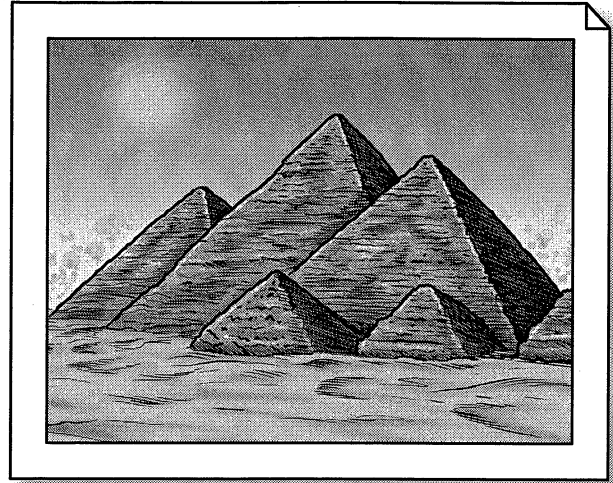


The Gift of the Nile

We have learned about the ancient Egyptians by the things they left behind. The most famous reminders of ancient Egypt are the pyramids built during Egypt's Old Kingdom. Three pyramids were built at Giza on a plateau on the west bank of the Nile River. Egypt was described by an ancient historian as "the gift of the Nile." Egypt got this nickname because the Nile's fertile banks were home to the first Egyptian farmers.



Ancient Egypt's history is divided into three time periods: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom. The Old Kingdom lasted from about 2700 B.C. until 2200 B.C. During this time, Egyptian rulers created a strong central government. They brought all the small farming villages around the Nile under their absolute control. Egyptian leaders were called pharaohs, and they had total power over the kingdom of Egypt.

The Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were living gods. They also felt that pharaohs ruled even after the pharaohs died. Egyptian religion said that a person had a spiritual body, called the *ka*, and a physical body. When a person died, the physical body had to be properly preserved. Bodies were preserved after death by mummification, or drying the body to stop it from decaying. The person's tomb had to have the same things a living person needed. Then, the *ka* could continue its life, even though the physical body had died. For this reason, pharaohs' tombs were more important than their palaces. Tombs were filled with supplies for the dead, like chairs, weapons, foods, and even pets.

Historians and archaeologists do not know for sure how the pyramids were built. Egyptian workers moved millions of limestone blocks to build the pyramids. Somehow, the enormous stones for a pyramid were cut, moved to the site, and put together. The stones were very heavy, and the pyramids were built before the pulley or vehicles with wheels were invented. The largest of the three pyramids was built by King Khufu around 2540 B.C. Khufu's tomb, the Great Pyramid, covered 13 acres and stood 481 feet tall. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus reported that 100,000 Egyptians spent 20 years building the Great Pyramid.

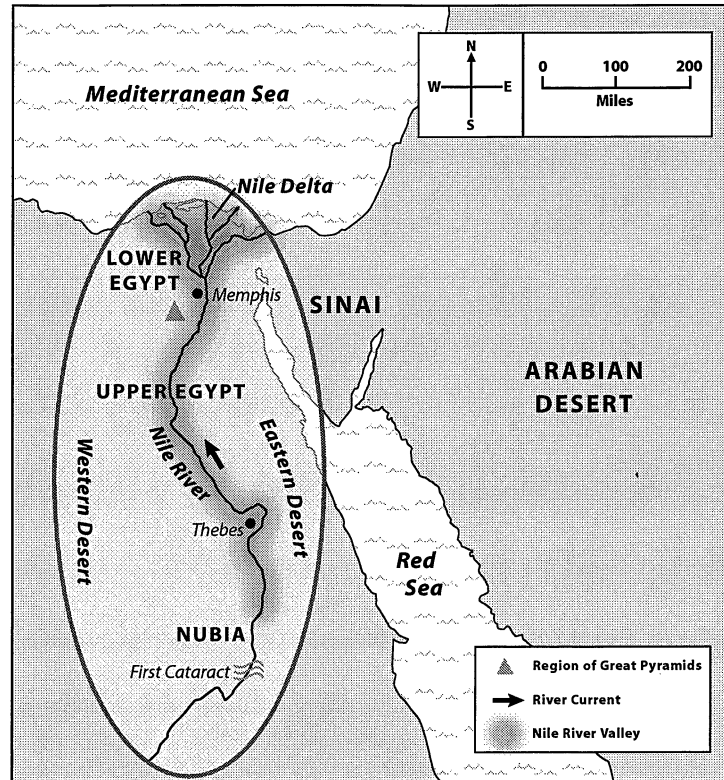
A pyramid was not only the pharaoh's tomb. It was also an important symbol of power during the pharaoh's life. The pyramid could be seen for miles and reminded everyone how rich and powerful the pharaoh was. Although the Old Kingdom's government collapsed, the pyramids stand as a symbol of the pharaohs' power.



