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### At the Foot of the Pyramid

At last, Meri reached the shore near the pyramid. She had never seen such confusion. Workers were everywhere, shouting to one another. The braying of donkeys mixed with the sound of hammers and axes on stone. The air was filled with a thick yellow dust. It stung her eyes and made her cough. She saw an endless line of yellow blocks being pulled by weary workers.

Meri began working her way through the crowd, searching for her father. Workmen shoved her out of the way. Donkeys almost stepped on her. Splinters of stone flew past, almost hitting her.



# The Nile River

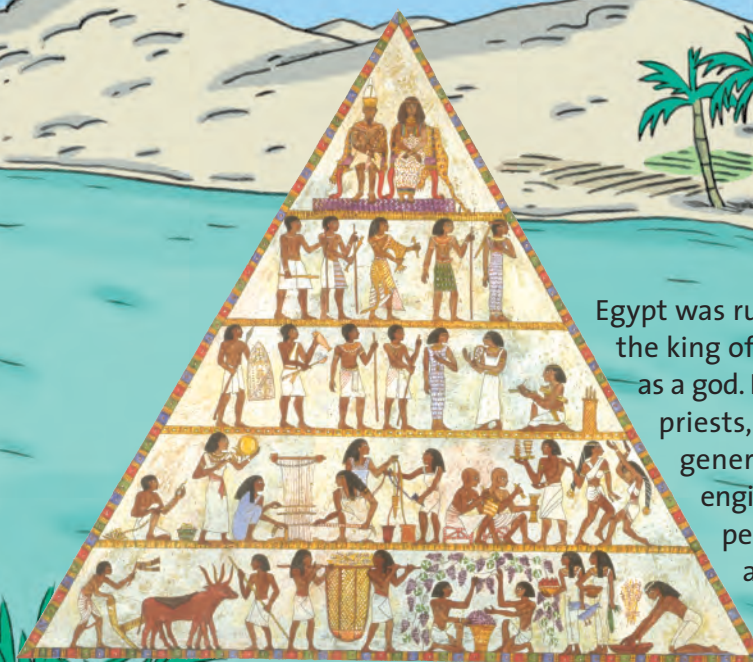
The Egypt of the Pharaohs lasted for 3,000 years!



Many historians believe that the first humans arrived in Egypt after crossing the Sahara Desert in search of water. These early people settled on the banks of the Nile where they founded a great kingdom.

The country's wealth comes from the Nile. The Nile River allowed early Egyptians to grow grains, fruit, and beans. They were also able to fish from its banks—despite the hippos and crocodiles! Muddy clay from the river was used to make pottery and bricks for building. Plants growing on its shore were used to make paper, sandals, and baskets.

Each year, heavy rains caused the Nile to overflow its banks. This kept the soil around the river very healthy. To protect villages, many dikes and dams were built.



Egypt was ruled by the pharaoh. He was the king of Egypt and was worshipped as a god. Beneath the pharaoh were the priests, the scribes, and the military generals. Next came the doctors, engineers, and soldiers. Many more people were merchants, servants, and craftspeople. Most people, however, were laborers and farmers.

The pharaoh held all the power. He ruled the country with the help of his close advisor called a tjaty. The pharaoh lived in a great palace with his family and many servants. On important occasions, the pharaoh would wear special clothing. This included a fake beard and the pschent (skent), which is a double crown representing the union of Upper and Lower Egypt.

## The Egypt of the pharaohs



3000 BC

**Cheops (kē'ops)**  
Ancient Empire  
2700-2200 BC



**Mentuhotep**  
Middle Empire  
2000-1650 BC



**Amenhotep**  
New Empire  
1550-1070 BC

332 BC