



## FACT SHEET

# ANCIENT EGYPT

The ancient Egyptian civilization lasted for roughly 3,000 years. Egyptian history is usually divided into three periods or kingdoms: Old Kingdom—2686 B.C. to 2186 B.C.; Middle Kingdom—2055 B.C. to 1650 B.C.; and New Kingdom—1550 B.C. to 1069 B.C.

Kings called pharaohs ruled ancient Egypt. The Egyptians believed each new pharaoh was the god Horus in human form. The pharaohs had supreme power and ruled the wealthiest kingdom of the ancient world.

The Nile River was called Egypt's lifeline. Every year the Nile flooded and deposited rich black soil along the banks. The fertile soil allowed the Egyptians to raise a surplus of food. The Nile River provided water for irrigation and it was a major transportation route. The ancient Egyptians fished and hunted animals such as Nile perch, ducks, cranes, ibis, hippopotamuses, and crocodiles. Papyrus, a long, thin reed, grew along the banks of the Nile. The papyrus reed was made into paper.

Religion was an important part of Egyptian life. The ancient Egyptians believed that gods and goddesses influenced every part of daily life. They also believed in the afterlife. This belief in the afterlife led the ancient Egyptians to construct pyramids and other great tombs for the pharaohs. They believed that the bodies of the dead should be mummified and then placed in coffins to preserve the body in the afterlife.

## FOOD

The staple for the common Egyptian diet was bread. Poor Egyptians added beer, vegetables, and fish. Garlic and onions were popular seasonings. The wealthy consumed such delicacies as goose, roast beef, pomegranates, figs, and wine.

## SHELTER

The majority of Egyptians lived in towns and villages along the Nile Valley. Because of the yearly flooding, they built their houses on the edge of the desert or on patches of high ground. The houses were built from dried mud bricks and covered with a white limestone plaster to deflect the heat of

the sun. A shelter was built on the roof to catch cool north breezes. In hot weather, families spent most of their time on the roof.

Rich Egyptians had bathrooms. To take a shower, a servant poured water over the bather who stood on a stone slab. Toilets were stone seats with a hole. Underneath the hole was a large sand-filled urn that was changed from time to time.

## CLOTHING

Egyptians wore lightweight clothing made from fine linen cloth. The cloth was draped around the body. No one wore underwear.

The basic woman's dress—a simple tube made from a rectangle of linen sewn down one side, with straps attached to the top edge—remained the same throughout the three kingdoms. During the Middle Kingdom, some women added a colorful collar. During the New Kingdom, a pleated, fringed robe was worn over the dress.

Men wore knee-length kilts during the Old Kingdom. The linen cloth was pleated and fastened at the waist with a knot or a buckle. In the Middle Kingdom, the style of kilts changed. They were longer and straighter.

