

Year 4 – Summer Term History – Who were the Ancient Egyptians?

Vocabulary and Glossary

Civilisation	The developed culture and way of life of a society
Fertile Crescent	The semi-circular are of land where the first ancient civilisations began.
Papyrus	A form of paper that was made from a papyrus plant that grew along the banks of the Nile.
Hieroglyphics	A series of small signs used as a form of writing.
Irrigation	The digging of channels to allow water to flow through a field to water crops
Hierarchy	Mummification is the process of preserving a dead body, typically through drying or embalming, to prevent or slow down decomposition
Mummification	A system where people of things are arranged in order of importance
Afterlife	Another life after this one!
BC	Used to show that a date is before the year 0. This is counted backwards, so 200 BC is before 100 BC. Dates after the year 0 are marked AD.
Pharaoh	A term used to describe the rulers of Egypt during ancient times.
Archaeology	The study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains
Sarcophagus	A stone coffin or container to store a coffin used to bury a wealthy person.
Artefact	In archaeology, artefacts are objects found which are evidence of past human life and activities.

When and where did the Ancient Egyptian Civilisation begin?

The Ancient Egyptian civilization began on the banks of the river Nile over 6000 years ago in North East Africa. It became one kingdom c3150 and the civilisation lasted for around 3000 years. Because the climate was hot and dry, people lived on the banks of the river to give them easy access to life-giving water.



Who ruled over Ancient Egypt and how do we know?

Pharaohs ruled over Ancient Egypt with absolute power and there was a clear hierarchy – priests were under the pharaoh with farmers and slaves at the bottom. The Ancient Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was the earthy representatives of the gods. Pharaohs were buried in the Great Pyramids (Old Kingdom) or in other underground tombs (New Kingdom). The most well-known pharaoh is Tutankhamun. His tomb was discovered in the Valley of the Kings by Howard Carter (an archaeologist) in 1922. The vast number of priceless artefacts found buried with the pharaoh provided a lot of information about life in Ancient Egypt.



Who were the Ancient Egyptians?

What did the Egyptians use for writing?

The Ancient Egyptian system of writing was called hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics used pictures to show sounds and meaning. Ancient Egyptians wrote on papyrus. The Rosetta Stone is an important artefact that helped historians understand hieroglyphics.



What did the Ancient Egyptians believe about the afterlife?

Ancient Egyptians believed that doing good deeds would give them a happy afterlife. They believed in preserving the body for the afterlife through mummification. Mummification was a long process that took 70 days. Only pharaohs and very important people were mummified. The most important mummies were buried in pyramids, or in the Valley of the Kings.



What did the Ancient Egyptians invent?



The Ancient Egyptians improved earlier inventions and invented many useful items to make life easier. They created clocks and calendars for telling the time. They made paper from the papyrus plants to record information. To help move water for their crops, they invented a shaduf, which used a lever mechanism to move a heavy bucket of water from a low to higher level. They also grew crops in the fertile soil next to the Nile. The most important crops were wheat and barley, which they used to make bread, porridge and beer. They also grew vegetables, fruit and flax to make linen. Agriculture was essential to the economy as it provided food for the people with enough left over to store for years of drought.

How did Ancient Egypt compare to Ancient Sumer?

The Ancient Egyptians and Sumerians both developed next to rivers, which they used for water, transport and irrigation. They made good use of the fertile land for growing crops. Both invented things to advance their society and had similar hierarchies. It is likely they shared similarities because they coexisted for a period of time and were connected by trade. They both changed over time but Kings ruled individual city states in Ancient Sumer whereas pharaohs ruled all of Ancient Egypt.

