

Pyramids



by Kelly Jean Chapman

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Sixth Grade Research Report

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Pyramids

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The Pyramids, those of South America, Mexico, and Egypt, have been with us for centuries. People from all over the world still flock to Africa and the Americas to see the work of long dead pharaohs and kings. They are gone, but their footprints still remain, marking time and reminding us of the era when their kingdoms prospered and flourished.

The Making of the Great Pyramid of Egypt

The Great Pyramid towers above the Giza Plateau in Egypt. Magnificent in its antiquity, it shows how well it was built, for after about 4500 years, it is still standing. Now at 450 feet high, the pyramid is 31 feet lower than it used to be as some upper stones are now gone. Conscripts built the pyramid from more than two million limestone blocks, each weighing an average of two and a half short tons! When it was all put

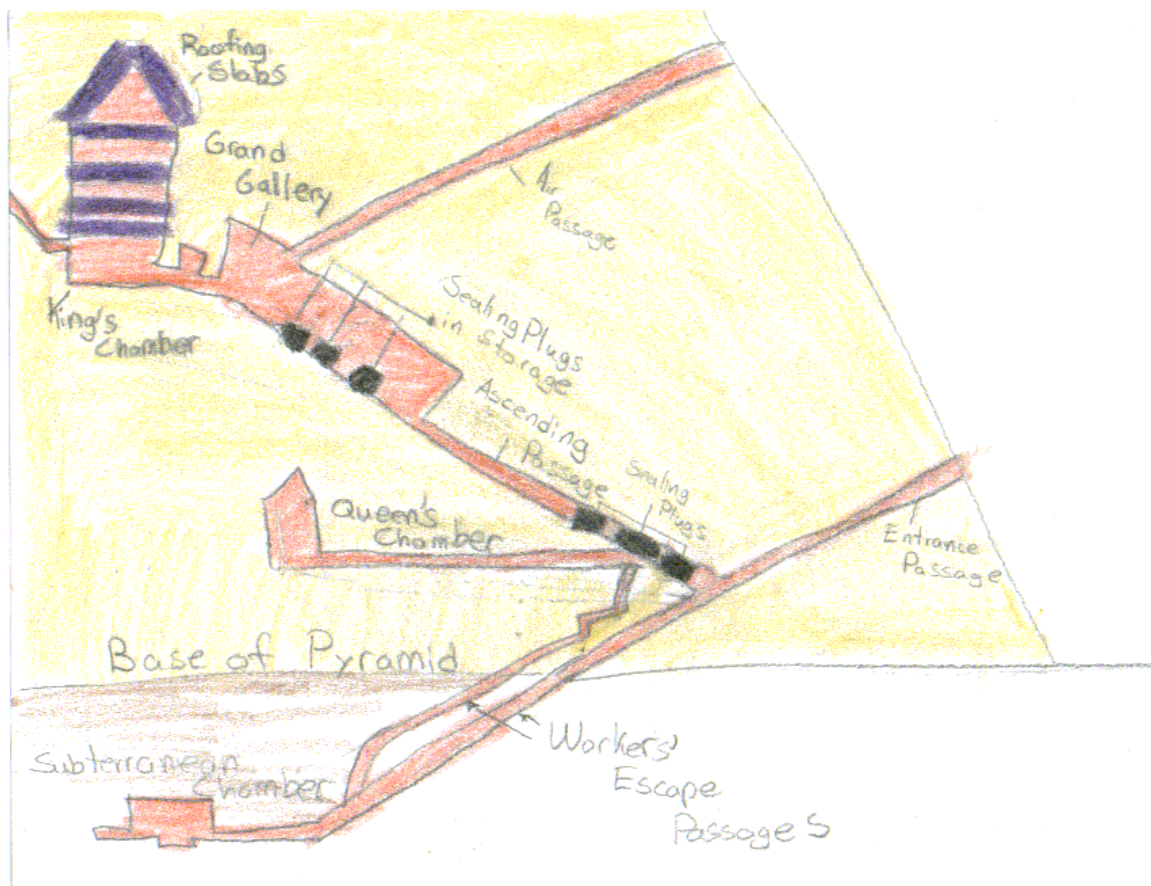
together, the pyramid covered thirteen acres. The following is a step-by-step process of how the pyramid was built.

