

Egypt

Ancient Egyptian Pharaohs



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The pharaoh was the most powerful person in Egypt. Pharaohs were seen as **divine** rulers as well as mortal ones.

They held the following titles:

- High Priest of Every Temple
- Lord of the Two Lands.

High Priest of Every Temple meant that the pharaoh was seen as the voice of the gods on earth. They performed religious rituals to please and honor the gods.

Lord of the Two Lands meant that the pharaoh ruled both Upper and Lower Egypt.





Lord of the Two Lands



As well as the Pschent, there were many other symbols that the pharaohs used to show their power.



- The **crook and flail** represented the pharaoh's kingship and the fertility of the land.
- A ceremonial **false beard** linked the pharaoh with the god Osiris and was a sign of divinity.
- The **Atef crown** was worn by the pharaoh for religious duties. It was also associated with Osiris.

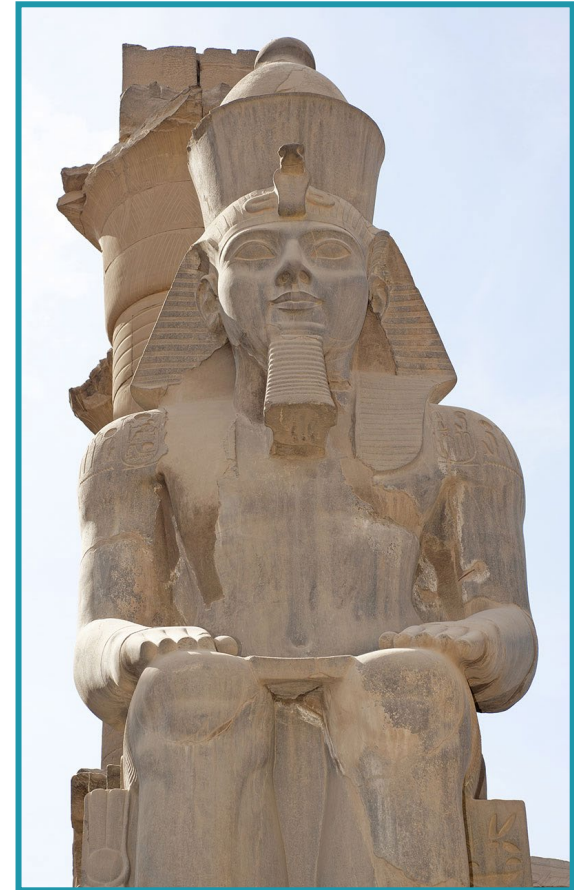
Can you find each symbol on this image?



When a pharaoh died, the crown usually passed to the nearest male relative. If there were no male relatives, a **power struggle** would break out, so it was important for a pharaoh to have an **heir**.

A pharaoh's son began preparing to become pharaoh from a young age. As **commander-in-chief** of the Egyptian armies, pharaohs often fought in battle. They had to be strong, fit and powerful.

Young princes trained in the army and were expected to know hunting, fishing and horseback riding.



New pharaohs attended the burial of the old pharaoh before they were crowned themselves. Their own coronation would begin on the first day of the new season.

A pharaoh's coronation involved many ceremonies and festivals, and could take up to a year! Ceremonies included:

- **Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt**, which celebrated the two lands of Egypt coming together
- the **Appearance of the King**, which had the pharaoh appear wearing the white crown, the red crown, and finally the double crown
- a ritual **procession** around the city of Memphis.



Why were these ceremonies important?



The pharaoh ruled Egypt with the help of a system of advisors and government officials. These were especially important when the pharaoh was crowned at a young age.

- The **vizier** was the most important advisor. They advised the pharaoh on political decisions.
- A series of lower-ranking **officials** were in charge of the day-to-day duties.

Ay had been the vizier of both Tutankhamun and his father. He became pharaoh himself when Tutankhamun died young and without an heir to inherit the throne.

What might this tell us about the role of viziers?



As High Priest of Every Temple, the pharaoh was closely associated with the gods and goddesses of Ancient Egypt.

The belief that the pharaoh was a **divine being** helped to strengthen their rule, because the people did not want to risk offending the gods by disobeying the pharaoh.

When the Egyptians **conquered** new lands, the foreign people had to accept the pharaoh as their ruler.

They also gave expensive, precious gifts to the pharaoh.



Why do you think they did this?



Pharaohs' names in hieroglyphics had **cartouches** drawn around them to symbolize protection and importance.

