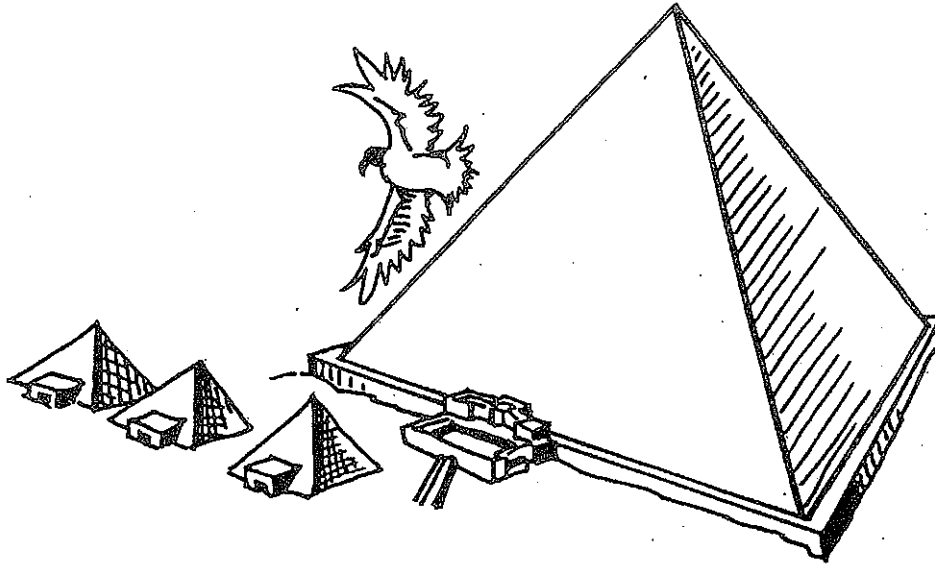


The Great Pyramid of Giza



The oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World was the **Great Pyramid of Giza**. There were actually several pyramids built at Giza, which is located close to Cairo, Egypt's modern capital. The largest and the oldest of the pyramids was built as the tomb of **Khufu**, whom the Greeks called **Cheops**. Khufu was a **pharaoh**, which is what the king was called in ancient Egypt. It is only this large pyramid that is considered one of the original seven wonders, although two other pyramids built for Khufu's son and grandson and smaller pyramids built for their queens are located close by.

It may have taken over 20 years to build the Great Pyramid. While this seems like a long time, it should be remembered that most of the construction probably took place only three months of the year. Each year, the Nile River would flood between July and October. This annual event brought rich, fertile soil to the fields, but it prevented the farmers from working the land. It is likely that for these three months most men worked on the pyramid, hauling and placing stones. During the remaining nine months of the year, a smaller group of artisans and masons performed more intricate jobs and planned for the next construction season.

Another reason the construction took so long was that since construction took place about 5,000 years ago, there were no modern tools and machinery. Simple tools and manpower were used to build the pyramid. Over two and one-third million stone blocks, each weighing about two and one-half tons, were transported from a stone quarry on the other side of the Nile. Workers used bars to tip the huge stones to the side in order to slip a **sledge** underneath it. People in the United States use the term sled for sledge. The stone was tied to the sledge, raised, and set on top of round logs that had been placed parallel to each other on the ground. The workers were then able to pull the stone over the round logs, which made the stone easier to move. Once moved to the barge, the stone was taken across the Nile, unloaded, and the same method was used to transport the stone to the building site. The pyramid was built by stacking each level of stones on top of the last level, with each higher level being smaller than the level before. When the top level was completed, the sides looked like steps.

Throughout the centuries, people have wondered how the Egyptian workers were able to raise these very heavy stones up the side of the pyramid and place them on the upper levels. Many explanations have been offered, but the one commonly accepted today is that an earthen ramp was built on each side of the pyramid, making it possible to pull the stones up to the top. As each level

