

Lesson Two: Egyptian History

6.20 Identify the Old, Middle, and New Kingdom time periods and evaluate the significance of the following: · Menes · Khufu · Hyksos invasion · Ahmose · King Tut · Queen Hatshepsut

Pharaohs Unify Egypt

What is a dynasty? How did ancient Egyptians choose rulers?

Egypt's first civilizations were small villages scattered along the Nile River. During these early days, Egypt was not united. In the ruins of Egyptian towns from this period, scenes painted on walls show bloody battles, suggesting that wars were commonplace among the Egyptians. Over time, the people formed two kingdoms: Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt.

Around 3100 BCE, the two kingdoms became one. It is believed that Menes, king of Upper Egypt, led his forces into Lower Egypt and seized control. Menes unified the people living along the Nile into one nation and so became Egypt's first pharaoh, or ruler. Egyptians believed that Menes and the pharaohs that followed him were not just kings, but gods on Earth.

That is one version of the story. Because these events occurred over 5,000 years ago, information about them is incomplete, and historians disagree about how Egypt became a united kingdom. Some historians believe Menes is a myth—that he didn't exist. In these historians' view, several kings helped unite Egypt. Others believe that the drawings and hieroglyphics from that period show Menes ruling Egypt for 62 years until a hippopotamus killed him. These historians claim that Menes founded Egypt's first dynasty, or series of rulers from the same family.

Rulers in many civilizations have passed leadership from one generation of the ruling family to the next. Sometimes, these transitions have gone smoothly, with the ruler's son—or sometimes daughter—assuming control after the ruler's death. At other times, disagreements over succession have led to bloody battles as families and outside forces have fought to determine who would be the next ruler.

For 3,000 years after Egypt's unification, pharaohs from at least 31 different dynasties ruled Egypt. The pharaohs and their families had immense power over Egyptian society.

Answer the following questions using the article.

1. What were the names of the two kingdoms first formed in Egypt?

2. Why is Menes important?

3. Define dynasty.

4. What is a pharaoh and what role do they play in ancient Egypt?

Watch, "Pharaoh Menes Unites Egypt"

