

- Ask students to create a biographical dictionary, or Who's Who of Egyptian history, describing the political and cultural achievements of leaders such as Thutmosis III, Ramses II, and Queen Hatshepsut. Students may compare and contrast ancient Egyptian rulers and evaluate which of them had a greater historical impact, providing reasons for their assessment. As a creative writing exercise, students may choose a Pharaoh as their subject for a hypothetical epitaph.
- Ask students to develop comparative maps that show Egyptian expansion during the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms. Students may also put together illustrated time lines that include the factors that made expansion possible.
- Role-play a meeting between Cleopatra and her advisors discussing how to negotiate an alliance with Julius Caesar and the Roman Empire. What compromises should be made? What will the effects of their decision be? To extend the activity, students may research the assassination of Julius Caesar and discuss its impact on the Roman and Egyptian Empires.
- A crucial breakthrough in the study of ancient Egypt occurred with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799. The stone enabled scholars to determine that hieroglyphics have not only symbolic meaning, but also served as a "spoken language." Today the stone is kept at the British Museum in London. Ask students to research the history of the Rosetta Stone and suggest other ways that modern scholars can gain more information about ancient Egypt. More information about the history of the Rosetta Stone may be found at this web site:
www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/hieroglyphics/rosettastone.html

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.ancientegypt.co.uk/menu.html
The British Museum provides a wealth of information on the mysteries of ancient Egypt, including gods and goddesses, pharaohs and pyramids.
- www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/mummy/
The University of Michigan presents an extensive time line, details the practice of mummification and offers a chart to help read hieroglyphs.
- www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmnh/exhibits/egypt/
The Carnegie Museum of Natural History's "Life in Ancient Egypt" is an introduction to its Walton Hall of Ancient Egypt, which contains hundreds of significant artifacts.

Suggested Print Resources

- Baker, Rosalie F. and Charles F. Baker. *Ancient Egyptians: Building for Eternal Glory*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY; 2001.
- Stalcup, Brenda. *Ancient Egyptian Civilization*. Greenhaven Press, San Diego, CA; 2000.
- Wilkinson, Richard H. *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. Thames & Hudson, New York, NY; 2003.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE

Grades 9–12

In the coastal areas along the Mediterranean Sea emerged the cultures and great powers of the ancient world. Understanding the rise and fall of these early civilizations and empires provides us with unique and valuable historical insight, and is the basis for an understanding of civilization today. In *The Fall of Great Empires*, students will learn about the clash of ideas, the legendary struggles for imperial power and the insatiable drive for great wealth that characterized the ancient world. Students will discover how these vast and influential societies declined and left a deep and lasting imprint on the history of Western civilization.



Program Summary

Starting with the legendary Menes, the Pharaohs ruled Ancient Egypt from approximately 3000 BCE until 30 BCE. The Pharaoh was an absolute ruler and not only controlled Egypt, but was worshiped by his subjects as a descendant of the gods. Advanced architects, mathematicians and artists, the ancient Egyptians developed a culture that not only showed a joy of life and but also a preoccupation with the “kingdom of death.” The pyramids served as tombs for the Pharaohs and were richly stored treasure chambers that were often plundered by bandits, who destroyed important evidence of Egypt’s ancient ways.

Of major importance to Egypt’s prosperity was the Nile River, as its flooding provided farmers with fertile soil. Throughout its long history, the Egyptian Empire fended off repeated attacks by nomadic peoples from the desert seeking to control this rich area. After 3,000 years of Pharaoh rule, the Roman Empire longed to conquer this fertile region and turn it into one of its provinces, providing its people with an ample food supply. Upon Caesar’s assassination, Cleopatra’s alliance with Rome fell apart and the Egyptian Empire collapsed. Two thousand years have passed since the end of the Empire of the Pharaohs, and while archaeological finds have provided us with an almost complete picture of the Egyptian Empire, scientists are still discovering new trails that lead back to the Empire’s mysterious past.

Time Line

ca. 3000 BCE — Menes unites Upper and Lower Egypt.

ca. 2650–2120 BCE — The Old Kingdom; the Great Pyramids are built.

ca. 2050–1650 BCE — The Middle Kingdom; the Pharaohs power is at its greatest.

ca. 1550–1070 BCE — The New Kingdom; rule of Hatshepsut, Akhenaton and Tutankhamun; the peak of Egypt’s military power and culture, and the beginning of its decline.

332 BCE — Alexander the Great occupies Egypt.

196 BCE — The Rosetta Stone is carved.

149 BCE — Third Punic War; Carthage is destroyed.

47 BCE — The destruction of the Library at Alexandria.

51–30 BCE — Cleopatra VII reigns; after her death, Egypt is made a province of Rome.

