Chapter 2: The Spread of Civilization, c. 3100 B.C. – c. 200 B.C.
Lesson 1: The Rise of Egypt
1. What continent is Egypt mostly located on?
   A. Asia. C. Africa.
   B. Australia. D. Europe.

2. Which of the following is the longest river in the world?
   A. Tigris River. C. Indus River.
It Matters Because

• **Egypt**, like **Mesopotamia**, was one of the first **river valley civilizations**.

• **Ancient Egyptian history** included 3 long periods of stability and achievement interspersed with shorter periods of political disorder.
Geography & Religion

• Guiding Question: What was the significance of geography to Egypt’s development?

• The Nile River played an important role in Egyptian civilization.

• Egyptians wrote of their reliance on the great river in “Hymn to the Nile,” praising it as the “creator of all good” in its ability to bring them food and other riches.

• The Nile River begins in the heart of Africa and courses northward for more than 4,000 miles.

• The Nile River is the longest river in the world.

• Before it empties into the Mediterranean, the Nile River splits into 2 major branches.

• This split forms a triangular territory called a delta.

• The Nile Delta region is called Lower Egypt; the land upstream, to the south, is called Upper Egypt.
Geographically and culturally, the Nile River was at the heart of ancient Egypt. The waters of the Nile enabled the Egyptians to farm, travel, and build a civilization. The river also had enormous symbolic meaning for the early Egyptians.
The ancient Egyptians referred to the river’s yearly flooding as the “miracle” of the Nile.

The Nile River rose in the summer from heavy rains in central Africa, reached its highest point in Egypt in early autumn, and left a deposit of mud that created an area of rich soil several miles wide on both sides of the river.

Farmers in the Nile Valley grew a surplus of food, which made Egypt prosperous.

The Nile River also served to unify Egypt.

In ancient times, the Nile River was the fastest way to travel through the land, making communication easier.

North winds pushed sailboats south, and the Nile’s current carried them north.
Traveling downriver, or to the north, was relatively easy for the ancient Egyptians. The Nile’s current moved in that direction, so a ship in the river was naturally carried northward.
Traveling upriver, or to the south, was a more difficult task. Even powerful strokes with an oar could not carry a vessel very far against the current. Instead, the Egyptians built sails to take advantage of the power of the wind.
Geography & Religion

• Egypt’s natural barriers provided protection from invasion and a sense of security.

• These barriers included the deserts to the west and east; the Red Sea to the east; the cataracts (rapids) on the southern part of the Nile; and the Mediterranean Sea to the north.

• The regularity of the Nile floods and the relative isolation of the Egyptians created a feeling of security and changelessness.

• Unlike people in Mesopotamia, Egyptians faced life with a spirit of confidence in the stability of things.

• Ancient Egyptian civilization was characterized by a remarkable degree of continuity over thousands of years.
Geography & Religion

• Religion, like physical geography, played a central role in the development of Egyptian civilization.
• Religion provided the Egyptians with a sense of security and timelessness.
• The Egyptians had no word for religion.
• For them, religious ideas represented an inseparable part of the entire world order.
• The Egyptians were polytheistic.
• The Egyptians had a number of gods associated with heavenly bodies and natural forces.
• The Egyptian ruler took the title “Son of Re.”
• The rulers were seen as an earthly form of Re, one of the sun god’s names.
Guiding Question: What characterizes the divisions in the first two major periods in Egypt’s history?

Scholars divide Egyptian history into 3 major periods:

1. Old Kingdom
2. Middle Kingdom
3. New Kingdom

These were periods of long-term stability marked by strong leadership, freedom from invasion, great building projects, and rich cultural activity.

In between were the Intermediate periods - times of political disorder and invasion.
Egyptian Kingdoms

• Egypt’s history begins around 3100 B.C., when King Menes united Upper and Lower Egypt into a single kingdom and created the first royal dynasty - a family of rulers whose right to rule is passed on within the family.

• From then on, the Egyptian ruler would be called “King of Upper and Lower Egypt.”

• The crown was a double crown, indicating the unity of all Egypt.
The Old Kingdom

- The **Old Kingdom**, which lasted from around 2700 B.C. to 2200 B.C., was an age of prosperity and splendor.
- The **monarchs** of the **Old Kingdom** were powerful rulers over a unified state.
- Among the various titles of Egyptian monarchs, that of **pharaoh** – originally meaning “great house” or “palace” – eventually became the most common.
- Egyptian **religion** heavily influenced the development of kingship, as one tomb inscription noted, “What is the King of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and mother of all men, alone by himself, without an equal.”
- In obeying their **pharaoh**, subjects were helping to maintain a stable world order.
The Old Kingdom

• Egyptian pharaohs possessed absolute power; that is, they had complete, unlimited power to rule their people. Nevertheless, they had help in ruling.