First, architects found out what was the best size and shape for the pyramid. They made calculations and drawings. Some priests were then told to find out which direction was North because the pyramid was supposed to face that direction. They could not build the pyramid on uneven ground, so they leveled the site by cutting a grid on the rock and filling the channels of the grid with water. The rock was then cut to the level of the water. The pyramid stones had to be cut by hand. Workers used wet wooden wedges to crack the stones. Then they were smoothed and made square.

Next, it was time to move the stone blocks. Levers, ropes, sledges on rollers, and ramps were used. A space was left somewhere near the center of the pyramid for the burial chamber. The granite capstone was laid on and the rest was covered with white limestone. The causeway and temples completed the scene.

Inside the Pyramid

An entrance passage led down into the Subterranean chamber or into the ascending passage which, when the pyramid was finished, was blocked with sealing plugs. The ascending passage led into the Grand Gallery which was connected to the King's Chamber. The Subterranean chamber seems to have been unfinished. There is a passage that goes through the rock that was never finished. It might have been for Cheops's resting place, but no one knows. Cheops was the king who was building these Pyramids. He was also known as Khufu. The descending passage was not large enough for a sarcophagus.



A Map of the Inner Pyramid

Outside the Pyramid

A great causeway linked the Mortuary Temple and the Valley Temple outside the pyramid. Three smaller pyramids called the Queen's pyramids also stood outside on the southeast side of the great pyramid. There was one for Khufu's mother, Queen Hetepheres, one for Queen Henutser, who might have been Khufu's half-sister, and one for Queen Meritetes, who might have been Khufu's queen.

The boat pits outside the pyramids were dug in the shape of Ancient Egyptian boats. They had boat parts inside them which a man named Hag Ahmed Yusuf put together into a boat that was 142 feet from prow to stern. It even has its own museum.

The Sphinx, the half man, half lion with a broken nose, is the “guardian” of the great pyramid. It was built after Khufu’s era and the lion was considered a “guardian of holy places” according to Egyptian mythology. It is 66 feet tall at it’s highest point and it is 240 feet long from end to end. That is a pretty big guardian!

Conscripts

There were about 4000 people working on the great Pyramid. These workers needed to be clothed, fed, and sheltered while they worked. Cooks and bakers were hired along with people to build ovens for them. There were water carriers to keep the ramps wet and people to build the ramps. There were potters to make the water jars. There were scribes. There were overseers. There were butchers, brewers, and people to make the barracks. In all, about 25,000 workers were hired.

The common man in Ancient Egypt wore only a short loincloth while officials wore a long starched skirt that was held up by a rope around the neck. Some priests wore leopard skins slung over one shoulder. Women wore long, tight dresses held up by low shoulder straps. Court ladies wore elaborately decorated, V-neck, long sleeved tunics. Ladies wore tight garments to show their figures and almost everyone wore white because of the heat. Almost everyone went barefoot and both men and women shaped their hair and used make up.

Mummification and the Gods

After an Egyptian died, it was believed that he or she went to the next world. If that person was rich then he or she could be mummified. The process took 70 days. As

time passed the process became more and more elaborate. First, embalmers removed the brain piece by piece through the nostril. Then they cut an incision on the left side of the abdomen to get the intestines, stomach, liver, and lungs, but not the heart. Usually, they filled the body with oil and spices. Next, they plugged the nose with wax and dried the body in a salt called Natron. Last of all, Embalmers wrapped the body in linen bandages and placed it in its coffin.

The Egyptians had a religion that is now dead. They believed in several gods. “Ra” the main god was often represented as the sun. He and the goddess “Rennutet” were relied on for good harvests. The most important pair was “Isis” and “Osiris”. “Isis” represented a devoted mother and wife. Her husband and brother Osiris ruled over vegetation and the dead. The “god” of the sky was “Horus”, their son who was often pictured with the head of a falcon.



