

# Ancient Egypt, Part One: Early Egypt to the Old Kingdom

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The Sphinx of Giza in Egypt. Photo by: DeAgostini/Getty Images

*The first in a two-part series*

For thousands of years, Ancient Egypt prospered. Egypt has always thrilled scientists and historians. It even has its own field of study. It is called Egyptology. Information about Egypt comes from the objects and artifacts found at ancient places. Some places have hieroglyphs.

Hieroglyphs were the writing system in ancient Egypt. They used pictures to represent different words.

## **Predynastic Period (5000-3100 B.C.)**

Not much is known about the very early times in Egypt. People stopped hunting and began farming. The change allowed Egyptian art, technology and religion to grow.

Around 3400 B.C., two parts of Egypt were set up. They were the Red Kingdom and the White Kingdom. A king named Scorpion tried to rule both parts around 3200 B.C. Later, King Menes took over. He made it all one kingdom. He was the first king of the first dynasty.

Dynasties, or families, ruled Egypt for many years. One dynasty could last a very long time.

### **Archaic (Early Dynastic) Period (3100-2686 B.C.)**

King Menes founded the capital of Egypt at Memphis. This period saw the growth of ideas that were important to Egyptian society, including kingship. To the Egyptians, the king was like a god. The earliest known hieroglyph writing also comes from this time in history.

Most Egyptians then were farmers living in villages. Many lived along the Nile River. The river flooded every year. Farmers planted wheat after the floods. They harvested wheat before the weather got hot and dry again.

### **Old Kingdom: Age of the pyramid builders (2686-2181 B.C.)**

The Old Kingdom began with the third dynasty of pharaohs, or kings. Around 2630 B.C., King Djoser asked an architect and priest named Imhotep to make a big building for him. A large stone Step-Pyramid was made for King Djoser.

Later, the largest pyramid was built, the Great Pyramid at Giza. It was built for Khufu. He ruled from 2589 to 2566 B.C. Then two other pyramids were built at Giza.

### **Peaceful times did not last**

Egypt had a time of peace and much money. It lasted through the fourth dynasty.

In the fifth and sixth dynasties, the kings did not have as much money. It was partly because the pyramids cost so much. The kings began to lose power. It was because more people worshiped the sun god called Ra.

This time is known as the Old Kingdom. It ended in a mess.

**Quiz**

- 1 Which question is answered in paragraph 1?
  - (A) What is an artifact?
  - (B) How did ancient Egypt prosper?
  - (C) How do people know things about ancient Egypt?
  - (D) Why do people become interested in Egyptology?
  
- 2 Which paragraph from the section "Predynastic Period (5000-3100 B.C.)" gives examples of how people lived?
  
- 3 Which section of the article gives information about a hard period in ancient Egypt?
  - (A) "Predynastic Period (5000-3100 B.C.)"
  - (B) "Archaic (Early Dynastic) Period (3100-2686 B.C.)"
  - (C) "Old Kingdom: Age of the pyramid builders (2686-2181 B.C.)"
  - (D) "Peaceful times did not last"
  
- 4 Which answer choice is a section title?
  - (A) "Ancient Egypt Part One: Early Egypt to the Old Kingdom"
  - (B) The first in a two-part series
  - (C) "Predynastic Period (5000-3100 B.C.)"
  - (D) Not much is known about the very early times in Egypt.