Discover the timeless grandeur of the pyramids - from the tombs of Egypt to the temples of Mexico
Gold plaque with the name of Nebhepet-Re
Bronze royal cartouche from Nebhepet-Re
Gold plaque, probably from Nebhepet-Re, 1st century BC
Two plaques with names of Nebhepet-Re
Two plaques with names of Nebhepet-Re
Hauphres and his wife, Ram, c. 250 BC
Opium stone mask
Model sledge and saw from the reign of Thutmose III, c. 1570-1450 BC
Rosetta Anubitehau and his son
Contents

6
What are pyramids?
8
Built for a king

10
The great Step Pyramid
12
The Step Pyramid complex
14
First true pyramids
16
The pyramids of Giza
18
The pharaohs of Giza
20
The Great Pyramid
22
Inside the pyramid
24
Temples and offerings
26
The Great Sphinx
28
Funeral boats
30
Planning the pyramid
32
Building in brick and stone
34
Tools for building

36
The pyramid rises
38
A slow decline
40
The Middle Kingdom revival
44
Pyramidions
46
Riddles of the pyramids
48
Pyramids of Nubia
50
Pharaohs of Nubia
52
A queen’s treasure
54
Pyramids of Mexico
56
Mayan pyramids
60
Aztec pyramids
62
The pyramid lives on...
64
Index
What are pyramids?

The pyramids of Egypt have fascinated people for thousands of years. How did the ancient Egyptians build these massive stone monuments, and why? The most famous pyramids are the three at Giza, near modern Cairo. But there are more than 80 other pyramids in Egypt, and another 100 further south in the Sudan. Each one is a tomb built by a pharaoh (king) as the final resting place for his body. The pyramid was meant to help the dead pharaoh achieve eternal life. But we may never know why the Egyptians chose the pyramid shape. It may have developed from early burial mounds, or been a symbol of the sun's rays or a stairway to heaven. Many centuries later, the people of Central America also built pyramids, mainly as temples. Hundreds of these are still hidden in the deep jungles.

Mountain Peaks

Holy buildings all over the world have a pointed pyramid shape. Most cultures believe the gods live in the heavens, so it's only natural to want to join them. Most temples, churches, and pagodas, mosques, and stupas all put a spire-like peak over the mountain. This is the Temple of Pura in Indonesia.

Riddles Revealed

The Great Sphinx of the ancient Egyptians was built by the Sun god, and the Egyptians built their pyramids to join the Sun god. They believed that the pyramid had been created as a memorial stone from the principal pyramid. The mountain shape of the pyramid is thought to be the norm of all life. By escaping its shape, the pyramid had magical powers to help keep the king safe.

Stone Sarcophagus

The pharaoh Khufu built the pyramid at Giza around 2000 BCE. It is only slightly taller than the Great Pyramid, but it's the biggest of them all (pp. 22-23). The pyramid shape resembles the nose of a man, this is shown in a book in the desert. The king may have been buried in gold to make it shine like the sun.
Built for a king

The Egyptians believed their Pharaoh was a living god. He led the army in battle, passed judgement on criminals, and controlled the treasury. He also represented the unity of Egypt. In early times, most people lived in the north or the south, called Lower and Upper Egypt. It was the Pharaoh’s role to keep the two regions together. The centralized government meant he had all the resources of Egypt at his disposal for building his pyramid. The finest sculptors, masons, engineers, and countless workers spent years building the tomb. The labourers who dragged the stones were not slaves. They were farmers who believed that if they helped their king get to heaven, he would look after them in the next world.

Pyramidal Selves
- There were 80 pyramids in Egypt. They are all on the west bank of the Nile, where the sun sets. In the Old Kingdom, pyramids were grouped around temples. The capital in the Middle Kingdom, the capital was moved north to Luxor, so most pharaohs built their pyramids further south.

The Social Pyramid
- Beneath the pyramid were the royal family, nobles, and important priests, soldiers, and officials. The middle class included merchants and skilled craftspeople. But most Egyptians were peasant farmers.
The great Step Pyramid

The first pyramid – probably the first large stone structure in human history – was built for the pharaoh Djoser at Saqqara around 2680 B.C. It was designed by the architect Imhotep, who became more famous than the pharaoh he worked for. The Step Pyramid is really a series of six rectangular structures set one on top of the other, beneath it, cut deep into the underground rock, lie the burial chambers of Djoser and five members of his family. The king’s vault was built of pink granite and sealed with a three-tonne plug. But it was robbed long ago – only a mummmified foot was found inside.

Imhotep

More than 2,000 years after his death, the ancient Egyptians worshipped Imhotep as a god of wisdom. One writer called him “the inventor of the art of building with brick stone.” He is said to have written many books and became a sort of patron saint of architects. He is often shown seated with a papyrus scroll across his knees. He was also thought to be the son of the god Isis, whose magic gave him the power to heal the sick.

© Copyright Octopus Publishing Group

FINISHED STATUE

This is one of those unfinished bas-reliefs of Djoser found in his pyramid complex. Even in this fragmentary state, the king wears a stern expression. The spirit of a dead king was thought to change from the burial chamber and inhabit statues like this.

BUILT IN STAGES

The Step Pyramid was built around a core of dressed stone. Initially it changed its mind five times as the building progressed. He enlarged the original structure from below before building a fourteen-meter pyramid structure on top. Then two more stages were added by enlarging the earlier structure. It was finally faced with polished limestone to give a smooth finish.

A BUILDER’S SKETCH

This is an ancient architectural drawing, probably made by builders working on the Step Pyramid. It would have allowed them to figure out the exact angles of the building’s sloping sides.

THE KING’S PECTORAL

The first lifelike portrait in history is this carved stone of King Djoser. It was found in a closed chamber attached to the north side of his pyramid. Two round holes in the wall allowed the pharaoh to see the offerings brought by his worshipers. The king is wearing a sacred beard, a sign of royalty, and is held up by a large aide. His stylized hair is elaborately coiffed. The eyes were once inlaid with rock crystal. The face and hair of the Djoser statue are 70 years older than the king’s strong, powerful, serene men in his three feet prominent cheekbones, thick lips, and heavy jaw.

