

# The Egyptian Empire

## Guide to Reading



### History Social Science Standards

**WH.6.2** Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush.

### Looking Back, Looking Ahead

During the Old Kingdom, Egyptians established their civilization. During the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom, Egypt's powerful pharaohs expanded the empire by conquering other lands.

### Focusing on the Main Ideas

- The Middle Kingdom was a golden age of peace, prosperity, and advances in the arts and architecture. (page 179)
- During the New Kingdom, Egypt acquired new territory and reached the height of its power. (page 180)
- Akhenaton tried to change Egypt's religion, while Tutankhamen is famous for the treasures buried with him in his tomb. (page 183)
- Under Ramses II, Egypt regained territory and built great temples, but the empire fell by 1150 B.C. (page 184)

### Locating Places

Thebes (THEEBZ)

### Meeting People

Ahmose (AHM•OHS)

Hatshepsut (hat•SHEHP•soot)

Thutmose III (thoot•MOH•suh)

Akhenaton (AHK•NAH•tuhn)

Tutankhamen

(TOO•TANG•KAH•muhn)

Ramses II (RAM•SEEZ)

### Content Vocabulary

tribute (TRIH•byoot)

### Academic Vocabulary

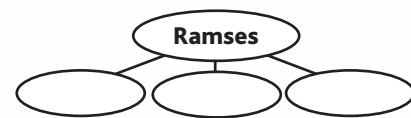
restore (rih•STOHR)

maintain (mayn•TAYN)

construct (kuhn•STRUHKT)

### Reading Strategy

**Categorizing Information** Create a diagram to show the major accomplishments of Ramses II.



## Where & When?



2400 B.C.

c. 2050 B.C.  
Middle Kingdom begins

1600 B.C.

c. 1500 B.C.  
Queen Hatshepsut reigns

800 B.C.

c. 1279 B.C.  
Ramses II takes the throne



**WH6.2** Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush.

**WH6.2.5** Discuss the main features of Egyptian art and architecture.

## The Middle Kingdom

**Main Idea** The Middle Kingdom was a golden age of peace, prosperity, and advances in the arts and architecture.

**Reading Connection** Have you heard older people talk about enjoying their “golden years”? Countries can also experience such happy, productive times. In the following paragraphs, you’ll learn why the Middle Kingdom was a golden age for Egypt.

About 2300 B.C., the pharaohs lost control of Egypt as nobles battled one another for power. Almost 200 years of confusion followed. Finally, a new dynasty of pharaohs came to power. They moved their capital south from Memphis to a city called **Thebes** (THEEBZ). There they **restored** order and stability, ushering in a new period called the Middle Kingdom.

The Middle Kingdom lasted from about 2050 B.C. to 1670 B.C. During this interval, Egyptians enjoyed a golden age of stability, prosperity, and achievement.

**The Drive for More Land** During the Middle Kingdom, Egypt took control of new lands. Soldiers captured Nubia to the south and attacked what is now Syria. The conquered peoples sent **tribute** (TRIH•byoot), or forced payments, to the Egyptian pharaoh, enriching the kingdom.

Within Egypt, the pharaohs added more waterways and dams. They increased the amount of land being farmed and built a canal between the Nile River and the Red Sea.



▲ This artwork with gold inlay from the Middle Kingdom period shows a funeral boat. **How did architecture change during the Middle Kingdom?**

**The Arts Blossom** During the Middle Kingdom, arts, literature, and architecture thrived. Painters covered the walls of tombs and temples with colorful scenes of the deities and daily life. Sculptors created large wall carvings and statues of the pharaohs, showing them as ordinary people rather than godlike figures. Poets wrote love songs and tributes to the pharaohs.

A new form of architecture was also created. Instead of building pyramids, pharaohs had their tombs cut into cliffs west of the Nile River. This area became known as the Valley of the Kings.

**Who Were the Hyksos?** The Middle Kingdom came to an end in 1670 B.C. Nobles were again plotting to take power from the pharaohs. This time, however, Egypt also faced a serious threat from outside. A people known as the Hyksos (HIHK•SAHS), from western Asia, attacked Egypt.

**History online**  
**Web Activity** Visit [ca.hss.glencoe.com](http://ca.hss.glencoe.com) and click on *Chapter 2—Student Web Activity* to learn more about ancient Egypt.





**WH6.2** Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush. **WH6.2.6** Describe the role of Egyptian trade in the eastern Mediterranean and Nile valley. **WH6.2.7** Understand the significance of Queen Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great.