• At first, members of the pharaoh’s family provided this help.

• During the Old Kingdom, however, a government bureaucracy – an administrative organization with officials and regular procedures – developed.

• In time, Egypt was divided into 42 provinces, which were run by governors appointed by the pharaoh.

• An example of the splendor of the Old Kingdom is the building of pyramids- one of the great achievements of Egyptian civilization.

• Pyramids were built as a part of a larger complex of buildings dedicated to the dead – in effect, a city of the dead.
The Old Kingdom

- To preserve the physical body after death, the Egyptians practiced mummification - a process of slowly drying a dead body to prevent it from rotting.
- This process took place in workshops run by priests, primarily for the wealthy families who could afford it.
- Workers first removed the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines and placed them in 4 special jars that were put in the tomb with the mummy.
- They then covered the corpse with a natural salt that absorbed the body’s water.
- Later, they filled the body with spices and wrapped it with layers of linen soaked in resin.
- At the end of the process, which took about 70 days, a lifelike mask was placed over the head and shoulders of the mummy.
- The mummy was then sealed in a case and placed in its tomb.
Canopic Jars
The Old Kingdom

• **Pyramids** were tombs for the mummified bodies of pharaohs.
• The largest and most magnificent of all the **pyramids** was built under King Khufu.
• Constructed at Giza around 2540 B.C., the famous **Great Pyramid of King Khufu** covers 13 acres, measures 756 feet at each side of its base, and stands 481 feet high.
• Speculation still surrounds the building of the **Great Pyramid**.
• Especially puzzling is how the builders achieved their amazing level of precision.
The three large pyramids in the picture (from left to right: Menkaure, Khafre, and Khufu) are called the Pyramids of Giza. Each pyramid was built to house the remains of a different Egyptian king. Originally built about 2500 B.C. during the Fourth Dynasty of Egypt, the pyramids have long been recognized as a marvel of architecture and construction.
The Old Kingdom

• Guarding the Great Pyramid at Giza is a huge figure carved from rock, known as the Great Sphinx.
• This colossal statue is 240 feet long and 66 feet high.
• It has the body of a lion and a human head.
• Historians do not agree on the purpose of the Great Sphinx.
• Many Egyptians, however, believed that the mythical sphinx was an important guardian of sacred sites.
The Old Kingdom

• The Great Pyramid still stands as a visible symbol of the power of the Egyptian pharaohs of the Old Kingdom.
• No pyramid built later matched its size or splendor.
• The pyramid was not only the pharaoh’s tomb, but also an important symbol of royal power.
• It could be seen for miles and served to remind people of the glory, might, and wealth of the ruler who was a living god on Earth.
The Middle Kingdom

- The **Old Kingdom** eventually collapsed, followed by a period of disorder that lasted about 150 years.
- Finally, a new **dynasty** gained control of all Egypt.
- **The Middle Kingdom** lasted from about 2055 B.C. to 1650 B.C.
- Egyptians later portrayed the **Middle Kingdom** as a golden age of stability.
- As evidence of its newfound strength, **Egypt** began a period of expansion.
- It conquered Nubia to the south and built fortresses to protect the new frontier.
- **Pharaohs** also sent traders to Kush, Syria, **Mesopotamia**, and Crete.
- One feature of the **Middle Kingdom** was a new concern of the **pharaohs** for the people.
- In the **Old Kingdom**, the **pharaoh** had been seen as a god-king far removed from his people. Now he was portrayed as the shepherd of his people and expected to build public works and provide for the public welfare.
Life in Ancient Egypt

• Guiding Question: How was Egyptian society organized?
• Over a period of thousands of years, Egyptian society maintained a simple structure.
• It was organized like a pyramid, with the god-king at the top.
• The pharaoh was surrounded by an upper class of nobles and priests who ran the government and managed their own landed estates.
• Below the upper class were the merchants, artisans, scribes, and tax collectors.
• Merchants carried on an active trade up and down the Nile River and in local markets.
• Egyptian artisans made a huge variety of well-built, beautiful goods: wooden furniture; gold, silver, and copper tools and containers; paper and rope made of papyrus; and linen clothing.
Life in Ancient Egypt

• By far, the largest number of people in Egypt farmed the land.
• In theory, the pharaoh owned all the land, but granted portions of it to his subjects.
• Large sections of land were held by nobles and the priests who supervised the numerous temples.
• Most of the lower classes were peasants who farmed the land of these estates.
• They paid taxes in the form of crops to the pharaoh, nobles, and priests; lived in small villages; and were forced to provide military service and labor for building projects.
Class status was generally quite rigid in ancient Egypt, but some upward mobility for very ambitious, talented, or fortunate individuals was possible. There were several ways people from humble origins could climb up the social ladder. One was through military service; another was for one’s family to invest in an elite education at a nearby school, usually run by priests. Then it would be possible to get a position in the state bureaucracy, which could prove lucrative. The excerpt below, taken from an Egyptian architect’s autobiography, suggests yet another way to raise one’s status. As a general rule, however, people remained in the class into which they were born.