5. How did the Nile help Menes keep Egypt united?

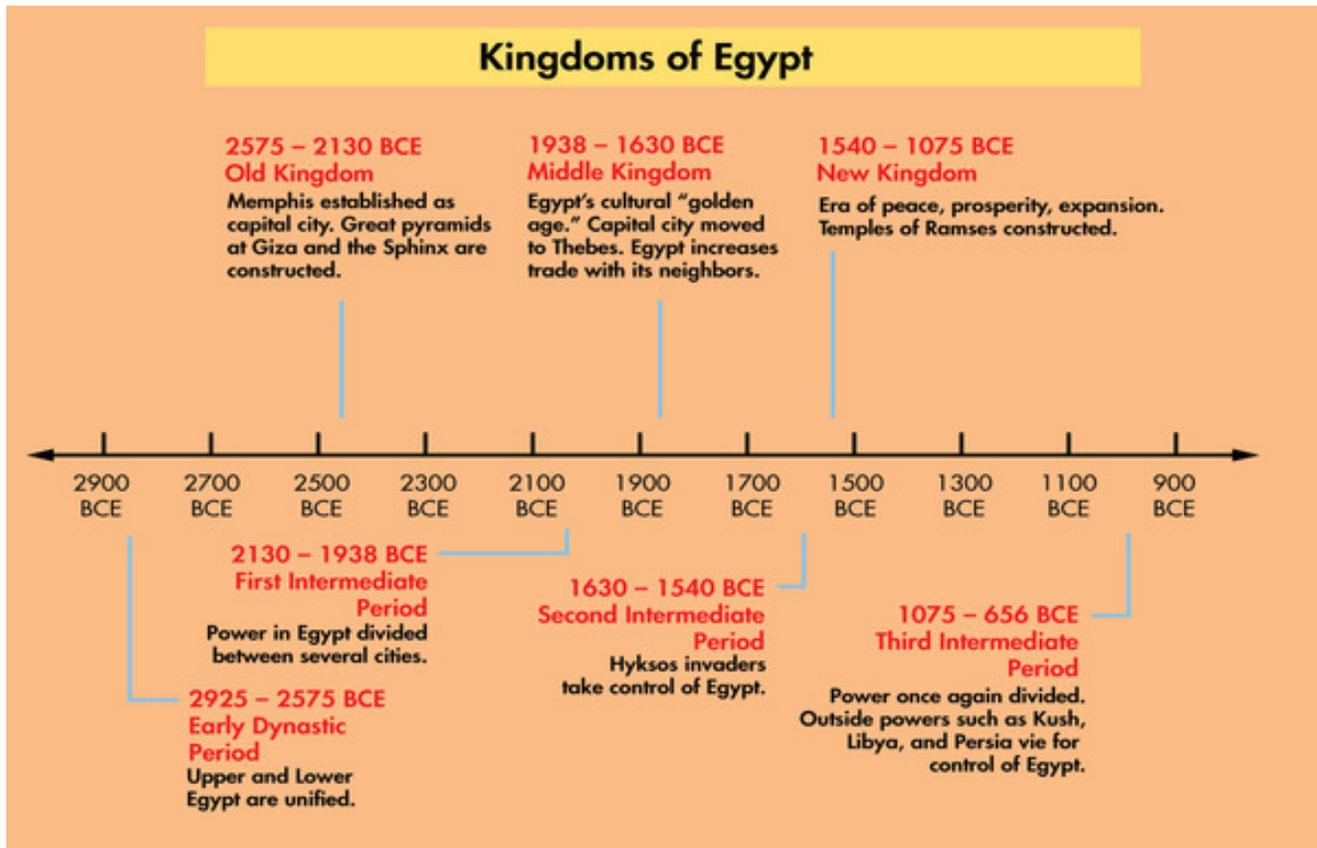
Egypt's Kingdoms

How do historians organize Egypt's history?

Think about the oldest person you know and all of the changes he or she has lived through. Chances are that this person is less than 100 years old. Now imagine trying to keep track of 3,000 years of history!

Historians today use Egypt's many dynasties as a convenient way to divide up its long timeline. They group these dynasties into three main time periods: the **Old Kingdom**, the **Middle Kingdom**, and the **New Kingdom**.

The time before the Old Kingdom is known as the Early Dynastic Period. During this time, Egypt's culture was beginning to form, but **Egyptians** had not yet built large cities. Between each major era were Intermediate Periods. These periods were times of change and conflict when no one central power ruled over all of Egypt. Each of these periods had powerful pharaohs who influenced the history of Egypt and the world.



Answer the following questions using the article.

1. What are the three main periods Egypt's history is broken into?

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3. What are the intermediate periods?

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4. Match the event to the correct time period.

	Hyksos invaders take control of Egypt
	Upper and Lower Egypt are unified
	The pyramids are built
	Capital is moved from Memphis to Thebes
	Ramses the Great rules Egypt

Great Leaders of Egypt

How did Egypt's most powerful rulers leave their marks on history?

The pharaohs ruled Egypt for 3,000 years, leaving behind great monuments, elaborate cities, and fascinating histories. Because many ancient historians mixed true history with legends, there are often conflicting accounts of pharaohs' lives. Still, among all of the pharaohs to have ruled Egypt, there are several whose impact on history has been particularly important.

King Khufu – Pyramid Builder

Egypt's most recognizable ancient site was built by one of its earlier pharaohs. The Great **Pyramid at Giza** was constructed by King **Khufu** during the **Old Kingdom's** Fourth **Dynasty**—about 2570 BCE. To accomplish this feat, ancient **Egyptians** combined advanced knowledge of geometry and architecture with the use of huge amounts of physical labor. The pyramid consists of more than two million limestone and granite blocks. Nearby, there are three small pyramids for each of Khufu's wives. Khufu's descendants also ordered great building projects. His son, Khafre, and grandson, Menkaura, also built pyramids at Giza.

