For most of a period lasting 3,000 years, Egypt was the strongest power in the world. It ruled an empire which, at its peak in about 1500 BC, included Palestine and Syria. Egyptians kings, or pharaohs, built the greatest monuments of the ancient world – the Pyramids.

Egypt

Egyptian armies fought off invaders and conquered new lands, while traders journeyed across the Mediterranean Sea and southward into Africa to bring back treasures to add to Egypt’s wealth. This wealth was based on the mighty Nile River. The Egyptians called their land Kemet (“black land”). Each year, the Nile flooded and its waters spilled over the banks to spread a layer of black, fertile mud on the fields where the farmers grew their crops. This yearly gift of the Nile allowed people to enjoy a civilization of plenty.

Egypt united

The earliest peoples of Egypt were desert nomads. As they settled and grew to be farmers, they built villages and towns. By 3100 BC, Egypt had become one country. The southern kingdom of Upper Egypt conquered the northern kingdom of Lower Egypt, and King Menes made Memphis his capital.

The Egyptians regarded their king as a god. Thirty dynasties (ruling families) of these god-kings ruled from the time of King Menes in 3100 BC until 332 BC when Alexander the Great conquered Egypt. From about 1554 BC, the Egyptian kings were given the title pharaoh.
The Nile not only provided Egypt's people with rich, fertile soil and plentiful water but it was also a source of food. Egyptians caught river fish to add to their basic diet. They used spears to hunt ducks on the river too.

△ The shaduf was a bucket swung from the end of a counterweighted pole. It was used to lift water from irrigation ditches, and is still used in Egypt today.

Government and daily life

Egypt was governed by officials and tax collectors, who measured the Nile's waters to predict how high it would flood each year. They could then determine how big a harvest was to be expected. Taxes were set accordingly. Most Egyptians were farmers. They grew crops of barley, wheat, fruit, and vegetables. Their diet consisted of daily meals of bread and beer, often supplemented with fish. Meat from cattle, sheep, and goats was a luxury.

Children began work at the age of five. Boys went to school if their parents could afford to spare them from work, and some girls did too. There were many slaves, but even freemen might be forced to dig irrigation canals or haul stones to building sites. Skilled workers, such as scribes (writers), stone-cutters, carpenters, metalworkers, painters, potters, bakers, and brewers, were kept busy in the towns.

The Egyptians were good at math, particularly at geometry, which they used in architecture and surveying. They drew up an accurate 12-month calendar of 365 days and used water clocks to measure time.

△ Egyptian farmers used sickles to harvest their crops. The harvest period traditionally lasted from March to July. Other farm equipment included ox-drawn wooden plows which were used to prepare the soil before planting time.

△ Egyptian writing is known as hieroglyphics. It was made up of about 750 signs, with pictures of people, animals, and objects. Scribes used a quick form of writing called hieratic.
Religion played an important part in Egyptian life. The Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses. Their chief deities were Ra the sun god, Horus the sky god, Osiris the god of the underworld, and Isis, wife of Osiris, who represented the ideal woman.

Pyramids and Gods

This large group of gods was challenged on only one occasion, when the pharaoh Amenhotep tried to introduce worship of one supreme being, the sun god Aton.

Town gods and temples
Gods looked after every aspect of life. Every town and city had its own god, too. Temples were dedicated to a particular god or a dead pharaoh. The biggest of all these temples was the temple of Amun (a sun god who came to be linked with Ra) at Karnak. The pharaoh was the chief priest as well as a god himself. Priests in each temple cared for the statue of the god that was kept there, washing it and offering it gifts of food. Priests also prayed to the gods. Ordinary people said their prayers in the home.

The next world and mummies
The Egyptians believed in an afterlife, to which human souls journeyed after death. They thought it important that the bodies of the dead be preserved for life in the next world, so they developed techniques for making “mummies.”

The dead person’s organs were removed and the body was embalmed and dried,

➢ The Great Sphinx is a mysterious rock sculpture, with a human head on the body of a lion. Some historians believe it is older than the Pyramids.
Many Egyptian gods were pictured with animal heads. Horus, son of Isis and Osiris, was shown with a falcon's head. Anubis, god of death, had the head of a jackal.