OUTLINE OF DJOSER’S NAME IN HIEROGLYPHICS

© Copyright Octopus Publishing Group

FINISHED STATUE
The Step Pyramid complex

The SAQQARA STEP PYRAMID was one building in a large complex. Between the pyramid and its massive enclosure wall is a series of courtyards and ceremonial buildings. The pyramid, these are probably the first large stone buildings ever made. Many are shaped and decorated like earlier structures made of mud bricks, rushes, reeds, or wood. Though they are carved to look like real buildings, most of them are dummies, complete with fake doors. One courtyard was used for the special sact sacrifices, held after Djoser had been king for many years. Crowds from all over Egypt came to watch the pharaoh run a course in the sun court. This makes the Step Pyramid the world's first sports arena! At the finish of each race, Djoser proved that he was still fit to rule. Then he was re-crowned as king of Upper and Lower Egypt on two thrones next to the sun court.
First true pyramids

The Pharaohs who followed King Djoser also built step pyramids. The familiar smooth pyramid shape was not developed until the reign of King Sneferu. In his 24 years as pharaoh (2575-2551 B.C.), he won wars in Libya and Nubia and built many new temples, fortresses, and palaces. Sneferu also built at least three—maybe even four—pyramids. His first, at Meidum, shows how building in stone had advanced by that time. The construction of the core and outer casing is similar to Djoser's Step Pyramid. But the builders had made great advances in handling large blocks of stone. The main structure is made of huge slabs, not many small blocks. They had also worked out a new way of roofing the burial chamber so it held the weight of the pyramid above and improved methods of sealing the entrance against robbers. All these features were used by Sneferu's son, Khufu, who built the biggest pyramid of all, the Great Pyramid of Giza. But in total tonnes of stone, Sneferu's four pyramids were an even bigger building project.

The Dahshur pyramids

Sneferu built two large pyramids at Dahshur. It is impossible to visit these three, because they are in a military zone. The old plates show the Bent Pyramid, which the Egyptians called the 'Bent Pyramid of the South'. It has more of its fine stonework than any other pyramid. The walls started at a very steep pitch but fell away upwardly (drowned edge), probably because of bad workmanship. The Bent Pyramid is also unusual in having two entrances and two burial chambers—both empty. The northern pyramid was built later. It is a true pyramid that rises at a very steep angle.

Memphite King

Sneferu was the first king of the Fourth Dynasty. He was an able builder. This coincide with the rise of the city of Memphis in the Delta. Sneferu was a builder and the first king to build a large pyramid when the Bent Pyramid starts to round, but the burial chamber was never finished. As a result, there is no real pyramid. But the Old Kingdom pyramid may have been started as a smaller one that was never completed.
The pyramids of Giza

"Time laughs at all things, but the pyramids laugh at time". This old Arab proverb pays respect to the great pyramids of Giza, which have sat on a high plateau by the Nile for more than 4,500 years. By the time of Thutmose III, they were more than a thousand years old, and even the Egyptians thought of them as ancient wonders. To the Arabs, who invaded Egypt in A.D. 639, the pyramids were unbelievably old. From a distance, they are an awesome, majestic sight. Up close, they are massive. The largest of the three, the Great Pyramid of Khufu, was built around 2580 B.C. At its peak it was 147 m (481 ft) tall, with square sides 230 m (786 ft) long. It is made of about 2,300,000 blocks of solid limestone, weighing 2.5 tonnes each on average. Its neighbour, built 70 years later for King Khafra, is only 3 m (9 ft) shorter. The third great pyramid was made for the pharaoh Menkaure. It is the smallest of the three, only standing 66 m (218 ft) high.

The Sphinx

The Great Sphinx (pp. 26-27) stands near the great pyramids. Carved from a huge boulder of limestone, it has the body of a resting lion and the face of a king, probably Khafra. Some modern buildings in Egypt's pyramids have been inspired by the Sphinx. They probably expressed a tribute to their king.

The Great Pyramid of Khufu

The Great Pyramid of Khufu is the largest of the three pyramids. It was built around 2580 B.C. and is made of about 2,300,000 blocks of solid limestone, weighing 2.5 tonnes each on average. Its height is 147 m (481 ft) and its base is 230 m (786 ft) square.

The Pyramid of Khafra

The Pyramid of Khafra is the second largest of the three pyramids. It was built around 2530 B.C. and is made of about 1,000,000 blocks of solid limestone, weighing 1.5 tonnes each on average. Its height is 136 m (446 ft) and its base is 227 m (745 ft) square.

The Pyramid of Menkaure

The Pyramid of Menkaure is the smallest of the three pyramids. It was built around 2500 B.C. and is made of about 600,000 blocks of solid limestone, weighing 1.0 tonnes each on average. Its height is 66 m (218 ft) and its base is 137 m (450 ft) square.

The Sphinx

The Sphinx is a massive statue of a lion with a human head. It stands near the great pyramids and was built around 2500 B.C. It is made of solid limestone and weighs about 6000 tonnes. Its height is 20 m (66 ft) and its length is 73 m (240 ft).

The Great Pyramid of Menkaure

The Great Pyramid of Menkaure is the smallest of the three pyramids. It was built around 2500 B.C. and is made of about 600,000 blocks of solid limestone, weighing 1.0 tonnes each on average. Its height is 66 m (218 ft) and its base is 137 m (450 ft) square.
The pharaohs of Giza

The pharaoh had total authority. His subjects thought of him as a god and would do anything for him. Without this absolute power, the pyramids could never have been built. The word pharaoh means “great house,” and originally referred to the palace rather than the king. Khufu, Khafra, and Menkaura had their palaces at Memphis. From there they could admire their massive tombs being built nearby at Giza. The building process took many years—if the pharaoh was lucky, his pyramid would be ready before he died. These huge projects must have put an enormous strain on Egypt’s economy. When they were finally finished, the Giza pyramids were given names which celebrated the majesty of the kings who built them. The Great Pyramid was called “Khufu is one belonging to the horizon”. The other two were known as “Great is Khafra” and “Menkaura is divine”.

**LEON THRONE**

One of the most beautiful Egyptian statues is this portrait of the pharaoh Khafra. He succeeded Khufu as king, and his statue was found in Khafra’s pyramid temple. The statue is carved from a single, massive stone called granite. The statue is shown sitting on a throne. His face is expressed with a divine, serene countenance. The statue was found during the excavation of Khafra’s valley temple, part of his pyramid complex. It may have been hidden there to save it from destruction by Ramses II or Ramses III.

**HEAD IN THE SAND**

The Great Sphinx (250-247 BCE) is a massive statue of a lion-headed man. The statue is carved from a single, massive stone called granite. It stands more than 200 feet tall and 66 feet wide. The Sphinx has been the subject of much fascination throughout history.

**ANCIENT REMAINS**

A broken wooden coffin was found in Menkaura’s pyramid, but the wood and writing show that it was made nearly 2000 years after the king’s death. Later Egyptians must have tried to repair the coffin, as it appears damaged.

**Queens’ pyramids**

King Menkaura built three smaller pyramids just south of his own pyramid. None of them was finished, but one is partly carved in granite. This is the largest of the three, where his queen Khentkawes was claimed to be buried. Many other pyramid complexes include smaller “queens’ pyramids.” But not all of them were built as tombs for the king’s wives. Some were tombs for his daughters, and others seem to have had different, symbolic purposes.

WHERE WOULD PHARAOHS KEE\n
The throne is a massive pyramid, carved from granite and set atop a stone base.

