

# Egypt Student Notes

## I. Ancient Egypt - Brief History

- A. Hunter-Gatherer groups moved into the Nile River valley more than 12,000 years ago.
- B. They learned the science of agriculture built permanent settlements such small villages and cities.
- C. The Nile River provided them with an abundance of food.

## II. Geography

A. Nile River - (weblink) The MOST important physical feature of the region.

1. "Gift of the Nile" - Egypt is called this since the Nile River gives life to the desert.
2. The Nile River also brought food including fish, ducks, and geese.

B. **Delta** - the triangular or fan-shaped piece of land made by deposits of mud and sand at the mouth of a river.

1. The soil of a delta is ideal for agriculture. Two-thirds,  $\frac{2}{3}$  (66%), of all of Egypt's agriculture is located in the **Delta**.

C. The Nile River had a predictable flood. The floods determined when farmers planted their crops, and the floods brought **silt**.

1. Silt - A mixture of fertile soil and tiny rocks that can make land ideal for farming brought from the rivers when they flooded.

D. Protection of the Egyptian people due to its geography.

1. To the North was the large Mediterranean Sea which the Nile flows into, to the east was the Red Sea, and the rest of Egypt was surrounded by the Sahara Desert - Examples of natural barriers. Egypt is located on the continent of Africa in the northeast corner

2. Cataracts - strong, steep rapids and waterfalls. These cataracts made it difficult to navigate and sail the Nile.

## III. Groups of People Who Lived near Egypt

A. Kush - People settled to the south of Egypt in an area called Nubia. The Egyptians called these people the Kush.

1. In the beginning, they lived in peace and traded with the Egyptians.
2. Many years later, the Kushites defeated the Egyptians and their leaders called themselves pharaohs.

## IV. Written Language

A. Hieroglyphics (weblink) - A form of writing using pictures and symbols instead of letters and words.

B. **Papyrus** - a paper-like material made from papyrus reeds that grew along the Nile River.

1. Papyrus was rolled into scrolls which made it easy to move.

C. Record Keeping - With hieroglyphics and papyrus, Egyptians were able to keep business records and record history.

D. Rosetta Stone - a stone slab inscribed with hieroglyphics, Greek, and a later form of the Egyptian language. Historians were able to translate Hieroglyphics using the Rosetta Stone.

## V. **Government** - Someone or some people gain authority over others, laws are created.

A. Pharaoh (weblink)- Was the ruler of Egypt and considered to be a living god.

1. The Pharaoh is the Egyptian god Horus in life.

B. Egypt was similar to **Monarchies** - A government ruled by a king or queen but it was ruled by a pharaoh.

C. Dynasty - A series of rulers from the same family.

## VI. Trade Systems

A. With agriculture and **Specialization of Labor** (Worker has a specific task or job to do), people were free to do other jobs including make tools, lead religions, and government.

B. Larger jobs such as construction allowed for **division of labor** - Division of work into a number of separate tasks to be performed by different workers. Example - One worker pours the concrete, another builds the frame, and another builds the roof.

C. Trade brought a lot of wealth to Egypt

1. Trade Route - Paths followed by traders.

2. Egyptians traded with people along the Red Sea, Nile River, Mesopotamia, Greece, Romans, and the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

3. They traded art, gold, ivory, slaves, and stone.

D. The economy of Egypt was based on agriculture.

## VII. Religion

A. People of Egypt practiced polytheism (weblink)- the belief in more than one god.

B. They believed these gods and goddesses had a lot of power and could bring floods, harvests, illnesses, health, wealth, etc. Pleasing the gods was important. Gods were based on nature.

C. Priests, people who performed religious ceremonies, were to win the gods' favor.

D. Afterlife - Life after death, this is where Egyptians believed they went after death.

1. To fill a person's needs in the afterlife, they filled their tombs with objects from their current life (furniture, clothing, jewelry, tools, weapons).

2. Ka - The soul of a person.

3. Mummification - bodies were embalmed (preserved) and wrapped in cloth so they would not decay.

4. Peasant families buried their dead in the dry desert.

5. Pyramids (weblink)- huge stone tombs with four triangle-shaped walls that met in a point at the top. These were the burial sites of pharaohs.

E. Prominent Egyptian gods.

1. Horus - god of the pharaohs, the pharaoh alive on Earth, a sky god

2. Osiris - god of the underworld - Judged the souls of the dead.

3. Re or Amon-Re - the sun god.

4. Isis - goddess of magic

## VIII. Architecture

A. **sphinx** - imaginary creature with the body of a lion and the head of other animals or a human.

B. Obelisk (weblink) - a tall, four-sided pillar that is pointed on top. \*Washington Monument"

C. Temples - Egyptians built massive temples; believed they were the homes of the gods.

D. **irrigation** - A way of supplying water to an area of land using canals, dams, and waterwheels. Helped them to better control the **Nile River**.

E. Pyramids - huge stone tombs with four triangle-shaped walls that met in a point at the top. These were the burial sites of pharaohs.

## IX. Social Order

A. **Social Hierarchy** - The division of society by rank or class.

1. Pharaoh was at the top.

2. Upper Class - Priests, Key Government Officials, and Nobles (rich and powerful families)

3. Middle Class - Lower government officials, scribes, craftspeople, and merchants

4. Farmers

5. Slaves and servants were at the bottom of the **Social Hierarchy**.