Tutankhamen was one of the most famous mummified Pharaohs

The People Involved with the Great Pyramid

William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942)

Petrie was an interesting individual who surprisingly received no formal education. However, he learned geometry just for the fun of it, and was interested in astronomy, chemistry, surveying, and coin collecting even though he was a sickly boy. In 1880, when he was 27 years old, he hopped aboard the S.S. Nephthys bound for Giza. Tourists usually went during the summer and spring so he went to Egypt during the winter. He stayed in an empty tomb making observations while the winter lasted. He lived with rats, fleas, and insects but was not discouraged easily. His first priority was to carry out the most accurate possible triangulation of the whole site. He worked painstakingly and sometimes, when it got very hot, he worked naked under the sun. Petrie published several works including Ten Years Digging in Egypt (1892), Egypt and Israel (1911), and Stonehenge (1880). In 1894 he founded the British School of Archeology in Egypt. He died in 1942.

Auguste Mariette (1821-1881)

When Mariette learned of the wonders of Egypt, he gave up a secure teaching position to get a menial job and learn Coptic. He was soon fluent and able to go to Egypt where he found a sphinx buried in the desert sands. He then set up the Cairo Museum.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)

Napoleon Bonaparte also played an important role in the Egyptian pyramids' history. In 1798 Napoleon led his French army into Egypt. They defeated the Mamelukes in the Battle of the Pyramids with an amazing outcome. In all, there were only about 40 casualties on the French side while the Mamelukes suffered terrible losses.

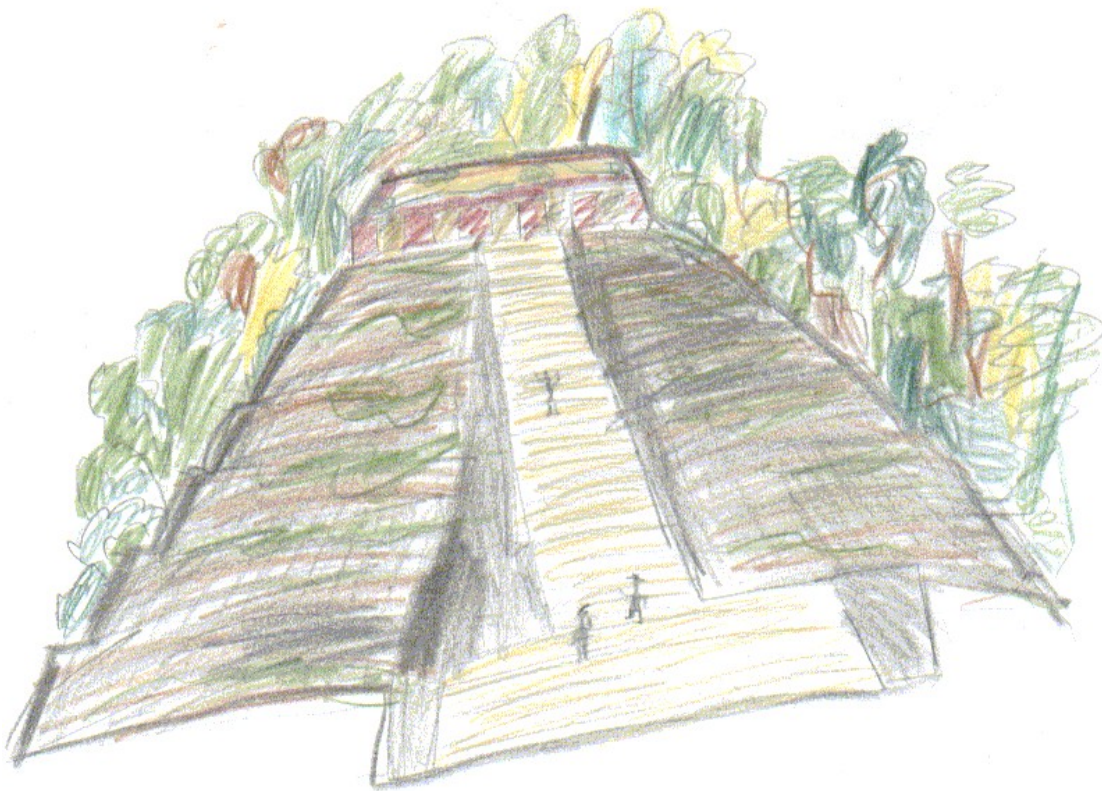
Napoleon wanted to stop the trade routes used by Britain in Egypt since that country was France's chief enemy. Napoleon also wanted to start a French colony in Egypt and he brought many French scholars with him. Their observations revived the study of Egyptian artifacts and their writings provided an excellent description of Egypt at that time.