Using salts and chemicals, and wrapped in linen bandages. It was then placed in a coffin. Even animals such as cats and monkeys were sometimes mummified. Many thousands of mummies must have been made, but only about 1,000 survive today.

Pyramids and rock tombs
Pyramids are the oldest stone structures in the world. There are more than 30, but the most famous are the three Great Pyramids at Giza. The biggest, which was built for the pharaoh Cheops, contains about 2 million blocks of limestone and is 460 feet high.

The pyramids were built as tombs, to keep the body of the dead king safe for eternity and perhaps (through their sky-pointing shape) to ease his passage to the heavens. The work of building such enormous monuments must have taken years, even with as many as 100,000 workers toiling to move the huge stone blocks up sloping ramps of sand.

Mighty as they were, the pyramids could not keep human robbers out. The treasures left inside each burial chamber with the king were invariably stolen.

Tutankhamun
Tutankhamun became king of Egypt at the age of 9 and died when he was about 18. His tomb is one of more than 60 royal tombs around the Valley of the Kings. Its four rooms contained more than 5,000 objects — from ostrich feathers and model ships to a throne and a gold death mask.

Osiris, god of the dead, was often shown as a mummy on a throne, wearing the crown of Upper Egypt.
Pyramids on the Nile

BEFORE YOU READ
In the last section, you read about the city-states that arose in Mesopotamia.
In this section, you will learn about early civilization along the Nile.

AS YOU READ
Use the web below to show how Egypt was unified, what its culture was like, and how it fell.

The Geography of Egypt (pages 35–37)
What was the key feature of early Egypt's geography?

Another civilization arose along the banks of the Nile River of East Africa. The Nile flows to the North, toward the Mediterranean Sea. It, too, floods each year. The waters leave rich soil on the river banks. There the people of ancient Egypt grew food and began to build their own culture. They worshiped the Nile as a life-giving god.

For many centuries, the people of Egypt lived in two kingdoms, Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Upper Egypt extended north from the Nile's first area of rapids, or cataracts, to the Nile delta. The delta is a broad, marshy, triangular area of rich land. Lower Egypt began here and continued north to the Mediterranean, just 100 miles away.
1. How did the Nile create boundaries?

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**Egypt Unites into a Kingdom**  
(pages 37–38)

**Who ruled the kingdom?**

About 3000 B.C., the king of Upper Egypt, **Narmer**, united the two kingdoms. In the years between 2660 and 2180 B.C., the basic marks of the culture of Egypt arose. Ruling over the land was the **pharaoh**. He was not only a king but was also seen as a god. A government in which a ruler is seen as a divine figure is a **theocracy**.

Pharaohs believed they would rule the land after their death. So these kings built themselves magnificent tombs. The tombs were huge **pyramids** made out of **massive** limestone blocks.

2. Why did pharaohs build pyramids?

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**Egyptian Culture; Invaders Control Egypt**  
(pages 38–41)

**What were the features of Egyptian culture?**

Egyptians believed in many gods and in an afterlife. One god, they thought, weighed the hearts of each dead person. Hearts judged heavy with sin were eaten by a beast. Good people, with **feather-weight** hearts, would live forever in a beautiful Other World. To prepare for this, Egyptians pre-

served a dead person’s body by **mummification**. This kept the body from decaying.

The pharaoh and his family were at the top of Egyptian society. Below them were people of wealth who owned large amounts of land, the priests, and members of the government and army. Then came the middle class—**merchants** and people who worked in crafts. At the bottom were the peasants. In later times, the Egyptians had slaves. People could move from one rank of society to another. Those who could read and write held important positions.

The Egyptians, like the Sumerians, developed a way of writing. In their writing system, **hieroglyphics**, pictures stood for sounds or ideas. The pictures could be put together to make words and sentences. At first they wrote on stone. Later they began to make a kind of paper from the **papyrus** plant. The Egyptians invented a system of written numbers and a calendar. Their calendar had 12 months, each of which had 30 days. They were famous in the ancient world for their ideas in medicine.