**MODEL SCULPTURE**

Most Egyptian pharaohs had many wives. The only children they were known for were sons, and the king usually had several. Their children were often considered to be the most important members of the family. The queen was often buried next to the king in a separate tomb. Her tomb was usually smaller than the king’s tomb. The queen’s tomb was often decorated with scenes of the queen and her children. Her tomb was usually smaller than the king’s.

**ANCIENT REMAINS**

A broken wooden coffin was found in Menkaura’s pyramid, but the wood and writing show that it was made nearly 2000 years after the king’s death. Later Egyptians must have tried to repair the coffin, as it appears damaged.

**Queens’ pyramids**

King Menkaura built three smaller pyramids just south of his own pyramid. None of them was finished, but one is partly carved in granite. This is the largest of the three, where his queen Khentkawes was claimed to be buried. Many other pyramid complexes include smaller “queens’ pyramids.” But not all of them were built as tombs for the king’s wives. Some were tombs for his daughters, and others seem to have had different, symbolic purposes.
The Great Pyramid

The largest and most famous pyramid is the Great Pyramid of Giza. It was built for King Khufu around 2550 B.C. Tourists have come to marvel at it for the last 4,500 years. With its original casing of white limestone glittering in the sunlight, it must have been truly awesome sight. Many people believe it is the greatest monument ever made. The base is bigger than any temple, cathedral, or mosque. Until the Eiffel Tower was finished in 1887, the Great Pyramid was also the tallest structure ever built. The precision of its construction is astonishing. The four sides, each slightly more than 230 m (755 ft) long, are aligned almost exactly with true north, south, east, and west. The difference between the longest and shortest side is only 20 cm (7.9 in). This mountain of stone contains approximately 2,300,000 blocks weighing a total of about 6,500,000 tonnes. Inside is a fascinating network of passageways, shafts, galleries, and hidden chambers (pp. 22-23).

And on the inner... Khufu was probably buried in the King's Chamber, at the very heart of the pyramid. This room is used as a store by grave goods. It was sealed long ago, but still contains many objects. This is slightly larger than the door, and must have been placed in the base of the pyramid, was used to build.

REFERENCES AND TOWARDS

The Great Pyramid is the largest stone structure ever built. It is impossible to count all the blocks, so no total number can only be guessed at. At the rear is a structure of red that was incorporated into the base. The outer casing stones were skillfully laid so that no blocks will not slip between them.

Climbing the Mountain

The ascent used to climb the Great Pyramid "the Mountain of the Old". In the 19th century, European tourists paid local guides to carry them to the top. It was very dangerous, people who slipped and fell were often killed. When in 1875, the American author Mark Twain said it was "a likely, substantial, lasting, unromantically sterile, unimpressing, and perfectly unspectacular reaching destination". Nowadays climbing the pyramids is against the law.

The pyramid's sides are at an angle of 53.5 degrees to the angle of 60° at the base of the pyramid.

Structures and Chambers

The Great Pyramid is the largest stone structure ever built. It is impossible to count all the blocks, so no total number can only be guessed at. At the rear is a structure of red that was incorporated into the base. The outer casing stones were skillfully laid so that no blocks will not slip between them.
Inside the pyramid

What wonders are hidden inside the pyramids?

This question has fascinated people throughout history. The early Christians thought the pharaohs used them to store grain, as told in the story of Joseph in the Bible. But the pyramids were really royal tombs. Somewhere inside or beneath the huge mass of stone was a burial chamber where the dead king was laid to rest. Since the earliest times, there have been fantastic rumors about the glittering treasures buried with the dead pharaohs. To stop robbers, the pyramid builders hid the entrances and sealed the internal passages with huge plugs of stone. The Middle Kingdom kings created extra passages and false shafts to try and fool robbers. Despite all these efforts, every known pyramid had been looted by 1000 B.C. The few fragments that have been found were overlooked by dusty thieves. The only intact king's burial ever found belonged to Tutankhamun, who had been buried in a rock-cut tomb in the Valley of the Kings. He was lying in three stunning coffins, one made of solid gold, surrounded by priceless treasures. We can only imagine what marvels were buried inside the pyramids.

The Pyramid Texts

On the inner walls of King User's pyramid are the earliest known religious hieroglyphs. These are the Pyramid Texts. Once brightly colored, these magical spells, prayers, and hymns are about the welfare of the king and his union with the gods. They date from about 2550 B.C., which makes them the oldest known religious writings. Later versions of the texts were painted on Middle Kingdom coffins, and an early New Kingdom papyrus, the famous Book of the Dead.
Temples and offerings

A typical pyramid complex included two temples connected by a long causeway. After the king died, his body was rowed across the Nile to the river or valley temple. Here it was mumified – embalmed, anointed with oils, and wrapped in linen bandages. Seventy days later, the funeral began. Priests led the procession, while women wept and threw sand into the air. The dead king was carried up the causeway to the mortuary or offering temple next to the pyramid. Here the priests performed sacred rites on the mummy before it was laid to rest in the pyramid. After the burial, the pharaoh’s spirit would need regular supplies of food and drink. Every day, meals were placed on an altar in the mortuary temple. Before he died, the king would have set aside lands for the maintenance of a community of priests. Their duty was to maintain the temple and provide offerings for the dead king long into the future.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT PYRAMID

The Great Pyramid was approached by a row of smaller buildings. Inside, a mortuary temple was built in the east side, where the sun rose each day. The temple housed statues of the king, and scenes of the king’s life. The temple shrines were richly decorated with gold and other precious materials. The interiors were elaborately decorated with paintings, reliefs, and inscriptions. The outer walls were covered in limestone, a black basalt base, and red sandstone. The sun rose in the east and set in the west. BEHIND THE PALACE

LAND OF ETERNITY

The soul of the dead, dependent upon the king for its survival in the next world, often depicted as a jackal or hawk. The jackal was a symbol of fertility and the hawk of immortality. The soul was housed in a shrine within the pyramid walls. Beside it, the dead person could have a fantastic banquet in the afterlife.

False doors and stelae

Worshippers came to pray and lay offerings before a statue of the deceased in the pyramid temple. The statue was a statue of stone inscribed with the dead person’s name and titles. In the Old Kingdom, it often took the form of a false door connecting the world of the living with the world of the dead. The door did not open, but the dead person’s spirit was thought to pass through it. So he or she could leave the tomb and enjoy a meal in the temple.

