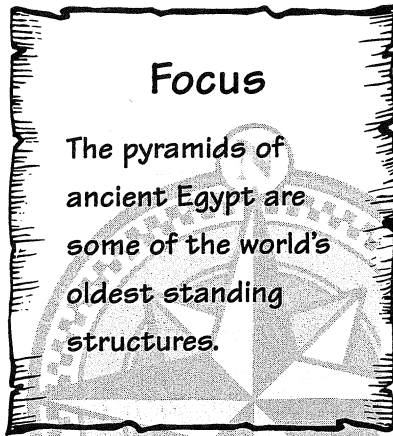


Pyramids

Brief #3



Egyptology is the study of the Ancient Egyptian civilization. Egyptologists study the things that the ancient Egyptians left behind to learn about how they lived. **Things that civilizations make are called artifacts.** Artifacts can be buildings, books, tools, or toys.



Pyramids

The ancient Egyptians left behind some very large artifacts. These artifacts are called pyramids. **A pyramid is an ancient Egyptian tomb, or burial place for the dead.** Other ancient people, like the Aztec and the Maya, also built pyramids. But the pyramids the ancient Egyptians built are the most famous in the world.

Ancient Egyptians built pyramids because of their religious beliefs. They believed that after a person died, they lived on in another place called the afterlife. They believed that in this afterlife people would need some of their possessions, like clothing and weapons. When an important ancient Egyptian was buried in a pyramid, he or she was buried along with many of his or her possessions.



Famous Pyramids

The oldest ancient Egyptian pyramid was built at Saqqara between 2686–2181 B.C. It is a step pyramid. **A step pyramid is made by placing rectangle blocks of decreasing size on top of each other.** It was built for the pharaoh named Zoser. **A pharaoh was an ancient Egyptian ruler who was believed to be both a human being and a god.** After Zoser died, he was buried under the pyramid.

The pharaoh Snefru was responsible for building other important pyramids. One was called the Bent Pyramid. Another is called the Red Pyramid. The Red Pyramid is important because it is thought to be the first pyramid ever built that had smooth sides, unlike those of the traditional step design.

Vocabulary

1. artifacts
2. pyramid
3. pharaoh
4. step pyramid
5. Giza
6. Great Sphinx
7. Valley of the Kings
8. Tutankhamen

Pyramids

Brief #3 (cont.)

Fast Fact

Tutankhamen died at about the age of 19, probably from a broken leg that became infected.

Famous Pyramids (cont.)

The largest pyramid ever built is called the **Great Pyramid of Giza**. It is 482 feet tall. The pyramid is made of over two million blocks of stone, each one weighing between two and 15 tons. The Great Pyramid of Giza was built by the pharaoh Khufu. It was built between 2589–2566 B.C.

One of the most famous ancient Egyptian monuments is the Great Sphinx. The Great Sphinx is located at the Giza site. A sphinx is a mythological creature that has the body of a lion and the head of a man. The Great Sphinx is 241 feet long and 65 feet high. It is believed to have been built by Khafre, the son of Khufu, but no one is really sure.

Valley of the Kings

Pyramids were not the only structures in which rich and powerful ancient Egyptians were buried. **During Egypt's New Kingdom, many important ancient Egyptians were buried in an area near the modern city of Luxor. This area is called the Valley of the Kings.** It contains about sixty different types of tombs.

Archeologists have been discovering the tombs of ancient Egyptians in the Valley of the Kings for a few centuries. Every time they discover a new tomb they give it a number. Before each number are the letters KV, which stand for King's Valley.

Because important ancient Egyptians were buried with many valuable possessions, including gold, these tombs had been robbed of their belongings long before archeologists in the 19th century discovered them.

One tomb, however, remained intact. This was the tomb KV 62, which belonged to the pharaoh Tutankhamen (King Tut). Tutankhamen was known as the boy king because he became ruler when he was eight or nine years old. He was pharaoh around 1334 B.C.

Archeologists found hundreds and hundreds of artifacts in Tutankhamen's tomb. They found containers of food and wine. They found gold and furniture. They also found a gold face mask in which Tutankhamen was buried. The coffin in which the boy king was buried was made of solid gold. The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen was one of the most important archeological discoveries ever made. These treasures from ancient Egypt have been displayed in museums all over the world. Millions of people have seen them.