The Gift of the Nile

Map – Ancient Egypt

Use the map to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.



1. Name the city closest to the pyramids.

2. What body of water does the Nile River flow into?

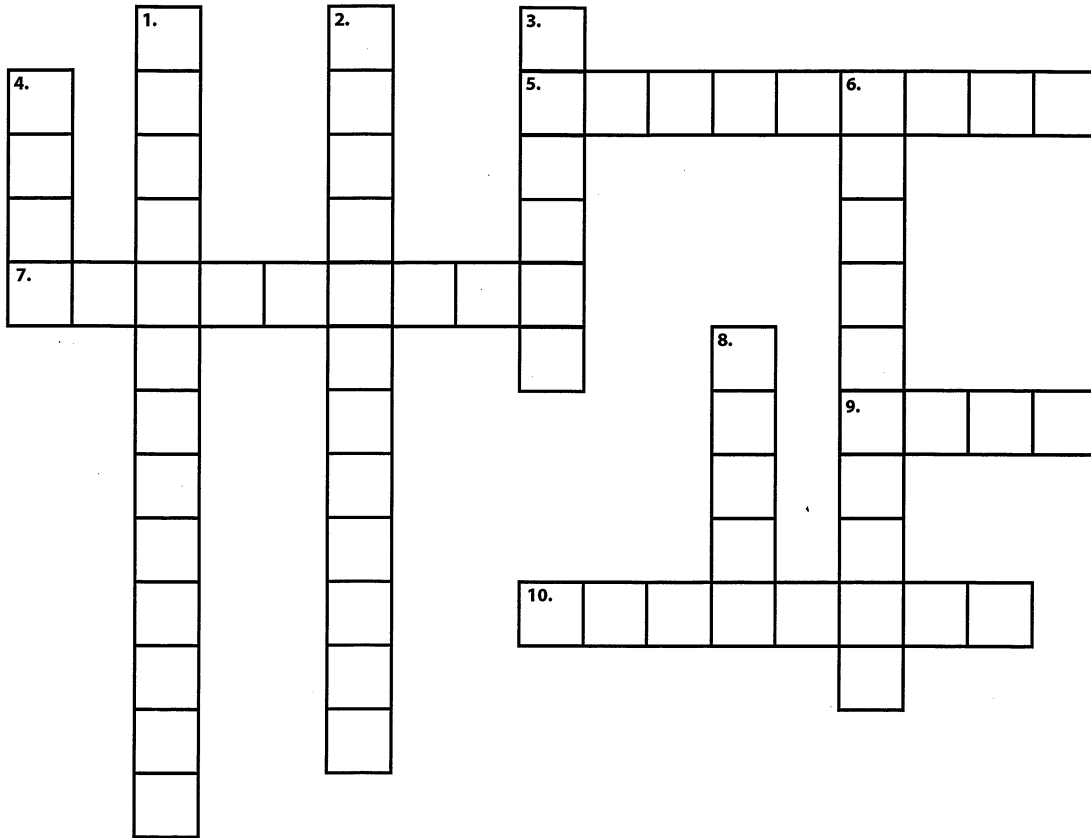
3. What borders the Nile River Valley on both sides?



The Gift of the Nile

Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

5. _____ reported that 100,000 Egyptians spent 20 years building the Great Pyramid.
7. Ancient Egyptians believed that everyone had a physical body and a/an _____ body.
9. Egypt was described as “the gift of the _____.”
10. The _____ had total power over the kingdom of Egypt.

DOWN

1. Bodies were preserved after death by _____.
2. The _____ covered 13 acres and stood 481 feet tall.
3. The pyramids were built before the pulley or vehicles with _____ were invented.
4. Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were living _____.
6. During Egypt’s _____, rulers created a strong central government.
8. The pyramid was a symbol of _____ during a pharaoh’s life.