The Hyksos were mighty warriors. They crossed the desert in horse-drawn chariots and used weapons made of bronze and iron. Egyptians had always fought on foot with copper and stone weapons. They were no match for the invaders.

The Hyksos ruled Egypt for about 120 years. Then, around 1550 B.C., an Egyptian prince named **Ahmosé** (AHM•OHs) led an uprising that drove the Hyksos out of Egypt.

**Reading Check Explain** What advances in art were made during the Middle Kingdom?

## The New Kingdom

**Main Idea** During the New Kingdom, Egypt acquired new territory and reached the height of its power.

**Reading Connection** Do you know the names of any women who hold political office? In ancient civilizations, women rarely held positions of power. Read to learn how a woman became ruler of Egypt.

Ahmosé's reign in Egypt began a period known as the New Kingdom. During this time, from about 1550 B.C. to 1080 B.C., Egypt became even richer and more powerful.

# Linking Past & Present

## Hieroglyphs and Computer Icons

**PAST** The ancient Egyptian system of writing was made up of hundreds of different characters called hieroglyphs. Each hieroglyph was a picture that represented a word. For example, a large circle with a smaller circle drawn in its center meant "sun." Egyptian scribes carved hieroglyphic symbols on monuments and used them for everyday communication.



▲ Hieroglyphs

### ▼ Computer icons



**PRESENT** Today, millions of people use computer icons as symbols for words and even emotions in e-mails and other electronic communication. These icons are pictures—such as flags or paper clips—that represent other things. *In what way are hieroglyphs and computer icons similar?*

**A Woman Ruler** About 1473 B.C., a queen named **Hatshepsut** (hat•SHEHP•soot) came to power in Egypt. She ruled first with her husband and then, after his death, on behalf of her young nephew. Finally she made herself pharaoh. Hatshepsut became one of the few women to rule Egypt.

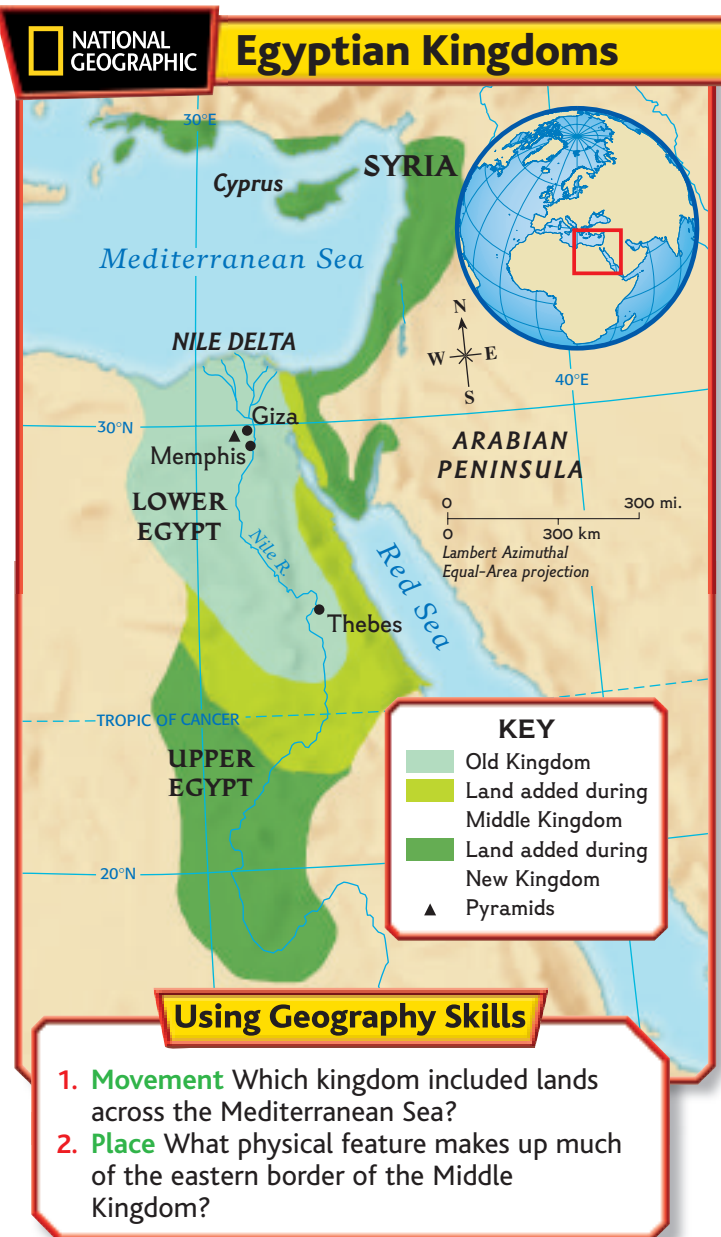
Hatshepsut was more interested in trade than conquest. During her reign, Egyptian traders sailed across the eastern Mediterranean and south along the east coast of Africa. One product Egyptians wanted to find was wood. The Nile Valley had few trees, and the Egyptians needed wood for boats and for wood cabinets that the upper class liked to have in their homes.