After 2180 B.C., the pharaohs lost power. Egypt went through a time of troubles. Then strong rulers once again took control. They ruled for four centuries until a group of Asians called the **Hyksos** arrived in horse-drawn chariots. The land fell to these invaders in 1640 B.C.

3. How was Egyptian society organized?
CHAPTER 2

GUIDED READING  Pyramids on the Nile

Section 2

A. Determining Main Ideas  As you read about ancient Egyptian civilization, fill out the chart below by writing notes to answer the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Why is Narmer a legendary hero in ancient Egyptian history?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did the role of Egyptian pharaohs differ from the role of Mesopotamian rulers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Why did the Egyptians build great pyramids for their kings?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. How did Egyptian religious beliefs compare with those of the Mesopotamians?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What social classes made up Egyptian society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What were significant achievements of the ancient Egyptians in science and technology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How did the Egyptian writing system compare with the Mesopotamian system?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Writing Expository Paragraphs  On the back of this paper, write a paragraph explaining why ancient Egypt was viewed as the "gift of the Nile." Use the words delta and cataract in your writing.
A delta is a flat, triangular-shaped deposit of land found at the mouth of a river that empties into a normally still body of water. Deltas are formed when branches of a river carry soil downstream; the river's flow is slowed at the point of emptying, and soil is allowed to build up. Egypt's Nile River reaches its destination by first splitting into two main branches and then into numerous canals and streams, forming a delta out of an area that was once part of the Mediterranean Sea.

Egypt's famous Nile Delta is notable for more than being just the northern limit of the Nile River. The Delta is extremely fertile and thousands of years ago provided an environment for the formation of one of the world's first civilizations. The Nile Delta has long been considered an agricultural "fantasy"—containing more than one-half of Egypt's farmable land. Today the Delta is like a spider web of nearly 54,000 miles of canals. These canals provide water for the approximately 15 million Egyptians who live in the Delta's thousands of villages. The people grow everything from food and flowers, to cotton.

However, the Nile Delta region is not without some problems. In contrast to Upper Egypt of the south, with its more durable building stones, little of the Delta's ancient past survives. The Delta's structures were built primarily with mud bricks. As a result, today almost all of its ancient sites have been reduced to mere piles of mud. Also, drainage problems have arisen. Salts are coming to the surface and the Delta's fertility is declining. Pollution from untreated waste is increasing. In addition, the polar ice cap is slowly melting, causing the level of the Mediterranean Sea to rise. This process threatens to some day "drown" the Delta. Concrete dikes are now being built to try to hold back the Mediterranean.
Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. Into what body of water does the Nile River empty? ____________________________

2. In what direction does the Nile River flow? ________________________________

3. The place where a river begins is known as its source. From Memphis, in which direction is the source of the Nile River? ________________________________

4. How is the area of river deposits shown on the map? ________________________

5. What surrounds the Delta region? __________________________________________

6. About how many miles long is the Delta's shoreline with the Mediterranean? ______________

   About how deep into the desert does the delta extend? _____________________________

7. Describe the importance of the Nile Delta to Egypt. ____________________________

8. What problems does the Nile Delta region face? ________________________________

______________________________
______________________________
RETEACHING ACTIVITY  Pyramids on the Nile

Section 2

Summarizing
Complete the chart below by listing the impact of each geographical characteristic of Egypt shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EGYPT</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nile River: Benefits</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nile River: Problems</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vast deserts on either side of the</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nile River: Benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vast deserts on either side of the</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nile River: Problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Determining Main Ideas
Write your answers in the blanks provided.

5. Ruled Egypt as god-kings: ____________________________

6. The type of government in which rule is based on religious authority: ____________________________

7. Building in which Egyptian rulers were buried: ____________________________

8. Process by which rulers' bodies were preserved: ____________________________

9. Egyptian writing system: ____________________________

10. Used by Egyptians as a writing surface: ____________________________