Ancient Egypt

Geography

Nile River

* Begins in the heart of Africa
* Longest river in the world at 4,000 miles long
* Flows north towards the Mediterranean Sea
  + Splits before reaching the sea creating an area called a Delta
    - A delta is a low, watery land formed at the mouth of a river. It is often shaped like a triangle.
* There are two cataracts along the river. A cataract is like a rapid.

Lower and Upper Egypt

* Egypt is divided into two areas- Lower and Upper Egypt
* Why is Upper Egypt called ‘Upper’ even though it is to the south?
* The land around the Nile is fertile
  + Fertile- where corps and vegetation can grow

Egyptian History

* Egyptian history can be divided into three periods: Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms
* During these periods there was stability, strong leadership, secure borders, and growth
  + But, between the periods there were invasions and disorder
* Upper and Lower Egypt were first united by King Menes in 3100 BC to create the first royal dynasty
  + Dynasty- A family of rulers whose right to rule is passed on with in the family

Old Kingdom

* 2700 B.C. to 2200 B.C.
* Powerful rulers called Pharaoh’s ruled the land
* Egyptians believed Pharaoh’s were gods
  + Everyone had to obey the Pharaoh to maintain a stable world
* The Old Kingdom collapsed and there was 150 years of disorder

Middle Kingdom

* 2055 B.C. to 1650 B.C.
* Known as the “Golden Age” of stability
* These pharaoh’s were concerned for the people
  + Created projects to help the people
    - Drained the swamplands to provide thousands of acres of new farmland
    - Dug a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea to help with trade
  + Which of these projects would help peasants?

New Kingdom

* 1550 B.C. to 1070 B.C.
* Became the most powerful empire in Southwest Asia
* This period had lots of wealth that led to building temples
  + Hatshepsut was the 1st woman pharaoh
  + She built a temple called Deir el-Bahri at the Valley of the Kings

Following the Three Kingdoms

* Egypt was invaded and unable to reestablish the empire
* Pharaoh Cleopatra VII tried to put the empire back together but committed suicide when she was defeated
* Egypt was swept up into the expanding Roman Empire

Pyramids

* The pyramids were built during the Old Kingdom
  + They were part of a larger complex
    - Large pyramid for the pharaoh
    - Small pyramid for the family
    - Small flat-roofed houses, mastabas, for the pharaoh’s officials
* Each pyramid had tombs filled with chairs, weapons, games, and food
  + The pharaoh’s body would be preserved so the spirit could return
    - This process was called mummification and it took 70 days to complete
* The biggest pyramid is the Great Pyramid of Giza constructed by King Khufu
  + It covers 13 acres sitting 756 feet wide and 481 feet tall
  + The pyramid is guarded by a Great Sphinx
    - A sphinx has the head of a human but the body of a lion

Society

* Egyptian society was broken down into classes that were shaped like a pyramid
* At the top was the God-King, the Pharaoh
* Next was the nobles and priests who ran the government and managed the land
* Then merchants, artisans, scribes, and tax collectors
  + Merchants traded up and down the Nile River
  + Artisans built beautiful goods such as stone dishes, gold and silver tools, and paper from papyrus
* Most people were peasants and worked the land
  + The pharaoh owned the land but let subjects use some of the land
  + The peasants had to pay taxes to the pharaoh in the form of crops and had to serve in the military
  + Peasants were forced into labor projects such as building the pyramids
* Men were the head of the household but the wives were still respected
  + Most men were only allowed one wife unless the first wife was childless
  + Woman were in charge of the household and education