The search for wood took Egyptian traders to the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea where the country of Lebanon is located today. The area had many trees, and the people in the region, called the Phoenicians, were famous for their crafts. They made beautiful wooden furniture and were among the first people to learn how to make glass.

The Egyptians traded wheat as well as paper, gold, copper, and tools for Phoenician wood and furniture. The Phoenicians then traded Egyptian goods to other people. In this way, Egyptian food and goods spread across the Middle East. Egypt's trade in the eastern Mediterranean helped make the kingdom wealthier.

**Expanding the Empire** When Hatshepsut died, her nephew, **Thutmose III** (thoot•MOH•suh), became pharaoh. Thutmose's armies expanded Egypt's borders north to the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia. His troops also moved south and regained control of Nubia, which had broken free from Egypt earlier.

Thutmose's empire grew rich from trade and tribute. In addition to claiming gold, copper, ivory, and other valuable goods



from conquered peoples, Egypt enslaved many prisoners of war. These unfortunate captives were put to work rebuilding Thebes. They filled the city with beautiful palaces, temples, and monuments.

Slavery had not been widespread in Egypt before. During the New Kingdom, however, it became common. Enslaved people did have some rights. They could own land, marry, and eventually be granted their freedom.

**Reading Check Summarize** Describe Egyptian trade during the rule of Hatshepsut.





## HATSHEPSUT

*Reigned 1473–1458 B.C.*

Hatshepsut ▶

Hatshepsut was the daughter of King Thutmose I and Queen Aahmes. Even as a young princess, she was confident, describing herself as “exceedingly good to look upon . . . a beautiful maiden” who was “serene [peaceful] of nature.” During her marriage to King Thutmose II, Hatshepsut influenced her husband’s decisions and hoped to someday have more power. She saw an opportunity when Thutmose died and declared herself pharaoh.

Because the position of pharaoh was usually passed from father to son, Hatshepsut had to prove that she was a good leader. She often wore men’s clothing to convince the people that she could handle what had always been a man’s job. Unlike other pharaohs, Hatshepsut avoided military conquests. She focused her attention instead on expanding Egypt’s economy. She restored Egypt’s wealth through trade with Africa, Asia, and throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Returning home from trading expeditions, cargo ships were loaded with wood, ebony, furniture, ivory, incense, and myrrh. During her reign, Hatshepsut also rebuilt many of Egypt’s great temples, including the temple at Karnak. In her temple at Deir el Bahri, the reliefs on the walls recorded the major events of Hatshepsut’s reign.



**“A dictator excellent of plans”**

—Egyptian scribe quoted in *Barbarian Tides*



▲ Hatshepsut’s temple at Deir el-Bahri

### Then and Now

Make a list of Hatshepsut’s strengths as a leader. Then choose a present-day female leader and list her leadership strengths. Write a paragraph comparing their similarities and differences.





## Legacies of Two Pharaohs

**Main Idea** Akhenaton tried to change Egypt's religion, while Tutankhamen is famous for the treasures buried with him in his tomb.

**Reading Connection** If you ask people to name an Egyptian pharaoh, the answer you're likely to get is "King Tut." Read on to find out more about him and his predecessor.

About 1370 B.C., Amenhotep IV (AH • muhn • HOH • TEHP) came to the throne. With the help of his wife, Nefertiti (NEHF • uhr • TEET • ee), Amenhotep tried to lead Egypt in a new direction.

**A Religious Reformer** Amenhotep realized that Egypt's priests were gaining power at the expense of the pharaohs. In an attempt to **maintain** his own power, Amenhotep introduced a new religion that swept away the old gods and goddesses. Instead, only one god, called Aton (AH • tuhn), was to be worshiped.

When Egypt's priests resisted these changes, Amenhotep removed many from their positions, seized their lands, and closed temples. He then changed his name to **Akhenaton** (AHK • NAH • tuhn), which means "Spirit of Aton." He began ruling Egypt from a new city far from Thebes.

To most Egyptians, Akhenaton's attacks on the gods seemed to be an attack on Egypt itself. They refused to accept Aton as the only god.

