found all the body parts, she bound them together in cloth, making him the first mummy.
6. Osiris didn't come back to life. Instead he became god of the underworld, sitting in judgement on the dead.
7. Isis wanted vengeance so she encouraged her son Horus to take revenge on Set
8. Horus, The Avenger, defeated Set and became the new Pharaoh of Egypt

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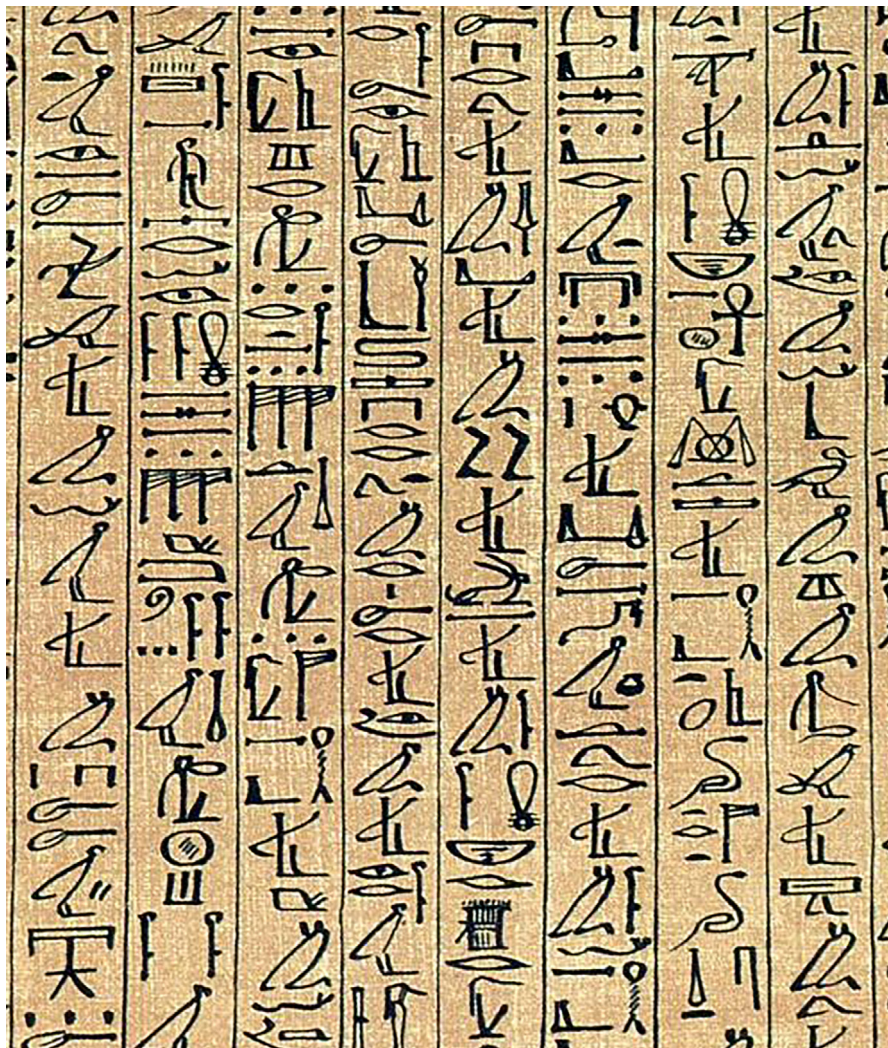
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source 2 – Egyptian Hieroglyphs



source Wikipedia: [hieroglyphs](#)