

The Ancient Egyptians

Who were the Ancient Egyptians?

Egypt is a country in the north of Africa. Most of it is sandy desert, where very little can grow. About 8,000 years ago, the first Egyptians settled on the banks of the River Nile where there was plenty of water for themselves and their crops. These Ancient Egyptians were very successful farmers and they became very rich. They built fantastic temples for their gods and huge pointed tombs called pyramids, where they buried their kings. They had armies and ships and courts of law. Their priests studied the stars and their craftspeople made beautiful things from gold and silver.

Why were the pyramids built?

The pyramids were huge tombs for dead pharaohs and other very important people.



No one knows exactly why the pyramids were shaped this way. Some people think they were built to point towards the Sun and stars, so that the dead person's spirit could fly to heaven like a rocket.

Pharaohs were buried with all their finest clothes and jewellery, so tombs were given sneaky traps to catch out robbers.

Why were mummies brainless?

The Ancient Egyptians believed that the heart was the most important part of the body. They thought that the brain was useless. So when they were preparing a mummy, they took out the brain – by pulling it through the nose!

Why did the Egyptians bury their mummies?

A mummy is a dead body which has been dried out so it lasts for thousands of years. The Egyptians believed that the dead travelled to another world, where they needed their bodies. And they didn't want any bits missing!

Some poorer families had their nearest and dearest mummified, but it was an expensive business. Only the rich could afford a really good send-off.

The mummy was placed inside a series of wooden coffins. These were put in a big stone case called a sarcophagus.

Monkeys, crocodiles and cats and other sacred animals were often mummified too!

Why were mummies wrapped in bandages?

Wrapping the dead body helped to keep its shape. After the insides were removed, the body was dried out for 40 days in salty stuff called natron. Then it was washed, rubbed with ointments and tightly bandaged.

Name: Class: Date:

1 When did the Ancient Egyptians settle by the River Nile?

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2 Why did the Ancient Egyptians become very rich?

	True	False
Because they had plenty of water.		
Because they built temples for their gods.		
Because they were successful farmers.		

3 What evidence can you find in the opening paragraph that the Ancient Egyptians were well-organised?

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4 “No one knows exactly why” shows the author is not certain of the facts about pyramids. **Find** and **copy** another phrase that shows the author isn’t sure of the facts.

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5 Why do you think robbers tried to get into pharaohs’ tombs?

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6 What did the Ancient Egyptians mummify as well as people?

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7 Which part of the body did the Ancient Egyptians think was the most important?

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8 How was the brain removed from a body?

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9 How long was a body dried out for before wrapping it in bandages?

.....

10 Match these words to their definitions.

craftspeople

a body that has been dried out

mummy

workers who make things by hand

sarcophagus

a king or ruler

pharaoh

stone coffin