Meanwhile, Akhenaton became so devoted to his new religion that he neglected his duties as pharaoh. The administrators he appointed were not as experienced as the priests they replaced, and Akhenaton took no action when the Hittites, enemies from what is now Turkey, attacked Egypt. As a result, Egypt lost most of its lands in western Asia, greatly shrinking the empire.

## The Way It Was

### Focus on Everyday Life

**Cats in Ancient Egypt** In ancient Egypt, cats were loved and even worshiped. Egyptians valued the ability of wild cats to protect villages' grain supplies from mice and rats. Over several hundred years, cats became tame, and their role developed from valued hunter to adored family pet to goddess.

In ancient Egyptian tombs, archaeologists have found many wall paintings, carvings, and statues of cats. Often the statues were adorned with beautiful jewelry, such as silver or gold earrings, nose rings, and collars. When an Egyptian family's cat died, its owners shaved their eyebrows to show their grief and had the cat's body mummified.

Egyptians worshiped cats because they associated them with the goddess Bastet. She represented motherhood, grace, and beauty, and often appears in paintings and statues as a woman with the head of a cat.



▲ Egyptian goddess depicted as a cat

### Connecting to the Past

1. Why did ancient Egyptians first value cats?
2. With what goddess did the ancient Egyptians associate cats?



**WH6.2.3** Understand the relationship between religion and the social and political order in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

**WH6.2.7** Understand the significance of Queen Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great.

Tutankhamen's  
gold mask



**The Boy King** When Akhenaton died, his son-in-law inherited the throne. The new pharaoh, **Tutankhamen** (TOO • TANG • KAH • muhn), was a boy about 10 years old. He relied on help from palace officials and priests, who convinced him to restore the old religion. After ruling for only nine years, Tutankhamen died unexpectedly. He may have suffered a fall or been murdered; no one is sure.

What *is* certain is that “King Tut,” as he is nicknamed, played only a small role in Egypt’s history. Why, then, is he the most famous of all pharaohs? The boy king captured people’s imaginations after a British archaeologist, Howard Carter, found his tomb in A.D. 1922.

The tomb contained the king’s mummy and incredible treasures, including a brilliant gold mask of the young pharaoh’s face. Carter’s find was a thrilling discovery, because most royal tombs in Egypt were looted by robbers long ago.

**Reading Check Evaluate** Why was the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb so important?

## The End of the New Kingdom

**Main Idea** Under Ramses II, Egypt regained territory and built great temples, but the empire fell by 1150 B.C.

**Reading Connection** Egypt remained mighty for thousands of years, but it finally fell to outsiders. Read to learn about Egypt’s last great pharaoh and the empire’s decline.

During the 1200s B.C., pharaohs worked to make Egypt great again. The most effective of these pharaohs was **Ramses II** (RAM • SEEZ). He reigned for a remarkable 66 years, from 1279 B.C. to 1213 B.C. During this time, Egyptian armies regained lands in western Asia and rebuilt the empire. Ramses also launched an ambitious building program, **constructing** several major new temples.



▲ Temple of Karnak

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY



## RAMSES II

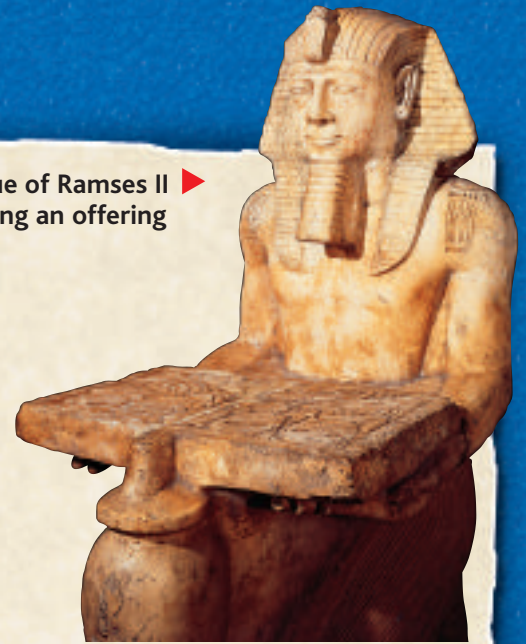
*Reigned 1279–1213 B.C.*

Ramses II began his military training at a very young age. Ramses' father, Seti I, allowed his 10-year-old son to serve as a captain in his army. Seti also made his son co-ruler of Egypt. By the time Ramses was crowned pharaoh of Egypt, he was a great warrior and an experienced leader. Nine kings who ruled after Ramses II named themselves in his honor. Many centuries later, archaeologists nicknamed the pharaoh "Ramses the Great" because of his fame on the battlefield, his construction and restoration of buildings and monuments, and his popularity among the Egyptian people. His subjects fondly called him "Sese," an abbreviation of Ramses.

