

INTRODUCING ART

EGYPTIAN ART SPHINX AND PYRAMIDS

1. The pyramids and the great Sphinx were constructed almost five thousand years ago in the desert sand of Giza in Egypt.
2. These were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The pyramids are the only surviving structures from those famous seven wonders.
3. They were built around the year 2500 B.C. and are the most famous of all remaining Egyptian pyramids.
4. The Pharaohs or kings built these structures as tombs for themselves.
5. The Egyptian pharaoh was considered to be not only a king but also a god. The people believed that he was appointed to rule the people by god.
6. Burial customs developed into an important aspect of Egyptian culture in which every man was responsible for insuring his own happiness in the after life. This was accomplished by supplying his tomb with the things which were considered necessary for living well. Often actual objects were placed in the burial chamber or pictures were painted on the walls to represent items that were needed in the after life.
7. Egyptians believed that the human spirit or ka, needed a body to live on in the after life. The practice of mummification evolved to preserve the body for the ka or human spirit. They also placed realistic statues of the person for the ka to indwell if the mummy was destroyed.
8. Many of the tombs have been discovered over the years and raided or robbed of many of their great treasures but many wonderful archeological discoveries have also been made to tell us much about Egyptian life.
9. The royal tombs were constructed to last forever and were made from blocks of limestone and granite which had to be transported by boat from quarries to the south of the Nile River. Each weighed up to two tons each and they could only be transported during the flood period. Each stone was dragged from the Nile up ramps.
10. Smoothing and shaping the stones was done at the building site. They were held together by mortar which was like a cement. Workers for these projects were believed to be paid workers rather than slaves and were to have lived in housing complexes on the site.
11. The pyramids were only part of the funerary complex. There were also temples, chambers, walkways, and smaller burial structures. Guarding this entire area is a huge sculpture called the Sphinx. It is part lion and part man, and has the attributes of the most noble beast, the lion and the Royal Pharaoh. It is strong, powerful, stately, and seemingly eternal.
12. The lion has been represented in Egyptian art for centuries. It is fierce and an image of protection. Lions are carved into temples or as decorative parts of a royal throne. In this case the lion represents the Pharaoh as Sun God Protecting the Pyramids.
13. The head of the Sphinx is carved wearing the striped royal headdress, the cobra on the brow and was originally adorned with the plaited chin beard associated with the pharaoh.

14. Between the lion's paws can be seen a small votive temple and a stela, or upright engraved marker. These small shrines were placed at the Sphinx by Sun God worshippers. Directly in front of the Sphinx have been unearthed remains of a Fourth Dynasty temple with a large complex of ceremonial buildings associated with the Pyramids and their elaborate burial rites. Behind the Sphinx are the three towering Pyramids of Giza. The largest all stone buildings ever known.

15. The pyramids were built with square bases and smooth sides which form an isosceles triangle. All sides meet at an apex. Each of the three Giza Pyramids is oriented to the four points of the compass. Each of the structures was once covered with an outer casing of finely smoothed white limestone, but this covering was taken off for other building projects.

16. The largest of the three pyramids was originally four hundred and eighty two feet high. Each of the four sides is seven hundred and fifty five feet long. The whole area occupied by the Pyramids covers about 13 acres.

17. Much damage to these structures has occurred over the years due to war, erosion and pollution.

18. The Egyptians built these pyramids and Sphinx to reflect their ideas about the pharaohs, and the after life and about their gods.

QUESTIONS

What do you see in this picture?

What shape are these? (point to the pyramids). They may call it a triangle but the correct term is a pyramid because it is a solid form and not a flat triangle shape.

Draw on the board a triangle and then draw a pyramid showing them that it has sides. How many sides do you think the pyramid has?

Make the sample pyramid from paper so that you can use it to demonstrate the following:

What shape do you think the base of the pyramid is? (square) Show them the model you made.

Why do you think the people built these pyramids?

How do we bury people who die in our culture?

What do you think the pyramids were made of?

How do you think the builders got the stones from the quarries (places where they dug them out of the ground) to the building site?

How do builders today bring building supplies to a site for a new house or building?

Do you think the stones weighed very much? They weighed as much as two medium sized cars and some of the stones weighed as much as fifteen tons or as much as five elephants. Do you think it was easy for the builders to construct these?

(Men built these huge structures without the help of machines such as bulldozers or cranes.)

How many men do you think it took to build one of these pyramids?(Sometimes up to 100,000 men worked for twenty seasons on one pyramid.)

What do you think held the stones together and kept them from slipping or tumbling down?

How big do you think the pyramids were? (They might understand that they are as tall

as a forty story skyscraper. They might understand better if you liken it to a building in town and then tell them how many times taller the pyramids are than that.)

What do you think this is? (point to the Sphinx)

does it look like a real animal?

Is it a combination of anything?

Why do you think it is in front of the pyramids? (protection and guarding)

