

Ancient Egypt

Civilization Beside the Nile River

Each year between July and October, the **Nile River** floods and spills over its banks in the **Delta Region** before it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. This leaves behind a layer of **silt**, rich in nutrients that make it possible to grow crops in this otherwise arid land.

This is the fertile land that people began to settle in 3300 B.C. Drawn by the abundance of food provided by the Nile, people began to settle, farm, and build cities. This became the Egyptian Civilization. The Egyptians called their country the **Black Land**, referring to the fertile soil. The desert surrounding their country was referred to as the **Red Land**. The Red Land provided a natural barrier that protected Egypt from invaders. This is one of the reasons that the Egyptian civilization lasted over 3,000 years. It was the longest-lasting civilization in history.

Writing and Paper

Egyptian influence on other ancient civilizations has been considerable. Its writing system, called **hieroglyphics**, and other cultural elements were widely adapted by other ancient cultures. In addition to writing, the Egyptians developed a paper-like material from **papyrus** reed. They also used papyrus to make mats, ropes, toys, boats, and other items.

Building Skills

Egyptians were excellent architects, builders, craftsmen, and artisans. They built huge pyramids in which to bury their pharaohs. The **Great Pyramid of Giza** was so large and magnificent it was listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It is the only one of these wonders that still stands today. The Great Pyramid was built over 5,000 years ago without modern machines or tools. Over 2.3 million stone blocks, each weighing about 2.5 tons, were transported from a stone quarry on the other side of the Nile and built into a pyramid about as high as a 42-story skyscraper. All of this was done with manpower alone. Also built near the Great Pyramid of Giza was the **Sphinx**, a huge stone sculpture of a creature with the face of a human and the body of a lion.

The Egyptians were superb engineers as well. They built canals, dams, and a reservoir to control the flood waters of the Nile. They even built a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea in order to improve trade.

Treatment of the Dead

Egyptians believed in life after death; a person's soul would continue to live as long as the body was preserved. The Egyptians practiced **mummification** of the dead. When someone died, their body was prepared in such a way that it would dry out and not decay. The bodies of the wealthy were wrapped in linen with jewels and protective charms inserted in the layers. The poor were often buried naked in shallow graves.



The Great Pyramid of Giza and the Sphinx

EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION AT A GLANCE

WHERE: Along the Nile River in northeast Africa

WHEN: 3100 B.C.—332 B.C.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Built the pyramids, the sphinx, canals, and temples
- Invented a calendar with 365 days
- Made a paper-like material from the papyrus plant
- Used a loom to weave cloth
- Invented a system of writing called hieroglyphics

Name: _____ Date: _____

Knowledge Check

Matching

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. Delta Region | a. what the Egyptians called the desert surrounding their country |
| _____ 2. silt | b. the process of preserving a dead body by drying it |
| _____ 3. Black Land | c. rich soil deposited by a river |
| _____ 4. Red Land | d. what the Egyptians called their country, referring to its fertile soil |
| _____ 5. heiroglyphics | e. a writing system where pictures stand for words |
| _____ 6. papyrus | f. the area of the Nile River where silt is deposited before the water empties into the Mediterranean |
| _____ 7. mummification | g. paper-like material made from reeds |

Multiple Choice

8. The Egyptian Civilization developed along the banks of which river?

a. the Danube	b. the Indus
c. the Congo	d. the Nile

9. Which Wonder of the Ancient World is still standing today?

a. the Sphinx	b. the Great Pyramid of Giza
c. the Lighthouse of Alexandria	d. the Hanging Gardens of Babylon

10. Which Egyptian structure had the face of a human and the body of a lion?

a. the Sphinx	b. the Great Pyramid of Giza
c. the Lighthouse of Alexandria	d. the tomb of King Tut

Constructed Response

11. Why did the Egyptians mummify their dead? Use details from the reading selection to help support your answer.
