

Pharaoh Gallery

Ramses II: Military Leader and Master Builder

The pharaoh Ramses II (RAM-seez) ruled from about 1,290 to 1,224 B.C., during the New Kingdom. Called Ramses the Great, he is one of the most famous Egyptian pharaohs. He reigned for more than 60 years, longer than almost any other pharaoh. He is best known for his military leadership and for building numerous monuments.

Ramses used his power to excess. He had over 100 wives, and more than 100 children. Never shy about his importance, he had hundreds of statues of himself erected throughout Egypt. Some of them were over 60 feet high.

From a young age, Ramses was a fearless soldier. He fought alongside his father in various battles. At the age of ten, Ramses was made a captain in the Egyptian army.

Ramses tried to defend an Egyptian empire that extended north into Canaan. His most famous military campaigns were against the Hittite Empire in Anatolia (present-day Turkey). The Hittites constantly threatened Egypt's northern borders. In his best known battle, Ramses reached a standoff with the Hittites, even though he was greatly outnumbered.

Ramses was also a peacemaker. He and the Hittites signed the world's first peace treaty. This peace lasted until the Hittite Empire collapsed around 1,190 B.C.

One of Ramses' greatest projects was the temple complex at Abu Simbel. The main temple was carved into the side of a cliff. The cliff was on a bank of the Nile River. A smaller temple honored his favorite wife, Nefertari.

Four giant statues framed the entrance to the main temple. The figures were carved right out of the rock of the rock face of the cliff. They are among the finest examples of the artistic skill of Egyptian sculptors.

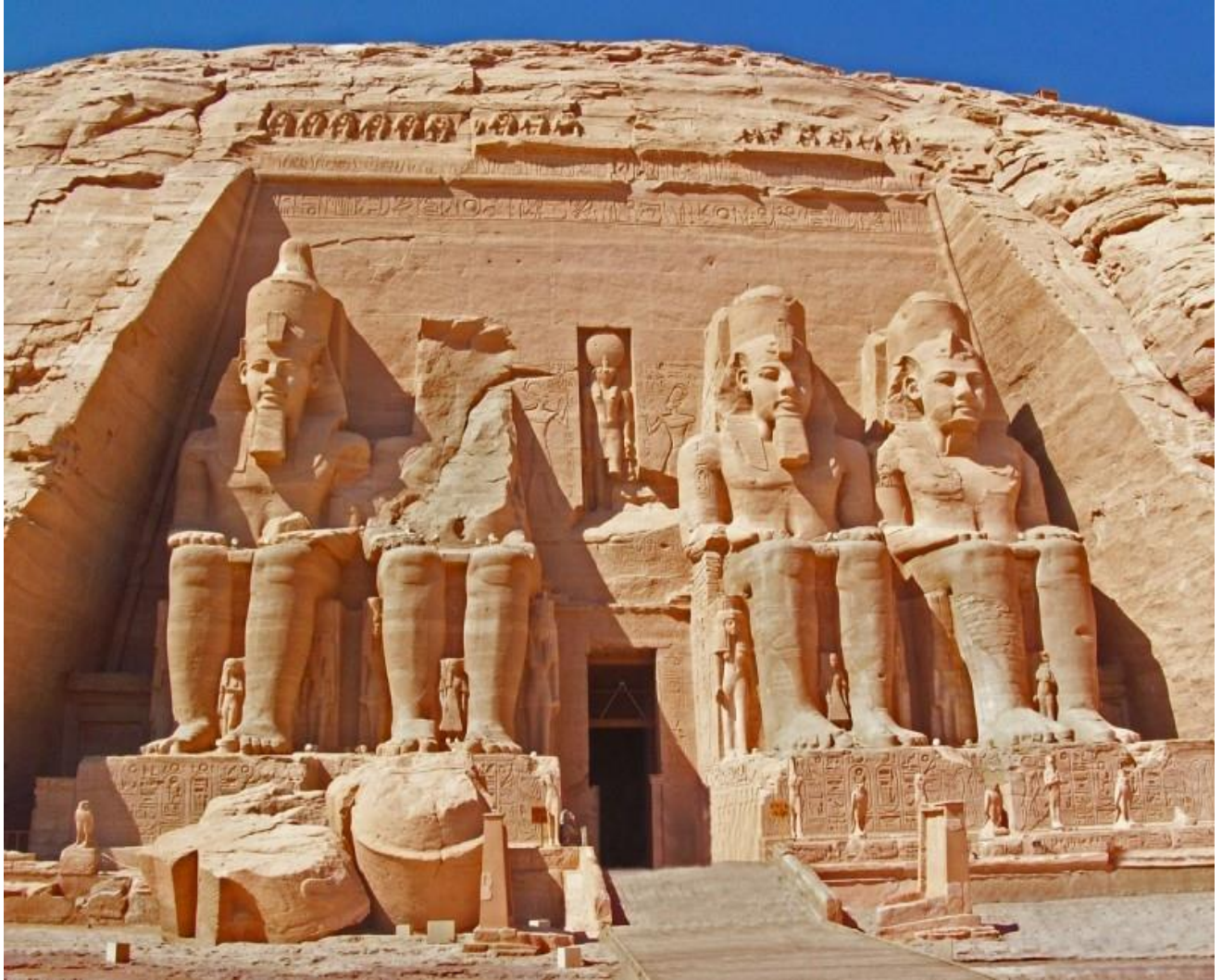
The inside of the temple was also remarkable. Visitors passed through three large rooms, called halls, to reach the temple's main room. This room's altar contained statues of Ramses and three Egyptian gods. The temple was built so that, twice a year, the sun lined up with the entrance. Beams of sunlight would shine down the halls and light up the statues.