Daily Bread

Painters painted bread and fruit in a typical treatise to show the prosperity and wealth of the deceased. Often, the deceased would be depicted as a king or a pharaoh, and the bread and fruit would be shown in large, richly decorated baskets. The bread and fruit were symbols of the abundance and prosperity of the afterlife.
The Great Sphinx

For more than 4,500 years, the Sphinx has guarded Khafra's pyramid at Giza. Carved from a huge outcrop of limestone, it is the largest free-standing sculpture to survive from ancient times. It has the body of a lion and the head of a king. The drifting sands have buried it up to the neck for most of its history. Attempts were made to clear it as early as 1400 B.C. by Thutmose IV. When he was a prince, Thutmose full asp self under the Sphinx's head after a fire had been lit in the desert. In the prince's dream, the Sphinx promised to make him king if he freed it from the suffocating sand. After he had dug the Sphinx out, the prince recorded his dream on a stone tablet between its huge paws.

BATTENED AND MORTAR
The Sphinx was carved from an outcrop of rock that was essentially cut into blocking stone for Khafra's pyramid. Its shape probably suggested the form of a lion, on which Khafra's stone images carved an image of their king. The dimensions are about 73.5 m (228 ft) long and 20 m (66 ft) high. The limestone has been badly weathered over the centuries. The paws were preserved with the image in Roman times. There were some recent.

26

27
Funeral boats

Boats were the most important means of transport for ancient Egyptians. They had no wheeled vehicles or major roads - their only highway was the Nile. In their religion, the Egyptians believed that the sun god Re sailed across the sky in a boat (p. 45). While the pharaoh was alive, he travelled the Nile and took part in state occasions in a beautiful boat. When he died, the pharaoh needed a boat in the land of the dead. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms, real boats were sometimes buried in pits next to a pharaoh's pyramid. The most famous boat belonged to King Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid. It is massive, 43.5 m (143 ft) long. In later periods, small models of boats were placed in tombs instead.

A 78 YEAR-OLD DAK
The Egyptians did not make nails on their boats. Instead they fastened long wooden rods at the corners of the boat. This is a drawing done with one of the funeral boats of Sesostris III, named from the Middle Kingdom, around 1920 B.C.

KHUFU'S FUNERAL BOAT
Khufu's funeral boat was discovered in 1954 by an Egyptian archaeologist. It is a remarkable discovery. Just south of the Great Pyramid of Giza, Khufu discovered a boat pit sealed for over 4,500 years. Under massive slabs of limestone lay 565 pieces of carved timber. These were put together to make an elegant boat. The name of King Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid, was written on some of the planks. It must have been harried by his successors. Radjedef, right after Khufu's death.

KHUFU'S FUNERAL BOAT
This model boat was discovered in 1954 by an Egyptian archaeologist. This model boat is a Trying to preferr a more realistic scene from the text.

DINGHY IN THE NIJE MARSHES
This concept is the trying to prefer a more realistic scene from the text.

FALCON HEAD
This concept is the trying to prefer a more realistic scene from the text.

AMENHETAN
This concept is the trying to prefer a more realistic scene from the text.
Planning the pyramid

The pyramids required careful planning. First, a site had to be chosen. For religious reasons, this was always on the west bank of the Nile, where the sun set. It had to be close to the river, because the stone would arrive by boat, but well above flood level. The pyramid also required a solid base of rock that would not crack under its enormous weight. Then the sides were leveled, and true north was established, so the sides could be lined up with the four compass points. The Egyptians probably did this by using the stars, since they did not have magnetic compasses. They had set squares and special tools like the merkhet to help in their calculations.

**DYNASTIC PROPORTIONS**

Like stone and wood, pyramid building followed a fixed system of proportions. Artists and builders used a grid to make sure that the pyramids were aligned horizontally and vertically with the stars to make what they called “divine proportions.” They used simple gadgetry to ensure that the pyramids were aligned in the lines of the stars, and the foundations were made perfectly smooth. Two small, unfinished models of pyramids were found that contained a plan of how the pyramids were to be built. These models show the size and shape of the pyramids, and the parts of the pyramids, and how they were to be built.

**UPRIGHT PEGS**

This ancient peg, probably a tool to mark out the foundations before the stone was raised, and a small, unfinished model of a peg, were found in the pyramid. The pegs were used to control the alignment of the stones, and to ensure that the pyramids were built in the correct proportions. The pegs were made of wood, and were used to mark out the foundations of the pyramids, and to ensure that the pyramids were built in the correct proportions. The pegs were made of wood, and were used to mark out the foundations of the pyramids, and to ensure that the pyramids were built in the correct proportions.

**Pyramid Calculations**

This is part of the Khandag Pyramid, as well as the Great Pyramid of Giza, which was built about 2500 BC. It shows a diagram of how the pyramids were built, and how the stones were placed. The angle of the stones was adjusted to ensure that the pyramids were built in the correct proportions. The angle of the stones was adjusted to ensure that the pyramids were built in the correct proportions. The angle of the stones was adjusted to ensure that the pyramids were built in the correct proportions.

**Breaking the Rules**

The base of the pyramid was the entire area of the pyramid, and the height was the distance from the base to the top of the pyramid. The base was shaped like a square, and the height was the distance from the base to the top of the pyramid. The base was shaped like a square, and the height was the distance from the base to the top of the pyramid. The base was shaped like a square, and the height was the distance from the base to the top of the pyramid. The base was shaped like a square, and the height was the distance from the base to the top of the pyramid. The base was shaped like a square, and the height was the distance from the base to the top of the pyramid.
Building in brick and stone

It took hundreds of thousands of pieces of stone to build a pyramid. The Great Pyramid is made of about 2,300,000 blocks, weighing an average of 2.5 tonnes. The largest slabs, in the roof of the King’s Chamber, weigh 50 tonnes. Quarrying all this stone and moving it to the site was an arduous task. The core of the pyramid was made from local limestone, a fairly soft rock. But the high-quality limestone used for the outer casing came from Tura, across the Nile. Some internal chambers and passages were made of granite, a harder stone that came from Aswan, 800 km (500 miles) upstream. All year round, gangs of workers at the quarries cut rough stone blocks out of the ground. When the river flooded and rose closer to the quarries, the stone blocks were loaded onto boats and carried to the pyramid site. The teams even wrote their names on the stones – some blocks in the Meidum Pyramid are labelled “Boat Gang”, “Enduring Gang”, or “Vigorous Gang”.

Granite

This hard, heavy stone was used for the pyramids and temples and sometimes for basalt and sandstone. It was very difficult to quarry. A large sandstone block is still housed in the Aswan quarry. It weighs over 5,600 tonnes and would have been 90 m (300 ft) high.

Sandstone

Harder than limestone but softer than granite, sandstone was used for building and sculpture. This is a fragmentary block (20 cm) from the temple of Seti I at Abydos.

Quarry stones

Quarry and pyramid stones were cut close to the Nile, so the stones could be transported by barge. This carving from the temple of the pharaoh shows a cargo boat carrying a large block of stone. The sail is raised up, so the boat is probably heading downstream (towards the reader).

Limestone

Old Kingdom pyramids were made of limestone. Because pyramids are so large, they were made of limestone. These are carved stones. This illustrates how a block of stone is cut and shaped.