Ramses continued in his father's footsteps by trying to restore Egyptian power in Asia. Like many New Kingdom pharaohs, Ramses did this through warfare. He secured Egypt's control of the nearby region of Canaan, an area where the ancient Israelites later lived. In the early years of his reign, Ramses defeated forces in southern Syria and continuously battled Egypt's longtime enemy, the Hittites. Details about one costly battle with the Hittites were carved on temple walls, showing the Egyptians succeeding against great odds.

During his 66-year reign, Ramses II undertook a large-scale building program. He could afford such an expensive plan because Egypt was very prosperous during his reign. He restored the damaged Sphinx, completed the Temple of Karnak, and built himself a city with four temples as well as beautiful gardens and orchards. He is famous for the temple built at Abu Simbel. It was carved out of a solid rock cliff and featured four huge statues of Ramses II, two on each side of the doorway.

Statue of Ramses II holding an offering table



**"They all came bowing down to him, to his palace of life and satisfaction."**

*—hieroglyphic translation by James B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts*



▲ Coffin of Ramses II

### Then and Now

Use the Internet and your local library to learn about Mount Rushmore, a monument in South Dakota. Describe Mount Rushmore, and then compare it to the temple of Ramses at Abu Simbel.



**Why Were Temples Built?** Under Ramses II and other New Kingdom rulers, scores of new temples rose throughout Egypt. Many were built by enslaved people captured in war. The most magnificent was Karnak at Thebes. Its huge columned hall decorated with colorful paintings still impresses visitors today.

Unlike modern churches, temples, and mosques, Egyptian temples did not hold regular religious services. Instead, most Egyptians prayed at home. They considered the temples as houses for the gods and goddesses. Priests and priestesses, however, performed daily temple rituals, washing statues of the deities and bringing them food.

The temples also served as banks. Egyptians used them to store valuable items, such as gold jewelry, sweet-smelling oils, and finely woven cloth.

**Egypt's Decline and Fall** After Ramses II, Egypt's power began to fade. Later pharaohs had trouble keeping neighboring countries under Egyptian control. Groups from the eastern Mediterranean attacked Egypt by sea, using strong iron weapons. The Egyptians had similar arms, but they paid dearly for them because Egypt lacked iron ore.

By 1150 B.C., the Egyptians had lost their empire and controlled only the Nile delta. Beginning in the 900s B.C., Egypt came under the rule of one outside group after another. The first conquerors were the Libyans from the west. Then, about 750 B.C., the people of Kush, a land to the south, began to conquer Egypt. Finally, in 670 B.C., Egypt was taken over by the Assyrians, a powerful society from the north.

**Reading Check Analyze** Why did Egyptian rulers lose control of their empire?

**History online**  
**Study Central** Need help with the reigns of Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great? Visit [ca.hss.glencoe.com](http://ca.hss.glencoe.com) and click on Study Central.

## Section 3 Review

### Reading Summary

#### Review the Main Ideas

- During the Middle Kingdom, Egypt expanded its borders, and the arts flourished.
- Under New Kingdom rulers, Egypt built a strong empire and expanded trade.
- Akhenaton failed in his attempt to create a new religion. Tutankhamen ruled briefly but gained fame because of treasures found buried with him.
- Ramses II was Egypt's last great pharaoh. In the 900s B.C., Egypt lost power to outside invaders.

### What Did You Learn?

1. What improvements did the Middle Kingdom rulers make?
2. What purposes did temples serve in Egypt?
3. **Organizing Information** Create a chart like the one below. Fill in details about Egypt's Middle Kingdom and Egypt's New Kingdom. **CA 6RC2.4**
4. **Evaluate** Why was the reign of Hatshepsut considered unusual? **CA 6RC2.6**
5. **The Big Ideas** How did Akhenaton upset the traditional order in Egypt? **CA HI.2**
6. **Compare and Contrast** Describe the similarities and differences between the rule of Hatshepsut and Ramses II. **CA 6WS1.3**
7. **Expository Writing** Which Egyptian ruler do you think had the greatest effect upon Egyptian history? Write a short essay to explain your answer. **CA 6WA2.2**

#### Critical Thinking

3. **Organizing Information** Create a chart like the one below. Fill in details about Egypt's Middle Kingdom and Egypt's New Kingdom.

Middle Kingdom	New Kingdom