Ramses ordered more temples and monuments built than any other pharaoh in history. When he died, he was buried in the tomb that he had ordered workers to construct solely for him. His mummy is one of the best-preserved bodies ever found.

Ramses the Great



The Great Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel



Hatshepsut: Promoter of Egyptian Trade

During the New Kingdom, the pharaoh Hatshepsut (haht-SHEP-soot) ruled Egypt from about 1,473 to 1,458 B.C. Hatshepsut was Egypt's first female pharaoh. Under her rule, Egyptian art and architecture flourished. She was also known for encouraging trade.

One of her greatest accomplishments was her rise to power. Never before had a woman pharaoh ruled Egypt. At first, she shared power with her male relatives. However, she soon took over as sole ruler.

Hatshepsut strengthened her position in several ways. She filled her government with loyal advisors. She demanded the same respect shown to male rulers. Sometimes, she dressed in men's clothing. She even put on a fake beard worn by male pharaohs. Artists were often instructed to portray her as a man. She also spread stories that her father was a god.

As pharaoh, Hatshepsut promoted trade with other countries / empires. Her biggest trade expedition was to the African kingdom of Punt, at the southern end of the Red Sea. Over 200 men in five ships brought gifts and trade goods to Punt.

Hatshepsut left behind a stunning monument to her reign – a great temple at Dayr al-Bahri (deer ahl-BAH-ray). The main part of the temple was built into a cliff above the Nile River. At the entrance were two tall, thin monuments called *obelisks*. The entrance was also graced by 200 sphinx statues. The sphinx is a mythical creature with a body of a lion and the head of a man.

Scenes from Hatshepsut's reign decorated the temple walls. Detailed carvings portrayed the great voyage to Punt. The carvings showed the valuable things that the pharaoh's traders had brought back from Egypt.

Hatshepsut



Hatshepsut's Temple at Dayr al-Bahri



Senusret I: Patron of the Arts

The pharaoh Senusret I (SEHN-oos-ret) ruled Egypt from about 1,971 to 1,926 B.C., during the Middle Kingdom. He was a strong leader who ruled a stable, unified Egypt. Art, literature, and architecture flourished during his reign.

The arts thrived under Senusret's rule. The pharaoh controlled mines filled with gold, copper, and gems such as purple amethyst. Artisans fashioned these materials into beautiful pieces of jewelry. Bracelets and necklaces were often highly detailed. They were also decorated with stones like turquoise.

Some of the greatest works in Egyptian literature were written during Senusret's reign, "The Story of Sinuhe" tells of a young official named Sinuhe who overhears a plot to kill the pharaoh. Fearing for his own life, Sinuhe flees Egypt. He thrives in his new land, but he grows homesick. When a new pharaoh calls him home, Sinuhe returns joyfully to Egypt.

Senusret's greatest accomplishments were in religious architecture. He had many temples, shrines, and religious monuments built and improved.

Perhaps Senusret's finest architectural achievement was the White Chapel. A chapel is a small temple, or place of worship. It was made of alabaster, a hard white stone. Some historians think that the chapel was originally covered with a thin layer of gold.

Beautiful artwork decorated the chapel's pillars. Carved scenes showed the pharaoh with various gods. Birds, animals, and Egyptian symbols were also depicted.

Senusret wanted his memory to live on through his monuments. However, few of his buildings survived the passage of time. A later pharaoh took the White Chapel apart and used the pieces in a monument of his own. Archaeologists later discovered the pieces and reconstructed the White Chapel.

Senusret I



The White Chapel at Karnak