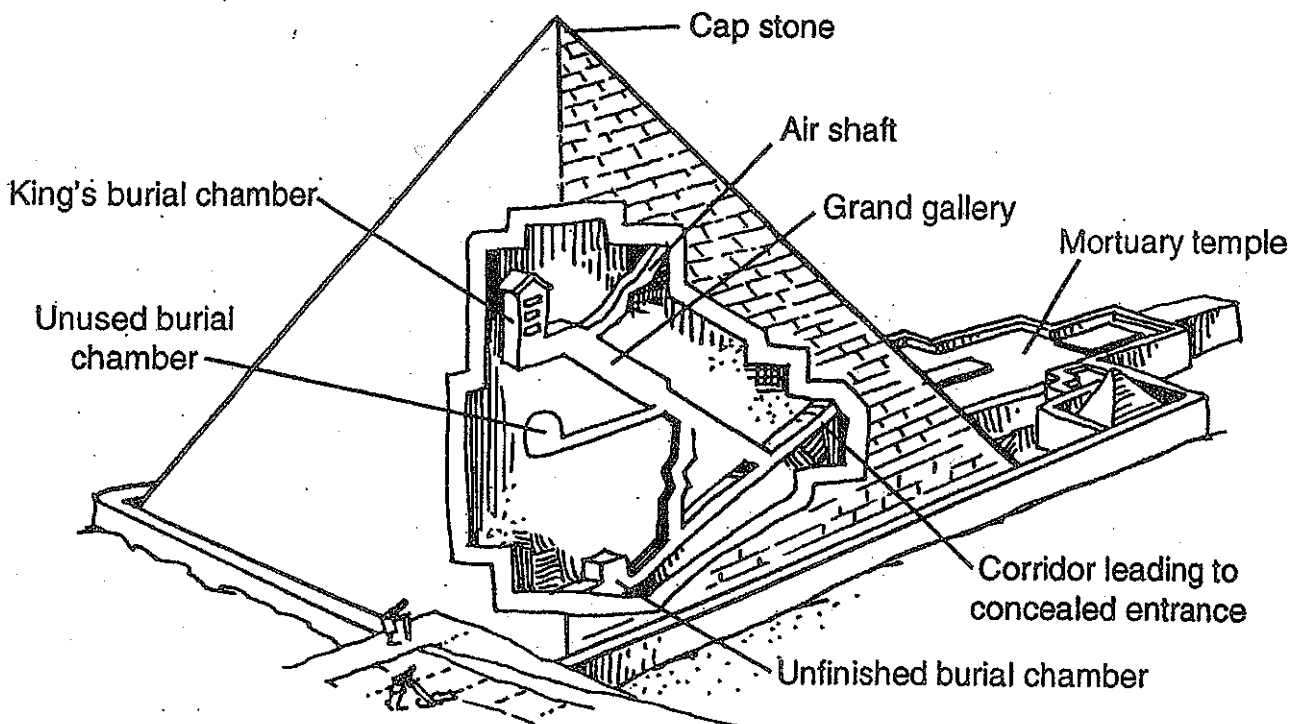
of the pyramid was completed, the ramp was raised and lengthened so that the angle of the ramp remained the same. The ramp eventually covered the sides of the pyramid as construction advanced to the higher levels. Someone looking at the pyramid as it was nearly completed would have only seen a huge mound of earth with workers on top of the mound placing stones at the top. They would have been completely unaware that buried beneath the mound was a magnificent pyramid.

When the last stone was put into place, the workers began to fill in the step-like sides of the pyramid with white limestone. This time they worked down the pyramid. They would pull the limestone blocks up the ramp and fit the blocks into the levels forming a smooth surface. They would then remove a level from the earthen ramp, put in another level of limestone and continue the process. When they had completely worked their way down to the base of the pyramid, they were finished. The white limestone encasement made the surface of the pyramid smooth and beautiful and caused it to glisten in the sunlight.

The interior of the pyramid, or the burial chamber, was built as the pyramid was being constructed. Before the first stone was laid, the burial chamber was dug and prepared. Then, as the pyramid was built layer by layer, an opening was left, forming a corridor which served as an entrance to the burial chamber. For some reason, the original burial chamber beneath The Great Pyramid was not used, and a new burial chamber was built inside the pyramid itself.

The exact measurements of the Great Pyramid are difficult to determine. When the Great Pyramid was built, it was about 480 feet high, about as high as a 42-story skyscraper, but it is not that high today. The top levels of stones have been taken and used for other construction so that it is now about 30 feet less than its original height. In addition, the limestone casing, which gave the pyramid its gleaming surface, is also gone. These stones were also taken to be used in other buildings. Each side of its base measures about 756 feet, and, while each side is not identical, the difference between the longest and shortest side is less than 0.1 percent. This accuracy is surprising considering the primitive tools the Egyptians used.