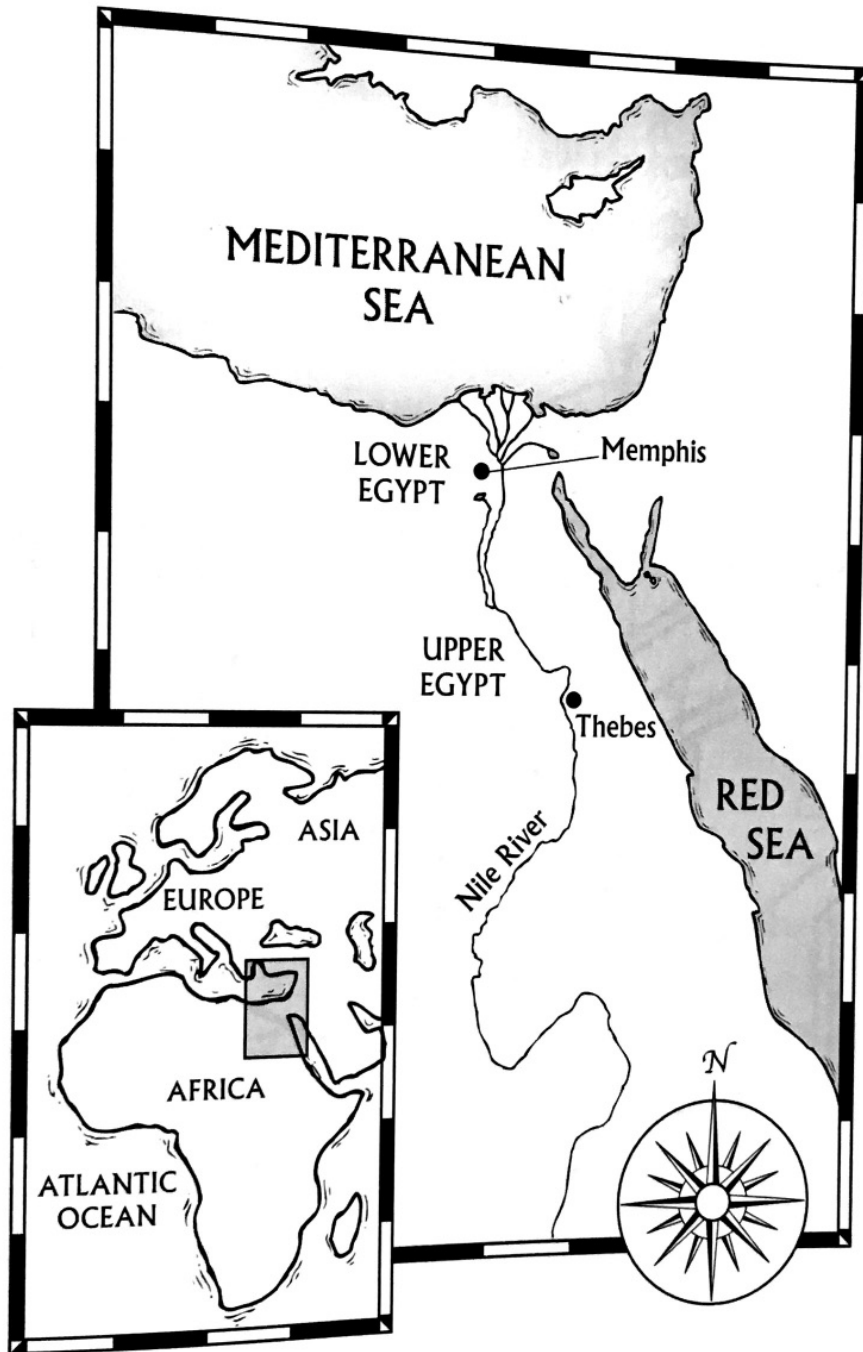
Boys' heads were shaved except for one long braided lock that hung at the side. Many Egyptians wore wigs for special occasions. Men and women wore makeup, perfumed oils, and jewelry.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The ancient Egyptians made many contributions to the development of civilizations. They built the great Pyramids. The Pyramids at Giza were enormous stone pyramids that still stand today. The ancient Egyptians created the 365-day calendar and invented a form of picture writing called hieroglyphics. They also invented a kind of paper made from the stems of papyrus plants. Their tomb paintings and enormous stone statues represented fine art and architecture. Art objects and jewelry made from materials such as gold and alabaster were valued greatly.