Vocabulary

Egyptian Empire — An ancient empire, ruled by a succession of pharaohs, that was centered on the Nile River and lasted for approximately 3,000 years.

pyramid — A stone structure with a square base and four triangular sides built as a tomb in ancient Egypt.

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Nile — The longest river in the world; it stretches over 4,000 miles from Central Africa to the Mediterranean.

Pharaoh — A ruler of ancient Egypt who was worshiped as a god.

hieroglyphics — A system of writing used by the ancient Egyptians in which pictures represented words or sounds.

Islam — A religion practiced by more than one billion Muslims worldwide. “Islam” comes from the Arabic word for “surrender.”

sarcophagi — Stone containers, which are inscribed with symbols and inscriptions and hold coffins and mummified remains.

Napoleon — A successful French general who took control of France in 1799, and later conquered and dominated Europe. His unsuccessful military incursion into Egypt at the end of the 18th century led to an expansion of the world’s knowledge of Ancient Egyptian culture.

Old Kingdom — Known as the “Age of the Pyramids,” or “Old Empire,” a period in ancient Egypt from about 2650 to 2120 BCE.

Middle Kingdom — A period in ancient Egyptian history that includes the 11th and 12th dynasties, which lasted from about 2050 to 1650 BCE.

New Kingdom — Also known as the “New Empire;” ancient Egypt from about 1550 to 1070 BCE.

Alexander the Great — King of Macedonia and great general who conquered most of the known world in the third century BCE.

Amenhotep IV — The tenth king of the 18th dynasty in ancient Egypt. He changed his name to Akhenaton early in his reign, and was noted for his break with traditional religious views for a more monotheistic framework.

Nefertiti — The queen of Egypt and wife of Akhenaton who was one of the most powerful women of ancient Egypt.

monotheism — A religion based on the belief in one God.

Cleopatra VII — Known as Egypt’s last Pharaoh, as Egypt became a province of Rome after her death in 30 BCE.

Julius Caesar — A popular Roman general who declared himself dictator for life; he was assassinated by members of the Roman Senate in 44 BCE.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Some of the oldest known writing has been found in Egypt and dates to around 3300 BCE. Discuss with students the importance of written history in understanding ancient civilizations.
- For centuries, people have been fascinated by many of the mysterious aspects of Egyptian culture. What were the pyramids? What purpose did they serve in ancient Egypt?
- The ancient Egyptians built their cities along the Nile River. Have students speculate about the advantages and disadvantages of living near the river.

Follow-up Discussion

- Who was Menes? What was the significance of his unification of Upper and Lower Egypt? What pros and cons are associated with creating a large nation-state?
- Why did Rome want to control Egypt? What was Cleopatra’s strategy in dealing with this threat? Ask students to evaluate her decision to align her empire with Rome.
- What is monotheism? How did Akhenaton attempt to revolutionize Egypt? Students may discuss the consequences of his decision and describe how individuals might have reacted to this philosophical shift at the time.

Follow-up Activities

- Pharaohs and wealthy Egyptians spent much time choosing the final resting place for their mummified bodies. Ask students to research the funerary equipment that was placed in a prominent person’s tomb, describe the purposes for these items and create lists of things they would want in their own burial chambers. Students may learn more about ancient Egyptian death preparations at the Theban Mapping Project web site, based at the American University in Cairo (www.thebanmappingproject.com/articles/article_5.2.html).
- Ask students to identify the Nile river valley on a map, investigate its climate and physical geography and plot where ancient Egyptian cities were located. As a follow-up, ask groups of students to research the technology for flood control and irrigation in the Nile valley, and to write a hypothetical proposal from an Egyptian engineer to the Pharaoh describing the best way to develop the Nile river valley for agriculture.
- Cleopatra’s needle is a huge, four-sided obelisk built to honor Pharaoh Tuthmosis III, that was brought to New York’s Central Park in 1880. Ask students to research the reign of Tuthmosis III, create a list of his accomplishments and discuss the story of how this priceless antiquity dedicated to him came to America. While this particular obelisk was given to America, other valuable cultural items have been taken from Egypt over the centuries, leading some to call for their return to Egypt. One item in particular is the 3,300-year-old bust of the legendary Queen Nefertiti, which some allege Germany deceitfully took from Egypt. Ask students to debate whether precious antiquities stolen from Egypt recently, as well as those taken out of the country in earlier times, should be given back.
- Ask students to research, compare and contrast the cultural, political and economic aspects of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, India and Mesopotamia. Students may create a Venn diagram describing the ways that Egyptian, Indian and Mesopotamian societies borrowed from each other. As a follow-up, ask students to discuss some modern examples of cultural borrowing.

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