

World Leaders: Ramses the Great

By Encyclopaedia Britannica, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.15.17

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TOP: A statue of Ramses the Great. SECOND: View of the temple of Ramses II. This massive rock temple is at Abu Simbel, a village in Nubia, southern Egypt, near the border with Sudan. The four statues are 65 feet tall each and show Pharaoh Ramses II. The complex is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the "Nubian Monuments." Public domain

Synopsis: Ramses II ruled as the king of Egypt more than 3,000 years ago. He ruled from 1279 to 1213 B.C. Egyptian kings were known as the pharaohs. Only one pharaoh ruled longer than Ramses II.

Ramses was powerful. Under his rule, Egypt enjoyed great riches. Historians called him "Ramses the Great" because he was a great military leader. Ramses led wars against the Hittites of Anatolia. This is now the country of Turkey. He also battled the Libyans and the Nubians. Ramses built huge temples and statues of himself across Egypt and Nubia.

Background And Early Years Of Reign

Ramses' father was Seti I, who was king of Egypt from 1290 to 1279 B.C. Both Seti and Ramses wanted to win back lands that Egypt had lost in wars.

Ramses was named as the next king at a very young age. Seti also made Ramses a captain of the army when he was just 10 years old.

Military Campaigns

Ramses came to be known as a great king. This was mainly because he was a great soldier.

Early in his rule, Ramses led an army to take back some land. His armies first went to what is now Syria. He stopped near Beirut, Lebanon. There, he engraved messages on rocks. This is how they wrote about what happened in war.

Next, Ramses' troops wanted to take over the city of Kadesh from the Hittites. But two captured Hittite spies lied to Ramses. They said that the main Hittite army was in a different city.

Then, his army learned the main Hittite army was hidden nearby. There were many more Hittites than Egyptians. The Egyptian army ran off. Ramses was left with a small group of fighters.

Others arrived to help Ramses' army. In the end, the two sides agreed to stop fighting.

Battle Stories

The fight at Kadesh is one of the few that is known today. Pictures and stories of the fight were carved in stone.

Years later, Ramses continued to fight the Hittites.

Ramses learned he could not hold onto land so far from Egypt. So, the two sides signed a peace treaty in 1258 B.C. They had been fighting on and off for 16 years.

The two nations became friends. It is thought that two Hittite princesses later became wives of Ramses.

Egypt Was Powerful Under Ramses

Ramses' rule is important in Egyptian history. This is because of the temples he built. A temple is a special place for worship.

Almost nothing is known about Ramses' life at home. We do know that he had many wives and more than 100 children.

His 3,000-year-old mummy is kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. During his rule, Egypt had much power in the world. After Ramses died, Egypt began to lose power.

Quiz

- 1 Which sentence BEST states the MAIN idea of the article?
- (A) Ramses was a powerful pharaoh and a great military leader.
 - (B) Ramses' father, Seti I, ruled Egypt from 1290 to 1279 B.C.
 - (C) Ramses could not control land far away from Egypt.
 - (D) The 3,000-year-old mummy of Ramses is in a museum in Egypt.
- 2 What is the section "Military Campaigns" MOSTLY about?
- (A) different leaders that argued over land in Egypt
 - (B) different messages that Ramses carved on rocks
 - (C) different battles in which Ramses and his armies fought
 - (D) different cities that Ramses and his family visited
- 3 Which answer choice is a section title?
- (A) "World Leaders: Ramses the Great"
 - (B) By Encyclopaedia Britannica, adapted by Newsela staff
 - (C) "Background And Early Years Of Reign"
 - (D) Ramses' rule is important in Egyptian history.
- 4 What is the purpose of the section "Battle Stories"?
- (A) to explain why Ramses and the Hittites did not get along
 - (B) to explain how Ramses and the Hittites stopped fighting
 - (C) to explain how many wives Ramses had
 - (D) to explain what happened in the fight at Kadesh