Broken surface

This stone from the brakli has a flake, polished surface that would have been used to polish stone.
Tools for building

All around the great temples, tombs, and pyramids, Egyptologists have found tools left by builders and sculptors. Some of these were lost or broken on the site. But others were left there for religious reasons. The Egyptians believed that a sacred building such as a temple or pyramid had a spirit that would have to be repaired in the next world. So the workers left tools for their spirits to use after they died. The design of these tools has barely changed over the centuries. It is amazing what wonders the builders created with such simple implements.

Copper and Bronze

Polishing it up
After a block of stone had been roughly cut and shaped, it might be polished rubbed down with a smooth stone to give it a polished surface.

CISELLES
Masons worked in teams with chisels. These bronze and copper chisels were used to create fine details. They could be heated to make them cut better.

Hardrock
Most stones are too hard to be worked with copper tools. Instead they were cut and shaped with iron or and stone.

MASON'S BEAKLET
For thousands of years, stonecutter all over the world have hit their tools with maltese stone to sharpen them. This stone is made of very hard wood.

BUTEYREY CLAMP
Clamps were used to hold blocks of stone together. The wide ends were placed in holes in the stone. Many clamps were made of iron, bronze, and wood.

PENDANT PRESS
Using a modern saw, this wooden tool was designed to cut the worker out. After he died, the tool was left in his hand, along with a sword and a wooden handle.

Getting the ax
Axes were used in various parts of the world. They were put on the arrows, the spearheads, and the clubs. These wooden tools found in the foundations of a temple.

Model saw with wooden handle and support frame

Model saw with wooden handle and support frame

CUTTING OUT SAWING
The blade was an ancient carpenter's favorite tool. It was used to cut wood, stone, and bone. This saw from 3000 BC is ancient because the best carpenters in ancient Egypt use this tool.

Egyptians are always shown with a short and a long saw.
The pyramid rises

No records survive to tell us how the pyramids were built. The only ancient account, by the Greek historian Herodotus, was written 2,000 years later and cannot be trusted. He claimed that gangs of 100,000 workmen toiled for 20 years to build the Great Pyramid. We now believe that about 4,000 skilled labourers worked all year round. This number was swelled during Akhet, the yearly flood, which lasted for about three months. Then thousands of peasants left their flooded fields and came to help on the site. There are many theories about how the heavy blocks of stone were lifted into place. Herodotus said they used lifting machines, but there is no evidence for this. It seems more likely that the stones were dragged up a ramp that grew as the pyramid rose.

BUILDING A TERRACE PYRAMID

This model shows the most popular theory—the one relying on a long wooden ramp. As the pyramid grew higher, the ramp was increased in height and length. The top of the pyramid was then a square platform ready to receive the next layer of blocks. In this model, the fine outer casing stones are being added. The boat presented is an idea. Most experts suggest that the whole pyramid was raised from the top down; at the end, the boat is shown being pulled up ramps, rollers, and scaffolding.

Some experts believe that the pyramid was built from the top down. This would mean that the stones were dragged up a ramp that grew as the pyramid rose. Others believe that the stones were dragged up a wooden ramp that was built as the pyramid grew higher. This theory is supported by the discovery of wooden ramps at the base of the pyramids. The ramps were probably built with wooden blocks, and the blocks were probably lifted into place using a system of pulleys and levers. The ramps were then removed, and the blocks were left in place.

The pyramid grew higher and higher, with each layer adding to the height and length of the ramp. The outer casing stones were then added, and the pyramid was complete.

As the pyramid grew higher, the wooden ramps were extended and new ones were added to support the weight of the stones. The ramps were made of wood and were probably covered with a layer of clay or mud to prevent the stones from sliding down. The ramps were used to transport the stones to the top of the pyramid, where they were placed in position using a system of pulleys and levers. The ramps were then removed, and the blocks were left in place.
A slow decline

The kings of Egypt's fifth and sixth dynasties continued the tradition of pyramid building. But their pyramids were smaller and not as well built. The largest, made for King Neferirkare at Abusir, is about the same size as Menkaura's pyramid, the smallest of the Giza trio. The kings still cased their pyramids in fine Tura limestone. But underneath was a core of small, roughly joined stones. These have slowly collapsed, so that little more than piles of rubble remain. The cult of the sun god increased during this period, and many sun temples were built. These magnificent buildings were places of worship and centres for food offerings, which were taken by boat and placed in nearby pyramid temples.

EASY ACCESS
The fifth and sixth dynasty kings did not make much effort to conceal the entrance to their pyramids. This made them easy for tomb robbers to get into. This decision affected the entrance to Nyuserre's pyramid at Meidum. Nearest from Howard Vyse's research book "The Pyramids of Gizeh", published in 1857.

MAGIC HIEROGLYPHS
The pyramid of Neferirkare at Abusir is about the same size as Menkaura's pyramid, the smallest of the Giza trio. The kings still cased their pyramids in fine Tura limestone. But underneath was a core of small, roughly joined stones. These have slowly collapsed, so that little more than piles of rubble remain. The cult of the sun god increased during this period, and many sun temples were built. These magnificent buildings were places of worship and centres for food offerings, which were taken by boat and placed in nearby pyramid temples.

PAPYRUS CYLINDER
The papyrus is a representation of the papyrus columns made of solid granite. The base of the column is carved to be a base of a papyrus stem. The stem is shaded like a papyrus stem. The top is carved to be a top of a papyrus stem. The stem is shaded like a papyrus stem.
The Middle Kingdom revival

After a long period of disorder and civil war, Egypt was reunited around 2040 B.C. The period that followed is known as the Middle Kingdom. Strong kings expanded the empire and revived the tradition of pyramid building. They were inspired by the great pyramids of the Old Kingdom and often built their tombs near the old sites. But the Middle Kingdom pyramids do not have the same grandeur. They were usually based around a core of mud bricks, which has slowly collapsed over the years. Middle Kingdom pharaohs were preoccupied with creating complicated devices and false passages to stop thieves from finding their burial chambers. But the kings were buried with priceless treasures, and the robbers stopped at nothing. Despite the elaborate precautions, all the pyramids were robbed in the period of unrest that followed the end of the Middle Kingdom, around 1750 B.C.

Great temple at Deir el-Bahri

The first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom, Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, was one of Egypt's greatest rulers. During his 51 years on the throne, art and architecture began to recover again. Mentuhotep chose a bay in the cliffs at Deir el-Bahri, near Thebes, for his temple pyramid. This unusual complex included islands, temples, and courts and halls. High on a terrace were six statues with shafts leading to the tomb of the king's wife and daughters. These seem more temple than tomb, but Mentuhotep's mummy or coffin was not found in either case. The whole complex is now preserved. It has been overshadowed by a similar, larger temple built 900 years later by Queen Hatshepsut.

