

# Egyptian Achievements

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. The Egyptians developed a writing system using hieroglyphics.
2. The Egyptians created magnificent temples, tombs, and works of art.

### The Big Idea

The Egyptians made lasting achievements in writing, architecture, and art.

### Key Terms and People

hieroglyphics, p. 102

papyrus, p. 102

Rosetta Stone, p. 103

sphinxes, p. 104

obelisk, p. 104

King Tutankhamen, p. 106



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### TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the many achievements of the ancient Egyptians.

## If YOU were there...

You are an artist in ancient Egypt. A noble has hired you to decorate the walls of his family tomb. You are standing inside the new tomb, studying the bare walls that you will decorate. No light reaches this chamber, but your servant holds a lantern high. You've met the noble only briefly but think that he is someone who loves his family, the gods, and Egypt.

## What will you include in your painting?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** The Egyptians had a rich and varied history, but most people today remember them for their cultural achievements, such as their unique writing system. In addition, Egyptian art, including the tomb paintings mentioned above, is admired by millions of tourists in museums around the world.

## Egyptian Writing


If you were reading a book and saw pictures of folded cloth, a leg, a star, a bird, and a man holding a stick, would you know what it meant? You would if you were an ancient Egyptian. In the **Egyptian writing system, or hieroglyphics** (hy-ruh-GLIH-fiks), those five symbols together meant "to teach." Egyptian hieroglyphics were one of the world's first writing systems.


## Writing in Ancient Egypt


The earliest known examples of Egyptian writing are from around 3300 BC. These early Egyptian writings were carved in stone or on other hard material. Later, the Egyptians learned how to make **papyrus** (puh-PY-ruhs), a long-lasting, paper-like material made from reeds. The Egyptians made papyrus by pressing layers of reeds together and pounding them into sheets. These sheets were tough and durable, yet easy to roll into scrolls. Scribes wrote on papyrus using brushes and ink.

## Egyptian Writing


Egyptian hieroglyphics used picture symbols to represent sounds.

	Sound	Meaning
	Imn	Amun

	Tut	Image
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	Ankh	Living
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Translation—"Living image of Amun"

	Hekh	Ruler
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	Iunu	Heliopolis
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	Resy	Southern
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Translation—"Ruler of Southern Heliopolis"



### ANALYSIS SKILL

### ANALYZING VISUALS

What does the symbol for ruler look like?

The hieroglyphic writing system used more than 600 symbols, mostly pictures of objects. Each symbol represented one or more sounds in the Egyptian language. For example, a picture of an owl represented the same sound as our letter *M*.

Hieroglyphics could be written either horizontally or vertically. They could be written from right to left or from left to right. These options made hieroglyphics flexible to write but difficult to read. The only way to tell which way a text is written is to look at individual symbols.

### The Rosetta Stone

Historians and archaeologists have known about hieroglyphics for centuries, but for a long time they didn't know how to read them. In fact, it was not until 1799 when a lucky discovery by a French soldier gave historians the key they needed to read ancient Egyptian writing.

That key was the **Rosetta Stone**, a stone slab inscribed with hieroglyphics. In addition to hieroglyphics, the Rosetta Stone had text in Greek and a later form of Egyptian. Because the text in all three languages was the same, scholars who knew Greek figured out what the hieroglyphics said.

### Egyptian Texts

Because papyrus did not decay in Egypt's dry climate, many Egyptian texts survive. Historians today can read Egyptian government and historical records, science texts, and medical manuals. Literary works have also survived. We can read stories, poems, and mythological tales. Some texts, such as *The Book of the Dead*, tell about the afterlife. Others include love poems and stories about gods and kings.

**READING CHECK** Comparing How is our writing system similar to hieroglyphics?

### THE IMPACT TODAY

An object that helps solve a difficult mystery is sometimes called a Rosetta Stone.

## Temples, Tombs, and Art

The Egyptians are famous for their architecture and art. The walls of Egypt's magnificent temples and tombs are covered with impressive paintings and carvings.

### Egypt's Great Temples

You have already read about the Egyptians' most famous structures, the pyramids. But the Egyptians also built massive temples. Those that survive are among the most spectacular sites in Egypt today.