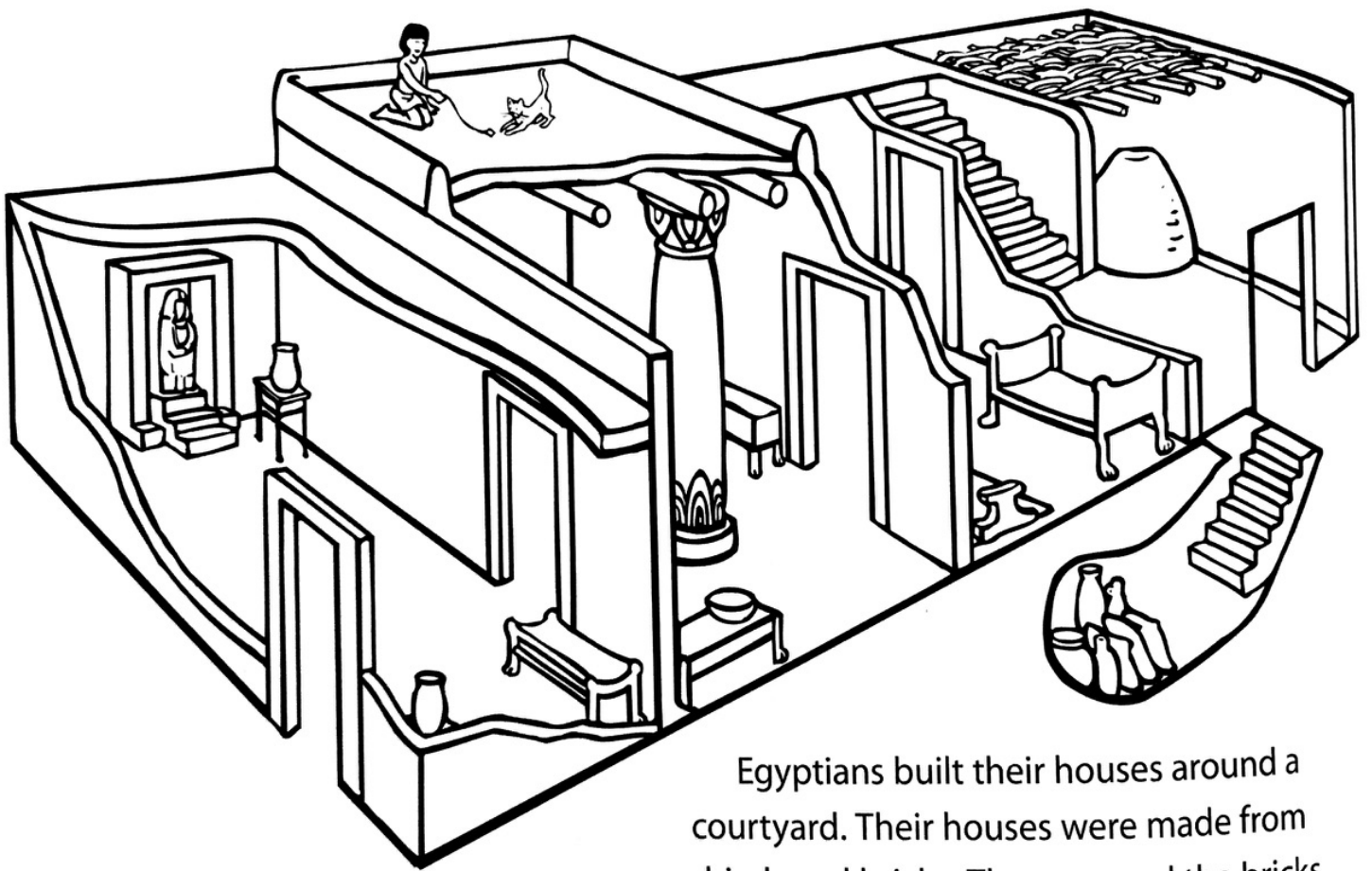
# ANCIENT EGYPT



The first Egyptians settled in the Nile River Valley. That was over 5,000 years ago. People grew crops in the rich soil beside the Nile River. The river valley was surrounded by desert. The desert helped keep invaders away. The desert had sandstone and limestone for building pyramids. There was also gold in the desert for making jewelry.



Egyptians ate lots of bread. They ate onions, peas, and beans. They liked fruit such as pomegranates, figs, and dates. They ate fish from the Nile River. Egyptians drank barley beer and wine. Cooking was done outside or on the rooftop. Egyptians sat at low tables and ate with their fingers.



Egyptians built their houses around a courtyard. Their houses were made from dried mud bricks. They covered the bricks with white limestone plaster. Most houses had three or four small rooms. The houses had small, high windows. This made the house dark even in the daytime. In hot weather, families spent most of their time on the roof.



Egyptian clothing was light and cool. Women wore simple dresses made from a rectangle of linen. They tied the rectangle together with a knot. This made a shawl. Men wore short skirts knotted or pinned at the waist. Both men and women wore makeup, jewelry, and perfumed oils.



People remember the ancient Egyptians. They built the great **Pyramids**. The Egyptians made huge statues such as the Sphinx. They used picture writing called **hieroglyphics**. The Egyptians invented **papyrus**. This was paper made from the stems of papyrus plants. The Egyptians had leaders called **pharaohs**.