INSIDE THE PYRAMID



Name _____

Date _____

The Great Pyramid Quiz

Shown below are a number of sentences. Some are true and some are false. If the sentence is true, write the word "true" in front of the sentence. If the sentence is false, write a term that could replace the term written in bold type to make the sentence true.

- _____ 1. Originally, the pyramid had an **alabaster** casing, which gave the pyramid its gleaming surface.
- _____ 2. The accuracy of the construction is surprising, considering the **primitive** tools the Egyptians used.
- _____ 3. A **pulley** was built on each side of the pyramid, making it possible to pull the stones up to the top.
- _____ 4. There were **several** pyramids built at Giza.
- _____ 5. In ancient Egypt the king was called **chief**.
- _____ 6. Over two and one-third **billion** stones were used to build the Great Pyramid.
- _____ 7. The Great Pyramid of Giza was built as a tomb for **King Tut**.
- _____ 8. The pyramid is located close to **Alexandria**, Egypt's modern capital.
- _____ 9. People in the United States use the term **sled** for sledge.
- _____ 10. It may have taken over **20 years** to build the Great Pyramid.
- _____ 11. Most of the construction on the pyramid probably took place only **nine** months of the year.
- _____ 12. It is likely that most men worked on the pyramid when the **Mississippi** River was flooding the farm land.
- _____ 13. Workers used bars to tip the huge stone to the side in order to slip a **wagon** underneath it.
- _____ 14. The interior of the pyramid was the **astronomical observatory**.
- _____ 15. Originally, the pyramid was 30 feet **lower** than it is today.
- _____ 16. Each stone in the pyramid weighed over two and one-half **pounds** each.
- _____ 17. The original height of the pyramid was about as high as a **42-story** skyscraper.
- _____ 18. Each stone was tied to a sledge and set on top of **wheels**, making it easy to roll the stones to the building site.
- _____ 19. The difference between the longest and shortest sides is within **10** percent.
- _____ 20. For nine months of the year, artisans and masons performed the more **intricate** jobs.

Strange Facts About Ancient Egyptian Burials

1. Ancient Egyptians thought that intelligence was in the heart, not the brain.
2. A bronze disc, which carried a spell, was placed under a mummy's head to keep it warm.
3. Mummies were buried facing east so they could see the sun rise each morning.
4. Eyes were sometimes painted on the side of the coffin so the mummy could see what was happening on the outside.
5. The chief embalmer wore a jackal mask representing *Anubis*, the god of mummification.
6. At the tomb, there would be a ceremony called "The Opening of the Mouth." The priest would touch the mummy's mouth with a special implement that was supposed to restore the mummy's senses so it could function in the afterlife.
7. The deceased might have several identical mummy cases, each larger than the next. The mummy would be placed in the smallest case, which would then be placed in the one slightly larger, which would then be placed in the next largest size, and so on.
8. Some tombs contained "Corn Mummies," which looked like real mummies, but inside the wrapped linen were grains of corn. The corn mummy had a mask of Osiris. The purpose of the corn mummy was to help the spirit of the deceased to join Osiris in the afterlife.
9. Ground-up mummies were used as medicine in the sixteenth century.
10. Ground-up mummies were also used to make a brown paint for artists.
11. In the sixteenth century, Egyptians would sometimes burn mummies as fuel.
12. Mummy heads were sold as souvenirs in the nineteenth century and displayed in homes.
13. Pets of the deceased were often mummified and placed in the tomb with their master.
14. Animals were identified with certain gods and were often mummified and buried in what we would call pet cemeteries. Mummies of bulls, baboons, birds, jackals, and even crocodiles have been found.
15. Cats were sacred, and anyone who killed a cat could be put to death. When a pet cat died, it was mummified, placed in a coffin, and buried.
16. When a pet cat died, a family might shave their eyebrows as a way to honor its pet.
17. In the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of cat mummies were shipped from Egypt to England, where they were turned into fertilizer.
18. Mummies can be examined without unwrapping them by using advanced electronic X-ray techniques. Scientists can determine the diseases the mummy had as well as a great deal of information about how he or she lived.
19. The Egyptians believed that you "can take it with you." They placed all sorts of personal belongings—games, beauty aids, and even food—in tombs to be enjoyed in the afterlife.
20. The sarcophagus of the last Egyptian pharaoh was taken to Alexandria, where the Greeks used it as a bathtub.