The Egyptians believed that temples were the homes of the gods. People visited the temples to worship, offer the gods gifts, and ask for favors.

Many Egyptian temples shared similar features. Rows of stone **sphinxes**—imaginary creatures with the bodies of lions and the heads of other animals or humans—lined the path leading to the entrance. The entrance itself was a huge, thick gate. On either side of the gate might stand an **obelisk** (AH-buh-lisk), a tall, four-sided pillar that is pointed on top.

Inside, temples were lavishly decorated, as you can see in the drawing of the Temple of Karnak. Huge columns supported the temple's roof. In many cases, these columns were covered with paintings and hieroglyphics, as were the temple walls. Statues of gods and pharaohs often stood along the walls as well. The sanctuary, the most sacred part of the building, was at the far end of the temple.

The Temple of Karnak is only one of Egypt's great temples. Others were built by Ramses the Great at Abu Simbel and Luxor. Part of what makes the temple at Abu Simbel so impressive is that it is carved out of sandstone cliffs. At the temple's entrance, four 66-foot-tall statues show Ramses as pharaoh. Nearby are some smaller statues of his family.

#### THE IMPACT TODAY

The Washington Monument, in Washington, DC, was built in the shape of an obelisk.

#### History Close-up

## The Temple of Karnak

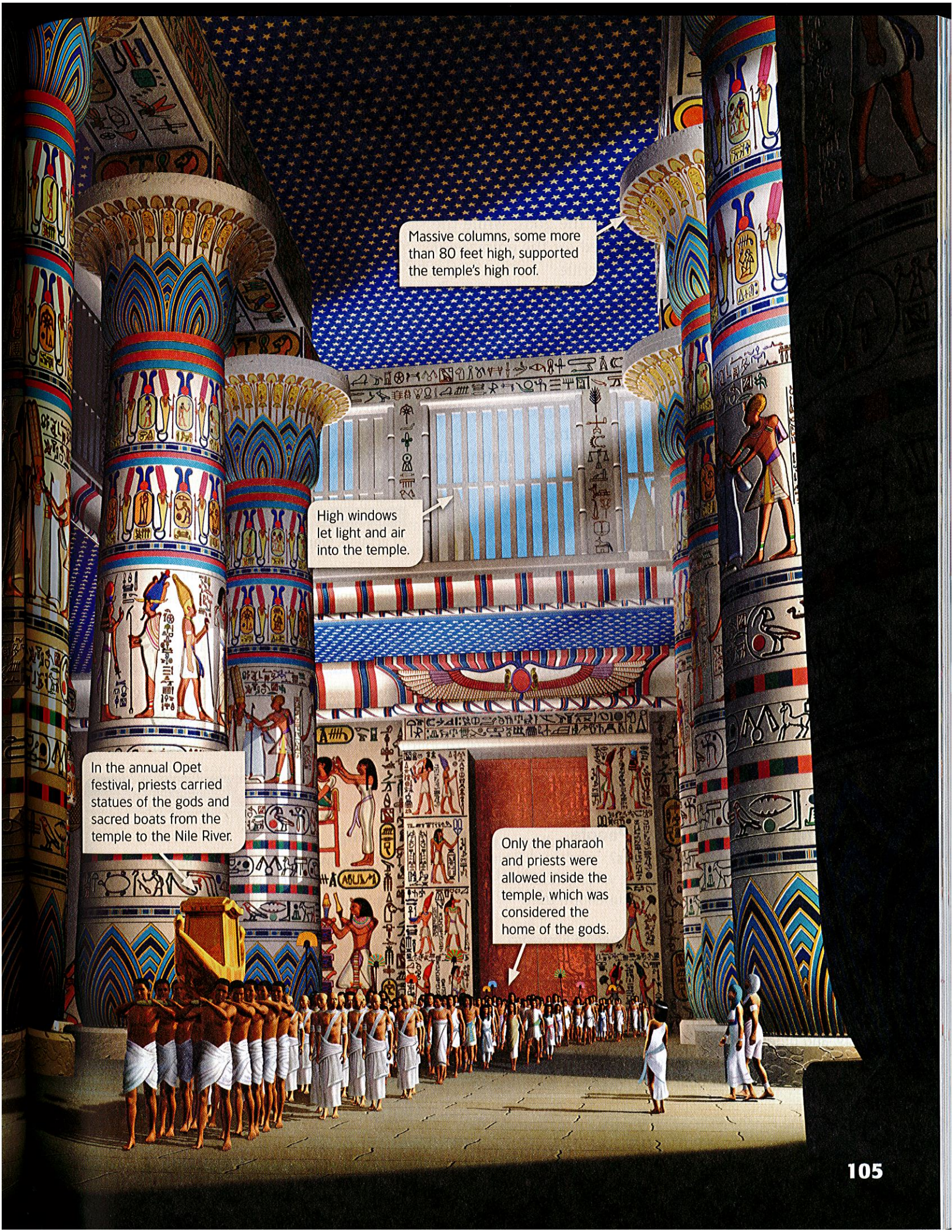
The Temple of Karnak was Egypt's largest temple. Built mainly to honor Re, the sun god, Karnak was one of Egypt's major religious centers for centuries. Over the years, pharaohs added to the temple's many buildings. This illustration shows how Karnak's great hall may have looked during an ancient festival.