Ahmose – Expeller of the Hyksos

King of Egypt (r. 1570-1546 bc), founder of the 18th Dynasty, the first of the New Kingdom. A Theban prince, he completed (c. 1567 bc) the expulsion of the Hyksos begun by his brother Kamose (r. about 1576-1570 bc), recaptured northern Nubia, and reorganized Egypt as a unified country under his sole rule.

Hatshepsut and Thutmose III – A Powerful Pair

While men dominated Egyptian society, some women did become powerful. Queen **Hatshepsut** ruled for 20 years during the **New Kingdom**, becoming one of the most famous female pharaohs. Beginning around 1479 BCE, she became regent, or temporary ruler, for her young stepson, **Thutmose III**. Later, she named herself **pharaoh** alongside him. Ancient Egyptian depictions of Hatshepsut show her wearing male clothing and even a beard. This indicates her power as pharaoh. Her rule was a peaceful one as Hatshepsut focused on trade and building projects.

Artwork in Hatshepsut's temple shows a trading journey to Punt in East Africa. Items such as gold, ebony, and myrrh trees were brought back to Egypt. Hatshepsut also built temples dedicated to the god Amon-Re and remodeled her father's temple. However, her biggest achievement was her own burial temple, Dayr al-Bahrī. This temple in **Thebes** is a large, carefully carved temple that is interconnected with an older temple for King Mentuhotep II and the temple of Thutmose III.

Toward the end of her reign, Hatshepsut passed more power to Thutmose III. He ruled as pharaoh for more than 30 years after Hatshepsut's death. Thutmose's independent rule was different from his time sharing power with his stepmother. He was a successful warrior who conquered land from Southwest Asia to **Kush**, the land south of Egypt. His efforts helped make Egypt a great military power.

These two powerful rulers shared power, but did they get along? The evidence is mixed. There are no records of conflict between the two during Hatshepsut's time as pharaoh. During his reign, however, Thutmose III began a program to erase all records of his stepmother's reign and dedicate all monuments built for her to the rulers who came before her. Historians have not pinpointed the exact motives for Thutmose III's actions against Hatshepsut, though. It remains a mystery to this day.

Ramses the Great – Warrior and King

Another pharaoh also had great achievements as a soldier. **Ramses II** ruled Egypt from 1279–1213 BCE during the New Kingdom. His 60-year rule was marked by victories on the battlefield and great building projects throughout Egypt. Ramses fought major wars against the nearby Hittites and Libyans. He completed several temples inside the capital city, Thebes, and six temples in the distant land of Kush. He even built a new capital city named Pi-Ramesses (city of Ramses). The ruins of many of these buildings are filled with inscriptions celebrating Ramses as a great ruler.

King Tut – The Boy Pharaoh

Tutankhamen, the Egyptian pharaoh commonly called King Tut, was possibly the son of King Akhenaton. Akhenaton was the pharaoh who altered Egypt's religion by establishing a cult to the sun. King Tut reigned for a short time and at the age of 19, he died. Under his rule, traditional Egyptian religion and art were restored.

Archaeologist Howard Carter discovered King Tut's tomb, intact, in the Valley of Kings in the 1920s. King Tut is famous today largely because the fabulous treasures of his tomb have been on exhibit around the world. His solid gold death mask is instantly recognizable. Scientific analysis of his mummified remains has suggested that he was frail and died of complications related to malaria.

Answer the following questions using the article.

1. Match the pharaoh with their accomplishments

	Built the Great Pyramid of Giza during the Old Kingdom
	Powerful woman pharaoh of ancient Egypt who focused on trade and building projects
	Drove out the Hyksos and was the first ruler of the New Kingdom
	Pharaoh who is known for his tomb. He ruled for a short time at the age of 19, but then died.
	Ruled Egypt for 60 years

Watch, "Ancient Egyptian Pharaohs"

Who is your favorite pharaoh and why? Support your opinion with two reasons.

Evaluate

1. What do the following terms mean: Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom?

2. Briefly explain the relevance of the following terms in Egyptian history

Menes	
Khufu	
Hyksos Invasion	
Ahmosé	
King Tut	
Queen Hatshepsut	
Ramses the Great	