“His majesty found me a common builder. His majesty conferred upon me the [successive offices of] journeyman builder, master builder, and master of a craft. [Next] his majesty conferred upon me the [successive offices of] Royal Constructor and Builder, Royal AttachÈ, and Royal Constructor and Architect. . . . His majesty did all this because his majesty favored me so greatly.”

—Nekhebu, quoted in The Culture of Ancient Egypt
Life in Ancient Egypt

- **Parents** arranged marriages for their **children** (girls at age 12 and boys at age 14).
- The main purpose of marriage was to produce **children**, especially **sons**.
- Only **sons** could carry on the family name.
- The **husband** was considered master of the house, but **wives** were well respected.
- Women’s property and inheritance stayed in their hands, even in marriage.
- Most careers and public offices were closed to **women**, but some **women** operated businesses.
- **Peasant women** worked long hours in the fields and in the home.
- **Upper-class women** could become priestesses, and 4 queens became **pharaohs**.
Egypt developed a very sophisticated educational system, though it was generally only available for the sons of the elite. From a very young age, youths were taught reading, writing, medicine, mathematics, and science. Many went on to become scribes and served the state. Others became priests, overseeing the rituals that gave order to Egyptian society. Whatever path the students were bound for, Egyptian schools were not creative environments, but places that stressed rote memorization and a strict adherence to tradition.

“The education of children, especially of the boys, was considered to be of great importance. They appear to have been sent to boarding-school at the age of four. . . . The subjects taught at the school were chiefly reading, writing, and arithmetic. Great pains were taken that the boys should be well trained as they were all being educated to be clerks in government offices, or priests, or artists; reading and writing were essential for these three professions, and for the government service arithmetic was of great practical value on account of the complicated system of taxation.”

— from Margaret A. Murray, *The Splendour That Was Egypt*, 2004
• One system of writing in Egypt emerged around 3000 B.C.
• The Greeks later called this earliest Egyptian writing hieroglyphics-meaning “priest-carvings” or “sacred writings.”
• This system of writing, which used pictures and more abstract forms, was complex.
• It appears in writing on temple walls and in tombs.
• A simplified version of hieroglyphics, known as hieratic script, was used for daily life.
• Hieroglyphics were at first carved in stone and, later, hieratic script was written on papyrus— a paper made from papyrus reeds that grew along the Nile.
The ancient Egyptians first developed a hieroglyphic script around 3000 B.C. Hieroglyphic writing uses a system of symbols or pictures to convey ideas or sounds. These complex symbols, often associated with Egyptian culture, are mainly found on tombs, monuments, and stone carvings. However, in everyday life, Egyptians used a much simpler form of hieroglyphics known as hieratic script. Hieratic script was generally used for keeping records or writing stories such as this excerpt from the Story of Sinuhe written on papyrus. Sinuhe was an official who spent much of his life in exile in Syria, but he longed to return to Egypt.
Papyrus Plant

Paper being made from Papyrus
Egyptian Accomplishments

- **Pyramids**, temples, and other monuments bear witness to the architectural and artistic achievements of the ancient **Egyptians**.
- Artists and sculptors were expected to follow particular formulas in style.
- For example, the human body was often portrayed as a combination of profile, semi-profile, and frontal view to accurately represent each part.
- **Egyptians** also made advances in mathematics.
- As early as 3500 B.C., the **Egyptians** had developed a number system that allowed them to count indefinitely and to make complex calculations necessary for their massive monuments.
- **Egyptians** were able to calculate area and volume and used geometry to survey flooded land.
- These concepts of geometry were later built upon by Hellenistic mathematicians after the conquest of Alexander the Great.
Egyptian Accomplishments

• The **Egyptians** developed an accurate 365-day calendar by basing their year on the movements of the moon and on the bright star **Sirius**.

• **Sirius** rises in the sky just before the annual (yearly) flooding of the **Nile River**, providing a standard date from which to calculate.

• The Romans later adopted this calendar in the first century B.C. and provided the basis for our current calendar developed in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
Assignment

• You will complete an assignment over decoding Egyptian hieroglyphics.
• Some hieroglyphics (pictures) are the same as other letters so you will have to determine which letter goes in the correct blank.
• Make sure your name is on your assignment before you turn it in!
• Turn your assignment into the organizer after you have finished completing it.