

Kingdoms of the Nile

Module 4

Lesson 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. Life in the Old Kingdom was influenced by pharaohs, roles in society, and trade.
2. Religion shaped Egyptian life.
3. The pyramids were built as huge tombs for Egyptian pharaohs.

Key Terms and People

Old Kingdom the third Egyptian dynasty, which lasted nearly 500 years

theocracy a government where religious leaders have power to make, approve, or enforce laws

Khufu the most famous pharaoh of the Old Kingdom

nobles people from rich and powerful families

afterlife life after death, a widely held ancient Egyptian belief

mummies dead bodies preserved by wrapping them in cloth

elite people of wealth and power

pyramids huge stone tombs with four triangle-shaped walls that meet at a top point

engineering application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes

Lesson Summary

LIFE IN THE OLD KINGDOM

Around 2700 BC, the Third Dynasty, or the **Old Kingdom**, came to power in Egypt. During the next 500 years, the Egyptians developed a **theocracy**. Religious leaders had power to make, approve, or enforce laws in this government. Egyptians believed the pharaoh was both a king and a god. The most famous pharaoh of the Old Kingdom was **Khufu**. Many monuments were built to him.

Egyptians believed that a well-ordered society would keep their kingdom strong. Social classes developed. The pharaoh was at the top and **nobles** from rich and powerful families made up

Why was there no distinction between religion and politics in Egypt's Old Kingdom?

Lesson 2, *continued*

the upper class. The middle class included lesser government officials, scribes, and rich craftspeople. Most people, including farmers, belonged to the lower class. Lower-class people were often used by the pharaoh as laborers.

Trade also developed during the Old Kingdom. Traders sailed on the Mediterranean and south on the Nile and the Red Sea to acquire gold, copper, ivory, slaves, wood, and stone.

Of the upper, middle, and lower classes, which was the largest in ancient Egypt?

RELIGION AND EGYPTIAN LIFE

Officials in the Old Kingdom expected everyone to worship the same gods. Over time certain cities built temples and were associated with particular gods. The Egyptians had gods for nearly everything.

There was also much focus on the **afterlife**. Each person's *ka* (KAH), or life force, existed after death but remained linked to the body. To keep the *ka* from suffering, the Egyptians developed a method called embalming to preserve bodies. Royalty and other members of the **elite** had their bodies preserved as **mummies**, specially treated bodies wrapped in cloth.

What is the *ka*?

THE PYRAMIDS

Pyramids, spectacular stone monuments, were built to house dead rulers. Many pyramids are still standing today, amazing reminders of Egyptian **engineering**.

Why do you think the Egyptians believed that royal burial sites were so important?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Make Judgments Write a one-page essay considering whether a god-king pharaoh ruling today would be loved or hated by his people.

Lesson 2, *continued*

DIRECTIONS Write two adjectives or descriptive phrases that describe the term.

1. afterlife _____

2. elite _____

3. engineering _____

4. Khufu _____

5. mummies _____

6. nobles _____

7. Old Kingdom _____

8. pyramids _____

9. theocracy _____
