

The rise and fall of the Egyptian civilisation

People had lived on the banks of the Nile for thousands of years before the Egyptian civilisation formed. These people hunted on the banks and fished in the river. About 5000 BC they began to grow crops and settled down to live in villages. There were two groups of villages. One group was on land around the southern part of the Nile. This area became known as Upper Egypt. The other group was on land around the northern part of the Nile. This area became known as Lower Egypt. Each group of villages became a kingdom.

About 3100 BC there was a battle between the two kingdoms and the kingdom of Upper Egypt won and the whole of Egypt became one kingdom. After the first king of all Egypt died, it is believed that his son took over as ruler. Over the years there were many rulers all from the same family. A group of rulers from the same family who reigned one after the other is called a dynasty. There were thirty dynasties in the Egyptian civilisation.

Archaeologists have divided some of the dynasties into kingdoms. The first kingdom is known as the Old Kingdom. This was the time when the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx were built. The Middle Kingdom followed. In this time, large parts of Nubia and Kush were conquered and added to the empire. The last kingdom was the New Kingdom. In this time, the temples at Karnak were built, great obelisks were set up and the tombs were made in the Valley of the Kings.

The last dynasty began with Alexander the Great who invaded Egypt from Macedonia and became king. When Alexander died his general called Ptolemy became king and his descendants ruled Egypt for another three hundred years until it became part of the Roman empire in 31 BC.

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Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

This worksheet gives the students a chance to consider some of the main events in the Egyptian civilisation as a piece of prose instead of a timeline and gives an opportunity for them to display their skills in comprehension. As there are a great many facts for the students to consider, you may like to use this activity to summarise previous work and provide a broad yet simple outline on which to build up their knowledge in further work.

Younger students

Some students may need help in extracting information from the text. Write these questions on the board for the students to answer.

1. How did the first people who lived by the Nile get their food? (By hunting and fishing).
2. What was the additional food that the villagers ate? (They ate the crops that they had grown).
3. How many kingdoms were there in the Egyptian civilisation and what were their names? (Three: Old, Middle and New kingdoms).
4. Who began the last dynasty in Egypt? (Alexander the Great).
5. What happened at the end of the Egyptian civilisation? (It became part of the Roman empire.)

Outcomes

The students:

- Can extract information from a text.
- Know how the people of the Nile changed their ways to set up the kingdom.

- Know that there were three kingdoms in the Egyptian civilisation.
- Know that Egypt became part of the Roman empire.

Older students

The students should answer the questions that have been set for younger students then answer the following.

6. What are the two parts of Egypt that became one kingdom? (Upper and Lower Egypt).
7. About how long did it take from the formation of the first villages to the setting up of one kingdom for the whole of Egypt (5500 – 3100 = 2,400 years).
8. What is a dynasty. (A group of rulers from the same family who reigned one after another.)
9. In which part of the Egyptian civilisation were the main pyramids built – early, middle or late? (Early).
10. In which part of the Egyptian civilisation were the tombs made in the Valley of the Kings – early, middle or late? (Late).
11. How long did Egypt last as a kingdom after it formed in 3100 BC? (3100 – 31 = 3,069 years).

Outcomes

The students:

- Can extract information from a text.
- Know how the people of the Nile changed their ways to set up the kingdom.
- Know that there were three kingdoms in the Egyptian civilisation.
- Know that Egypt became part of the Roman empire.
- Can perform calculations on the information.
- Can explain what a dynasty was.
- Can identify times when some major features of the Egyptian civilisation were set up.