Queen with a beard

Hatshepsut was one of the few women to become powerful in Egypt. To strengthen her shown in the throne, she had herself portrayed as the daughter of the god Amun. This comes from Karnak, where she ruled. On her stone, she is wearing a false beard, a sign of royalty.
Senusret III

The great pharaoh reigned from 1874 to 1835 B.C. He created a strong, centralized government and conquered Nubia to the south. He built his pyramid at Dahshur. The design of the pyramid buildings and the king's sarcophagus was influenced by Djoser's Step Pyramid complex (pp. 16-18), built 800 years earlier.

The Great Pyramid

Senusret III and his successor Amenemhat III built their pyramids at Dahshur, just south of Memphis. This is Amenemhat III's pyramid, when it stood the Step Pyramid, like one of the Middle Kingdom pyramids, it was built on a pile of mounds. The core of the building has been built with mud brick, and the base stones were used for this building process. The tomb, which was 10 meters in diameter, was 12 meters in height.

Pharaoh's Sarcophagus

The lid of the sarcophagus is covered with carvings of Senusret III. The lid itself is carved in a standard form.

Looking Backward

Senusret III looks stern and thoughtful in his statue carved from black granite. The rear view of the statue was carved during his reign.

A Precious Treasure

This beautiful piece of jewelry was found in the tomb of Princess Merneith near the pyramid of Senusret III. One of the images represents the goddess Nefertum.

Amenemhat III

The grandson of Senusret III, Amenemhat III was one of the most powerful pharaohs ever to rule Egypt. He built two pyramids and a famous lighthouse, which is said to contain 3,000 rooms. He is also credited with building the great irrigation scheme. The statue of Amenemhat III is known as the "Bendirat" statue, which was carved in black granite, and it is now part of the Louvre Museum.

Captivity

In the temple of the 5th dynasty, a gold statue of Amenemhat III was discovered. The statue was well-preserved and has a godhead. The Hieroglyphics on the statue read "Bendirat the beauty of the Eye, who is not a conquered god in the Dahshur pyramid."

Lords of All Lands

Another piece of gold jewelry from Princess Merneith's tomb. The statues are depicted as "The good god, lord of all lands and foreign countries."
Pyramidions

The massive royal pyramids of old inspired private individuals to build pyramid-shaped tombs in the New Kingdom. These were small brick buildings with pointed roofs capped by a pyramidion, or capstone. They were often whitewashed and had stelae, stone tablets, on the front. Prayers to the sun god Re were inscribed on the stelae and pyramidions. A courtyard often stood in front of the tomb. This served as a chapel where worshipers could place offerings and pray. An underground passage led to a vaulted burial chamber where the mummy lay. Hundreds of these small pyramids were built on the west bank of the Nile by officials, scribes, and the artisans who worked on the great royal tombs of the New Kingdom.

A PRAYER TO THE SUN GOD

This very popular prayer is in honor of white limestone. Like most pyramids, this stood about 40 cm (1.5 feet) tall. It has inscriptions praising Re, the sun god. It is known as the Pyramidion of the Queen, because it is set in a niche near the top of the pyramid. The shape varies in small and large, and the image is often a pyramid or pyramidion in the sky.

SACRED SHAPE

This small painting shows deities presenting gifts and food offerings, including images of the sacred shape of a pyramid. Food was sometimes placed in pyramidion-shaped boxes. The Egyptians worshipped a sacred stone at Heliopolis because they believed that when the world was formed, the eye of the rising sun had settled on this stone first. For this reason, pyramidians made of stone were also regarded as sacred places to the sun god.

UNCOMMON CUSTOM

There are no known private inscriptions on this type of pyramidion, so we do not know who it was made for. Yet, it has been suggested that the pyramidion was a symbol of the deceased person's prosperity in the afterlife. This is one of the most popular pyramidions, often seen in tombs from the New Kingdom and later.

A PYRAMIDION ON PHARAOH

This painting shows a funeral ceremony taking place before a temple. The pyramidion is at the front of the tomb, which is known as the Pyramid of the Queen. The ceremony involves both the "Opening of the Mouth" process on the mummy and the offering of food and gifts.
Riddles of the pyramids

Considering they were built 4500 years ago, we know a surprising amount about the Egyptian pyramids. But many mysteries remain. Almost everything has been learned in the last two centuries.

A great breakthrough was made in 1822, when the French scholar Jean-François Champollion began to decipher hieroglyphics, the Egyptian picture-writing. By then, the Egyptian language and civilization had been dead for nearly 2,000 years. The desert sands had swallowed up the smaller pyramids, and the names of the great kings and queens had been lost or forgotten. Modern archaeologists sift through these ruins, searching for tiny clues that will help them to piece together the puzzles of the past. The answers to some questions are unclear. Exactly how were the pyramids built? And what is the religious significance of the shape? There are many theories, but we may never know for sure.

How many people worked on the pyramids?

Reports differ. It took 10,000 workers to build the Great Pyramid in one year. All the men in the workforce were 2,000 years old. Another 6000 skilled workers were on duty all year round. Their names have been lost over the pyramids.

How were the stones moved?

There is no doubt that the Egyptians used levers, sledges, and rollers to move the stones. They cut granite and marble, and a metal hook for moving bricks. One tool used on the Great Pyramid is known as a "jackshovel." The stone was cut and lifted, then lowered down with a rope into place.

Weighed in gold

The tomb of Tutankhamen, dating from about 1370 B.C., has been discovered. It is a marvel of ancient engineering. The tomb was found intact, with all its contents intact. The pharaoh was buried with his possessions, including his chariot and weapons. The tomb was sealed with a massive stone door.

Sun or stars?

There are many theories about the pyramids. Many of these try to explain the link with the sun and the stars. In 1894, for example, F. A. Smyth claimed that the pyramids were built to align with the stars. Nowadays, experts agree that the pyramid is a tomb for a king, and that the stones were aligned to the stars for a reason.

Reconstruction of a chair from the tomb of Queen Hatshepsut at Guiza, c. 2000 B.C.
Pyramids of Nubia

To the south of Egypt further up the River Nile lies Nubia, known to the ancient Egyptians as “Kush”. This desert land was one of the cradles of African civilization, and was rich in gold and exotic goods. Nubia’s position on the Nile gave it great strategic importance, and for centuries Egypt’s pharaohs fought to control it. There are more than a hundred pyramids in Nubia. They were all plundered for their stone over the centuries, and today most of them are shapeless mounds. Like the Egyptian pyramids, they were also robbed of their treasures long ago. The first Nubian pyramids were built around 700 B.C., during a brief period when the Nubian kings ruled Egypt. They are at Kurru and Nuri, near Napata, the Nubian capital. When the capital was moved south to Meroe, around 300 B.C., pyramids were also built there. The kings and queens were mummified and buried underneath. Servants were often sacrificed and buried in the pyramid too, so that they could watch over their kings and queens in the next world.

