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Pyramids

The pyramids were the tombs that were built for the Pharaohs – the kings. The size of the pyramid was built to show the importance of the person who was buried in it. The ancient Egyptians believed that if a person was mummified that they would live forever, so they built these tombs to keep their bodies.

The most famous pyramid is the Great Pyramid (right), built for Pharaoh Khufu. When it was built it was over 140 metres high and took 20 years to build. It stands alongside many other smaller ones. The Great Pyramid has a rough rocky surface because the outer layer of rock has worn down. When the pyramid was originally built, it would have had an outer layer of stone with a smooth appearance.

Inside the pyramid there are a lot of hieroglyphics which tell the story of the pharaoh that was buried there. These would be used to tell the achievements and adventures of the Pharaoh. These hieroglyphics are why we know so much about the ancient Egyptian civilisation and the people who ruled it.

There are over 130 pyramids that have been found in Egypt, the earliest being the Pyramid of Djoser which was built around 2650BC. The last pyramids were finished around 1800 BC.

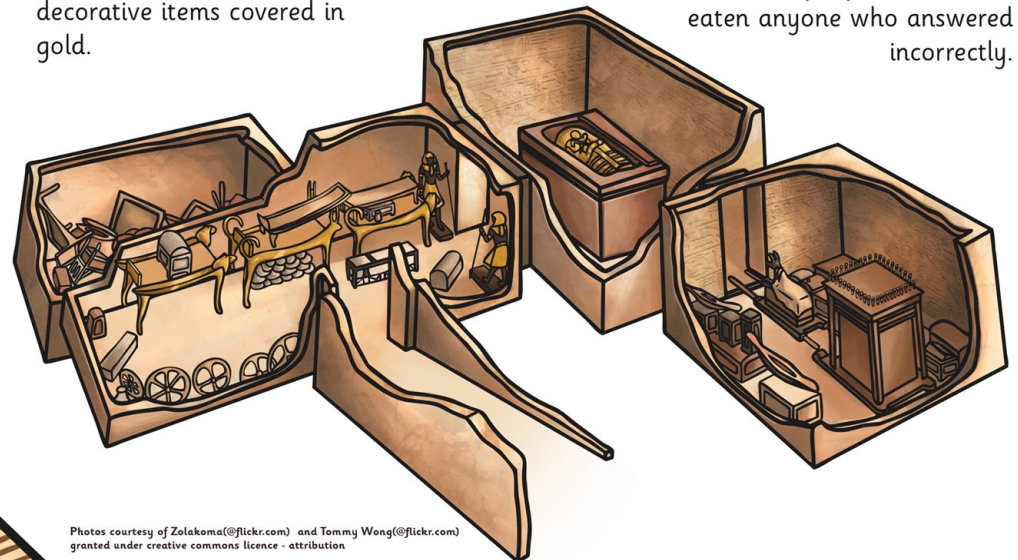
The Afterlife

The Egyptians believed that after you died, you would go into a new life. They also believed that when you did this you would take all your items that you owned with you. This meant that Egyptian families would put things into the grave of their loved one that they thought they would need.



The Tomb

The inside of an Egyptian tomb looked something like the example below. The body of the pharaoh was placed in a sarcophagus (a large stone coffin) which was then surrounded by other chambers, filled with items that they thought they would need in the afterlife, mostly decorative items covered in gold.



The Sphinx

The sphinx (above) had the body of a lion and the head of a pharaoh and sometimes the wings of a large bird. It was a mythical creature which was meant to guard the pyramid from harm. In myth, the sphinx is said to have asked people riddles and eaten anyone who answered incorrectly.