

Contents

6 The year 2700 BC

It is early summer in Egypt, along the banks of the Nile. People work in the fields to gather in their crops.

8 About 200 years later ...

The ruling pharaoh has already begun to prepare for the end of his life on Earth.

10 Five years later ...

The building of the new pyramid is in full swing.

12 Ten years later ...

As the pyramid is built higher and higher, an enormous spiral ramp is built up with it.

14 Five years later ...

It is time to put in place the very highest block of stone: the capstone or pyramidion.

16 Seven years later ...

The pharaoh has died. His coffin is carried on a royal barge along the Nile to the pyramid.

18 A few hours later ...

The mummy is taken to a large hall where the “opening of the mouth” ceremony is performed.



20 Fifty years later ...

To keep the dead pharaoh’s “life force” alive, priests make daily offerings of food and drink to his spirit.

22 About 300 years later ...

Thieves have broken into the burial chamber. All its treasures are taken away.

24 About 3000 years later ...

Egypt is now under the rule of the Arabs. To them, the pyramids are a useful source of building stone.

26 A thousand years later ...

Napoleon leads his soldiers against the Mameluke army in the “Battle of the Pyramids”.

28 Today

Tourists come from all over the world to see the pyramids.

30 Glossary

31 Index

Introduction

Imagine you are in Egypt, thousands of years ago. You are standing on a desert plateau overlooking the mighty river Nile. All around you are thousands of men working hard in the scorching heat of the sun. Many are hauling huge blocks of rock up great ramps, while others are busy chipping away at the stone using mallets and chisels. As the years go by, a massive pyramid takes shape. This immense building will lead a long and eventful life ...

The story told in this book is like a journey. It is not a journey you can make by plane, car or ship. In fact, you don’t have to go anywhere at all. You are about to travel through time. With each turn of the page, the date moves forward a few hours, years or even centuries. Each time—every stop on your journey—is like a new chapter in the life of the pyramid. The early days in which it was planned and built, the time when the pharaoh’s mummy was entombed inside it, the day, years later, when robbers stole all the treasure from it, the years of neglect—all tell the story of the pyramid.



Look out for a fat man. He appears in all of the illustrations. You can also find a monkey and a vulture on most of the pages too.

Use this thumb index to travel through time! Just find the page you want to see and flip it open. This way you can make a quick comparison between one scene and another, even though some show events that took place some years apart. A little black arrow on the page points to the time of the scene illustrated on that page.

Ten years later ...

As the pyramid is built higher and higher, an enormous spiral ramp, which winds up all four sides, is built up with it. The ramp provides a hauling track for the blocks of stone to be dragged up to the top. The ramp is built of rubble piled up against the pyramid and held in place by a wall.

It is hard work to drag the heavy stones up the ramps! Workers use levers to help the blocks around corners while others pour water on to the track to smooth the sledges' path.

Ramps were certainly used to build pyramids, but no-one knows what they looked like. For some smaller pyramids a "straight-on" ramp may have been built.