Karnak's interior columns and walls were painted brilliant colors.

#### ANALYSIS SKILL

#### ANALYZING VISUALS

What features of Egyptian architecture can you see in this illustration?



Massive columns, some more than 80 feet high, supported the temple's high roof.

High windows let light and air into the temple.

In the annual Opet festival, priests carried statues of the gods and sacred boats from the temple to the Nile River.

Only the pharaoh and priests were allowed inside the temple, which was considered the home of the gods.

## Egyptian Art

The ancient Egyptians were masterful artists. Egyptians painted lively, colorful scenes on canvas, papyrus, pottery, plaster, and wood. Detailed works also covered the walls of temples and tombs. The temple art was created to honor the gods, while the tomb art was intended for the enjoyment of the dead in the afterlife.

The subjects of Egyptian paintings vary widely. Some paintings show important historical events, such as the crowning of kings and the founding of temples. Others illustrate major religious rituals. Still other paintings show scenes from everyday life, such as farming or hunting.

Egyptian painting has a distinctive style. People's heads and legs are always seen from the side, but their upper bodies and shoulders are shown straight on. In addition, people do not always appear the same size. Important figures such as pharaohs appear huge in comparison to others. In contrast, Egyptian animals were usually drawn realistically.

Painting was not the only art form in which Egyptians excelled. For example, the Egyptians were skilled stoneworkers. Many

tombs included huge statues and detailed carvings on the walls.

The Egyptians also made beautiful objects out of gold and precious stones. They made jewelry for both women and men. This included necklaces, collars, and bracelets. The Egyptians also used gold to make burial items for their pharaohs.

Over the years, treasure hunters emptied many pharaohs' tombs. At least one tomb, however, was not disturbed. In 1922 archaeologists found the tomb of **King Tutankhamen** (too-tang-KAHM-uhn), or King Tut. This tomb was filled with treasures, including jewelry, robes, a burial mask, and ivory statues. King Tut's treasures have taught us much about Egyptian burial practices and beliefs.

**READING CHECK** Summarizing What types of artwork were contained in Egyptian tombs?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** Ancient Egyptians developed one of the best known cultures in the ancient world. Next, you will learn about a culture that developed in the shadow of Egypt—Kush.

## Section 4 Assessment

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ONLINE QUIZ

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** What are hieroglyphics?

**b. Contrast** How was hieroglyphic writing different from our writing today? from cuneiform used by the Mesopotamians?

**c. Evaluate** Why was finding the **Rosetta Stone** so important to scholars?
- a. Describe** What were two ways the Egyptians decorated their temples?

**b. Analyze** Why were tombs filled with art, jewelry, and other treasures?

**c. Draw Conclusions** Why do you think pharaohs like Ramses the Great built huge temples?

### Critical Thinking

- Summarizing** Draw a chart like the one below. Under each heading, write a statement that summarizes Egyptian achievements in that field.

Writing	Architecture	Art
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### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Adding Up What You Know about Egypt** Look at the notes you have taken at the end of each section. Think about what clues you might include when you write your riddle about Egypt.