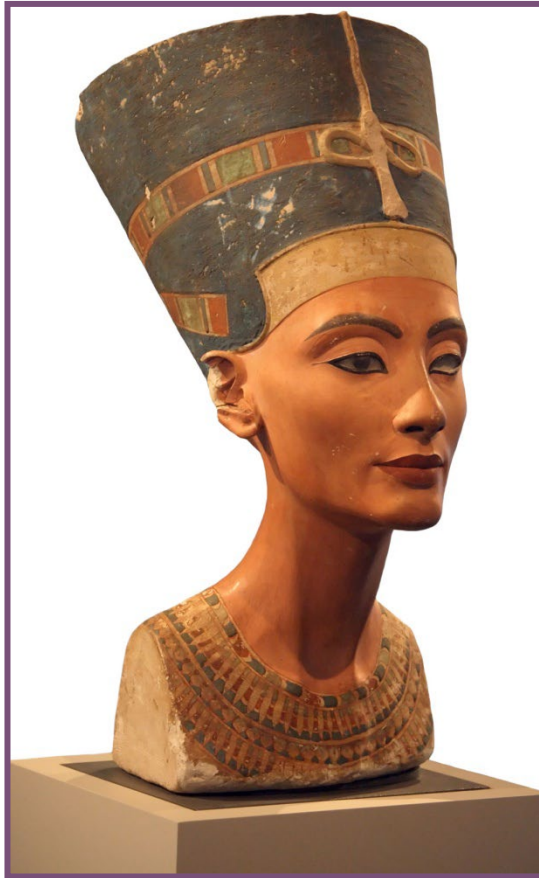


The word “cartouche” is French and means “**cartridge**”. When Napoleonic soldiers saw the symbol carved on ancient ruins, they thought it looked like their gun cartridges, and so they gave it the nickname.

For the Ancient Egyptians, the cartouche was a **loop of rope** representing everything encircled by the sun. It showed that the pharaoh ruled everything under the sun.



Most Egyptian society was **monogamous**: people had one husband or wife. However, the pharaoh was a different case.



As most pharaohs were male, they would have had many wives. They would marry to form **political alliances** as well as to secure their claim to the crown.

The principal wife of the pharaoh was given the title **Great Royal Wife**. She could often gain a lot of power and influence in this role.

Some women outlived their husbands and became pharaohs in their own right.





Although the pharaoh was usually male, there were some female pharaohs.

Hatshepsut ruled Egypt for fifteen years. After her husband died, she ruled with her young stepson. He was soon sent to join the army, and Hatshepsut became pharaoh herself.

Hatshepsut used the symbols of power, including a false beard. She was also called the “**female falcon**”.

She led a **trade expedition** to the land of Punt, bringing back gold, ebony, animal skins and myrrh trees that were planted around her mortuary temple.



Can you name any other female pharaohs?

It was important to pharaohs that they were remembered after they died. Some pharaohs were **deified** (worshiped as gods) after their deaths.

Many pharaohs built **monuments** to make sure people remembered them. These monuments were made of stone and were intended to last forever.

As a result, they were often large and expensive to build. They were a symbol of the pharaoh's **power** and **wealth**.



What Egyptian monuments can you name?

Pharaohs often built **mortuary temples** for themselves during their reign. These were built away from the pharaoh's tomb so that the tomb itself was safe from grave robbers.

Mortuary temples were usually built on the **west bank** of the river Nile, because the sun set in the west, and Egyptians associated this with the end of life.

These ruins are what is left of the mortuary temple of Rameses II: the **Ramesseum**.



What do you think mortuary temples were for?



Tombs took a long time to build, so as soon as a pharaoh came to the throne, they would begin building their own.



When a pharaoh died, they were buried with many precious goods. For example, **Tutankhamun's** inner sarcophagus was made of solid gold.

This meant that royal tombs became the targets of **grave robbers**. Many were plundered before archaeologists rediscovered them.

Pharaohs began building their tombs in secret locations in the desert near Thebes: **the Valley of the Kings**.





From pits to pyramids





The most recognizable tombs are the Pyramids. The three **Great Pyramids** at Giza were built around 2500 BC.

For Ancient Egyptians, pyramids symbolized a **stairway to the stars**, which the pharaoh would climb when they died.

The topmost stone was called the **benben stone**. It was named after the first hill, which Egyptians believed was created before everything else in the world.



Some benben stones may have been covered with **gold** so that they shone in the sunlight.