A Pyramid Field at Meroe

These are the pyramids in the southern cemetery at Meroe. They were built between 500 B.C. and about 275 B.C., when Nubia was captured by the Assyrians. By the first century B.C., Meroe was the centre of one of Africa’s great-old Empires. At its peak, Nubia was a fascinating mix of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and several African cultures. As the kingdom declined, the kings built smaller, less impressive pyramids.
Pharaohs of Nubia

Around 750 B.C., when Egypt was weakened by civil wars and disorder, the Nubian kingdom prospered and grew powerful enough to conquer Egypt. For about a hundred years, the kings of Nubia were also pharaohs of Egypt. Succession to the throne was from brother to brother — not from father to son, as in the usual Egyptian practice. The Nubians were fascinated by the culture and religion of Egypt, and even restored temples there. They also adopted the Egyptian tradition of being buried with shabti figures. These mummy-shaped statues were thought to have magical powers to work for the dead person in the next world. The Egyptians were buried with 401 shabti figures — one for each day of the year, plus 36 bosses carrying whips. But one Nubian king had 1,277, more than three times the usual number.

The great Taharqa

King Taharqa is the most famous Nubian king. He ruled over Nuba and Egypt from 690 to 664 B.C., at the height of the 25th dynasty. He is even mentioned in the Bible. Taharqa built many monuments and temples in both lands. His large pyramid at Nuri was probably inspired by the great Chin pyramids, which he could see from his palace at Memphis.

Seth-Atum

An English explorer drew this picture of the pyramids at Nuri in the 1850s. There are 20 large King pyramids here, plus another 53 smaller pyramid-shaped structures. They were built between about 700 and 200 B.C. All are made from hard yellow sandstone, a soft rock that has not weathered well. From 150 years ago the pyramids were badly eroded.
A queen’s treasure

Of all the hundreds of pyramids in Egypt and Nubia, a hoard of treasure has been found in only one. The pyramid, at Meroe in the Sudan, belonged to Queen Amanishakhty, who ruled Nubia in the first century B.C. In 1834, the Italian adventurer Giuseppe Ferlini found a magnificent collection of jewellery in a secret chamber near the top of the tomb. At that time, the pyramid was one of the best preserved in Nubia. But Ferlini was not an archaeologist; he tore the pyramid to pieces in his greedy hunt for more treasure.

ARMS FULL OF BEAUTY

Ferlini found five pairs of bracelets. Nubian queens wore bracelets and Amarnishakhty may have worn them at the same time. The queen in the tomb, Ammanishakhty’s predecessor.

JEWELED RINGS

The queen wore this ring to show her devotion to the gods. The drop-shaped pendant made a single stone, which was probably intended to please Amon and Nepthys.

EYES OF APPEAL

Spreading her wings

The gold mask is the counterpart of this beautiful gold brooch. The brooch and the mask of the goddess Isis in a protective gesture. Nubian queens identified themselves with Isis, believing they were the souls of their most important god, Amen.

MINIATURE IMAGES OF GODS

A cheap hanging from treasure

Egyptians and Nubians were always very subject to protect them from evil. These cheap gold figures were buried in a chest, together with a hanging pendant shaped like a lotus flower.

SIGN OF LIFE

Cut from a sheet of gold, these might have symbolized the life of a nobly born around the neck. The symbol was the sacred sign of life and was usually reserved for kings, queens, and gods. Only they had this power to give or take away life. The origin of the booted river is uncertain, but it may represent the life of a god.
Pyramids of Mexico

Before the arrival of Europeans, Mexico and Central America were home to a wide variety of different peoples and empires. Over the centuries they built thousands of pyramids, usually with steps or terraces rising to a flat top. Most of the pyramids were temples, often arranged in complexes with many smaller religious buildings. Priests climbed the stairs to high altars where they conducted sacred rites, including human sacrifice. A few pyramids were constructed over tombs. Some of the most magnificent structures were built by the Mayan people in southern Mexico between the 3rd and 9th centuries AD. The great Aztec pyramids were destroyed by the Spanish conquistadors (conquerors) who invaded Mexico in 1519.

Meanwhile, in South America... On the north coast of Peru, the Moche people built two great pyramids, the Huaca del Sol and the Huaca del Luna. They used sun-baked mud bricks to construct the pyramids, and covered them with brightly colored paintings. The Moche also made fine pottery. This one is shaped like a woman.

Comparing Sides

The bases of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan and the Great Pyramid of Egypt are almost the same size. But the Mexican pyramid is only about half as high. It is made of about 2.5 million tons of stone and earth, compared to the 6.8 million tons of stone in the Great Pyramid.

City of the Gods

The capital city of the Aztecs was the most impressive ancient city in the Americas. It was built on an island in Lake Texcoco. The city was divided into four main parts, each with its own pyramid temple. The main temple was the Temple of the Sun, built around 1325 AD. It appears to have been a sacred place, though there is some debate about whether it was actually used. So who built this great city? When the Spanish arrived the Aztecs, they said "the gods."
Mayan pyramids

Between the 3rd and 9th centuries A.D., the Mayas built pyramids all across eastern Mexico and into modern Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Made of stone blocks held together with strong lime mortar, Mayan pyramids were built at steeper angles than Egyptian ones. The staircases sometimes got narrower as they rose, to make the pyramids seem even taller and steeper. This also drew attention to the rituals performed in the temple chamber at the top. Crowds gathered at the base, but only priests could climb to the sacred heights. The Mayas were skilled astronomers and laid out their pyramids according to the sun, moon, and stars. They also developed yearly and sacred calendars, a system of mathematics, and their own language of picture-writing or "glyphs." This has still not been fully deciphered.

City Kingdom

The Mayas did not have a single capital or king like most Central American people. Instead, their cities were governed by a council of nobles. Their most important city was Chichen Itza in the Yucatan Peninsula. There were many major religious and administrative buildings there, including the famous pyramid El Caracol. The stone pillars in the central court show the influence of the Teotihuacan civilization. People were buried with their goods in the central court.

Dancing Gods

These carvings show the gods shared by most Central American people. On his mighty journey through the earth, the Sun god became the jaguar god of the underworld. The black spots on his fur symbolize the stars. The jaguar Quetzalcoatl was brought to express priestly power. A priest's headdress is shown with jaguar pelt, his open mouth, to link him to sacred images of the jaguar god.

Jaguar Pot

Very rare Mayan wall paintings remain, but we can get some ideas of their style from the decorated ceramics that have survived. People for the religious ceremonies were adorned with jewelry that often featured jade. The Jaguar god was especially popular in the southern Mayan cities. His clawed paws are often shown on vessels.

