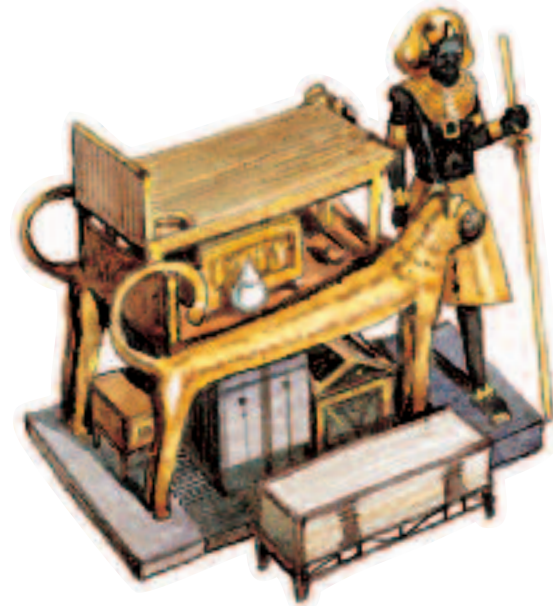


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Ancient Egypt

People have lived in the fertile land of Egypt beside the river Nile for thousands of years. Each summer the river floods, coating the earth with a layer of rich mud, ideal for growing crops. It was here, over 5000 years ago, that a great civilization emerged.

The people of ancient Egypt worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses who represented everything from motherhood and wisdom to the sun, moon, stars and sky. They built great temples to their gods and massive pyramids and spectacular tombs for their kings, known as pharaohs.



The ancient Egyptians believed in life after death. If you had lived a good life, then your soul would pass into the Next World where life was restful for evermore. They preserved the bodies of rich and important people by mummifying them, so that they could come back to life again in the Next World.

People were buried with all the things they might need in the Afterlife, including food and clothes and statues of servants to do their work for them. Pharaohs were also buried with gold and treasures.

In this book you can explore inside a pyramid and see how it was built, wander through a temple and come face to face with a mummy in his tomb. Along the way you will meet some of the people who built these amazing structures, and see how they lived.



The pyramid

It is 2500 BC and the pharaoh of ancient Egypt has come to see how the construction of his great pyramid is progressing. Twenty years ago, when he first became pharaoh, he ordered the building of the pyramid to be both his tomb and a lasting monument to his greatness. Now the pyramid is almost finished. Thousands of workers are busily polishing and painting its outer surface made of perfectly fitting, smooth limestone blocks.

BUILDING THE PYRAMIDS

First the plan of the pyramid was marked out on the ground with stakes and string. Priests used the position of the stars to line up the pyramid's four sides so that they faced exactly north, south, east and west. Then the ground was levelled and the pyramid built up layer by layer from giant limestone blocks, like a

massive staircase. The blocks were hauled up the pyramid on a ramp built of earth and rubble that spiralled up the pyramid's sides.



CASING STONES

The outside of the pyramid was faced with triangular blocks called casing stones made of a finer limestone than the building blocks. These were levered into place starting at the top of the pyramid and working down to give a perfectly flat surface. They were polished by hand until they were completely smooth.

BUILDING STONES

Massive blocks of limestone were quarried using copper chisels and wooden mallets. They were cut and shaped, at the quarry, which was close to the pyramid site. Huge blocks, most weighing 2–3 tonnes, but some

weighing as much as 15 tonnes, were then hauled to the pyramid and up the ramp by teams of men using ropes, levers and rollers. Once the pyramid was finished the ramp was demolished and all the rubble carried away.

PAINTING

Finally, the smoothed outer stones were painted a deep brick red that glowed like fire when the pyramid caught the rays of the sun.

Workers shave and polish the limestone casing stones.

Wooden frames act as ladders to help the workers reach higher.

Scaffolding around the pyramid provides a solid platform to work from.

Workers hail the pharaoh

Passing up supplies

Stepped structure of pyramid

Ramp made of earth and rubble



Weight-bearing chambers

Giant slabs of rock support the weight of the pyramid

Sarcophagus

Pharaoh's burial chamber

Steep gallery leading to burial chamber

Second chamber

EMPTY CHAMBERS

Two other chambers were built beneath the king's chamber. No one knows what these were for—perhaps the pharaoh just changed his mind about where he wanted his tomb to

Third chamber dug below the pyramid

Closely fitting stonework

Narrow passage lit by torches

Narrow shaft points directly to the Pole Star

KING'S CHAMBER

At the heart of the pyramid was the burial chamber of the pharaoh. In here his body rested inside a stone coffin, called a sarcophagus, surrounded by treasures and items he would need in the Next World. The weight of the pyramid above the chamber was supported by five solid slabs of granite.

SHAFTS AND GALLERIES

As well as the galleries leading to the chambers, there were narrow shafts to the outside for the pharaoh's soul to pass through on its way to the stars.

PAINTING AND GILDING

The glowing red of the pyramid stood out against the sands of the desert making it visible for many kilometres. At the very top of the pyramid was a pointed capstone which was gilded—covered in gold—to reflect the sunlight.

Pyramid entrance

Donkeys are used to carry loads

Ramp