Cracking the Code

For over a hundred years, researchers struggled to understand the secrets of Mayan glyphs. Only in the last twenty years have they started to break their code. There are many texts that record the history of the Mayas, but codices, were burned in 1523 by a Spanish priest who claimed they were the works of the devil. Only a few survived. These were written and painted on bark paper called Atlante. They have helped us to understand the Mayan calendar and mathematics. These glyphs are from the Codex Fejervary-Mayer.

Flattened Pendant

The Earliest Known God of Mexico was Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent. He is carved on the wall of El Caracol pyramid at Chichen Itza. At the entrance, the serpent is shown, looking toward the sacrifice at the top of the pyramid.

Revelations

After the fall of the Mayas, the city was abandoned and left to the jungle. It was not rediscovered until 1908. The base is shown on the top of the pyramid, with the steps leading up to the top.

Inside Temples

Mayan pyramids were not only for rulers, but they were also used for religious ceremonies. In many cases, the gods were shown in the temple. The pyramid was built by the priests, who used stone blocks, not only for their size, but also for their weight and strength. The pyramid's base is shown at the bottom, with the steps leading up to the top. The temple is shown at the top, with the gods shown in their sacred places.
Blood-letting and sacrifice

Mayan nobles sustained themselves in special blood-letting ceremonies. They pierced needles or stingray spines through parts of the body and collected the blood in Cones-shaped bowls. Men usually passed their position, the image from Palace II (south of Tikal) shows a king with a jaguar head through a teens. The ruler's Jaguar has been a common theme.

PUBLIC AUDIENCES

Mayan nobles were grandiose in their public ceremonies. The Temple of the Giant Jaguar in Tikal, Guatemala, was a central feature of the city. It was built in five distinct phases from the 7th to 10th centuries. The ceremonial platform on the east side leads to the base temple chamber. The entrance is flanked by niches, and homes to the myth of a great monster.

OVAL FRACTURED

The Pyramid of the Magician at Uxmal, Mexico, has an oval fracted. It was built in five distinct phases from the 7th to 10th centuries. The ceremonial chamber on the east side leads to the base temple chamber. The entrance is flanked by niches, and homes to the myth of a great monster.

MAYAN SPECIALIZED ART

A number of Mayan artists specialized in a variety of media. Some specialized in shaping stone to create执着 statues of deities, while others focused on creating intricate textiles or pottery. The Mayan people believed in the power of these works to connect with the gods and to aid in their rituals.
Aztec pyramids

The Aztecs ruled the last great empire of Central America. They called themselves Mexico and made their capital at Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City. When the Spanish conquistadors entered Tenochtitlán in 1519, they found one of the largest cities in the world. They were impressed by its beauty, cleanliness, and order. But as they approached the huge ceremonial centre, the Spaniards were horrified by the smell of blood. The Aztecs used their pyramids for human sacrifice, which they believed provided vital energy needed for the workings of the universe. In the last years of their empire, thousands of victims, mostly prisoners of war, were sacrificed each year. The Aztecs built their pyramids from a core of adobe mud bricks faced with stone held together by mortar. None of them were very high. The tallest, the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán, was only a fifth of the height of the Great Pyramid at Giza.

The pyramids were an important part of Aztec life and were often seen during festivals. Stone masks were placed near the base of the pyramids to protect them in the afterlife. Finally, carved stone masks were also placed in temples as offerings to the gods. This one is probably the Aztec god of storm and vegetation.

The Great Pyramid of Teotihuacán was the largest pyramid in the world when it was built. It was made of adobe mud bricks and was covered in stone. The Pyramid was surrounded by temples and other buildings. The Aztecs believed that the pyramid was a gateway to the underworld.

The Aztecs believed that the world had been created by their gods. They believed that the gods were angry and would punish them if they did not sacrifice enough victims. The Aztecs sacrificed thousands of people each year to please their gods.

The Aztecs believed that the world was divided into four equal parts. Each part was ruled by a different god. The gods were associated with different aspects of life, such as the sun, rain, and war. The gods were also associated with different animals and plants.

The Aztecs believed that the world was going to end and that they would have to sacrific e enough people to please the gods. They believed that the gods would then give them a new world.

The Aztecs believed that the gods would also give them a new world if they sacrificed enough people. They believed that the gods would give them a new world if they sacrificed enough people. They believed that the gods would give them a new world if they sacrificed enough people. They believed that the gods would give them a new world if they sacrificed enough people.
The pyramid lives on...

Four and a half thousand years after the Great Pyramid rose on Egypt’s desert horizon, a different kind of pyramid is appearing on city skylines. Modern pyramids are not made of millions of tons of stone. It does not take thousands of workers to build them, and they represent big business, not the spiritual realm of the dead. New materials like reinforced concrete and smoked glass supported by steel girders mean that huge structures can be built with a minimum of effort. There is something special about the pyramid shape that has inspired architects, artists, and designers throughout history. As a geometric shape, it is the supreme symbol of natural balance and harmony. Built on a grand scale, it gives the impression of something superhuman, built by the gods. The eternal magic of the pyramid is destined to live on and on.

A New Era

Since 2005, the U.S. one-dollar bill has included a picture of a pyramid from the Great Pyramid of Egypt, symbolizing the strength and permanence of the United States. The pyramid was chosen to reflect the country’s endurance and leadership in the modern world.

Pyramid Power

The pyramid in the United States is not alone in its significance. The pyramid shape is found in many architectural designs around the world, symbolizing strength, stability, and the secrets of ancient knowledge.

Setting the Scene

The simple elegance of ancient Egyptian art has inspired many modern architects. The famous pyramid of the Giza Plateau is one such example. The shapes and design elements used in ancient pyramids have been adapted by modern artists to create stunning works of modern art.

The Dome Pyramid

The most impressive modern pyramid in Europe is in Spain. It was designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. The pyramid rises to a height of 35 meters (115 feet) and is made of concrete and glass. The design is inspired by the shape of the ancient pyramids of Egypt, but with a modern twist.

Reach for the Sky

In China, the Jin Mao Tower in Shanghai is a modern example of the pyramid shape. The 128-story skyscraper reaches 420.5 meters (1,379 feet) and is one of the tallest buildings in the world. The pyramid shape is not just a symbol of strength and stability; it is also an efficient use of space, allowing for maximum light and air flow in the building.

Living Pyramid

The pyramid is not just a symbol of strength; it is also a living entity. The glass pyramid at the Louvre Museum in Paris is a dynamic example of this. The pyramid is designed to change and adapt, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of art and culture.

Sand Proof

Built in 1977, the transparent pyramid in the desert town of Las Vegas is a perfect example of how the pyramid shape can be used to create unique buildings. The pyramid is made of clear glass and is supported by a steel framework. It is a testament to the enduring appeal of the pyramid shape.

Evolving the Pyramid

As the pyramid shape continues to evolve, it is being reimagined in new ways. The pyramid is not just a symbol of strength; it is also a symbol of growth and change, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of art and culture.