Tourists who flock to Egypt year round to see the pyramids often cause great disaster. Not just now, but before, too. The pyramids and other great archaeological finds in Egypt are being ruined by graffiti and vandalism.

The American Pyramids

The American pyramids are as significant as those on the Giza Plateau. They were stepped pyramids with flat tops to make room for temples that were used to sacrifice to the ancient American gods. Many are still standing although they are worn and ancient. One of the greatest pyramids is found in Peru's northern coast, near Trujillo. The Temple of the Sun is a terraced brick pyramid on top of a stepped platform. It was 215 meters by 215 meters at the base and about 63 meters high but in later periods it was enlarged to the final size of 225 meters along each side.

Spanish conquerors destroyed most of the pyramids of the later Aztec empire but the Ancient Mayas have some left. They built pyramid shaped mounds of earth with temples on top. One tribe even gathered tons of rubble, covered it with dirt and made that a pyramid!



Mayan Ruins at Palenque

Tenochtitlan

The city of Tenochtitlan was founded by the Aztecs. It has a very special history. An old legend says that once, a long time ago, the Aztec people wandered about Mexico looking for a place to live. They reached a large lake named Lake Texcoco and there ahead of them was an eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its talons. They took that as a special sign from the gods which helped them to decide to settle there. They made an island in the middle of the lake and built a city there. That city grew and prospered. To this day the flag of Mexico bears the symbol of the eagle on a cactus with a snake in its talons. The middle of the city featured a pyramid called the Great Temple in that stood

about 130 feet tall. Tenochtitlan is now modern day Mexico City since the Spanish destroyed Tenochtitlan and drained Lake Texcoco where they settled. But even though the city was destroyed, parts of it can still be seen in Mexico City. Other famous pyramids that are still standing can be found in Guatemala. They were built by the Mayans whose culture was at its peak around 250 A.D.

Hernando Cortes was a Spanish explorer who conquered what is now Central and Southern Mexico. He took over Tenochtitlan and destroyed most of the city. Montezuma II, the leader of the city at the time, was wounded and died when the people of Tenochtitlan rebelled. Cortes then hanged the new leader. Cortes helped spread Spanish rule in Mexico. He died on December 2, 1547.

Chichen Itza was a large Mayan city that was the home of a huge limestone pyramid with a temple on top dedicated to what they called Kukulcan. Kukulcan, also known as Quetzalcoatl, was a feathered serpent god.

The Aztec Way of Life

The Aztecs ate beans, maize, tortillas, vegetables, and various sorts of water creatures. The rich people drank chocolate. Back then the chocolate that they drank was probably bitter and grainy. But the Aztecs didn't think it was bad! They thought that it was food fit for the gods. The men wore loin cloths and if they could afford it, they wore a cloak, too. Priests and warriors wore tunics. Common people used only white cloth for their clothing. The richer people were allowed to wear colors and designs on their garments. Rich people wore sandals and the common folk went barefoot. The Aztecs had mirrors, lip balm and perfumes. They even had chewing gum! Ladies used a special

ointment to make their skin yellow because that was their favorite color. The farmers lived in cottages made of wood, straw, and mud. They had one room, a dirt floor, an open doorway, but no windows and no chimney.

Aztecs were unusually clean. They took a bath at least once a day and they used the roots of certain plants for soap. Each home had a sweat lodge and there were more than a thousand washers and sweepers hard at work around Tenochtitlan every day. There were public toilets and garbage was buried at the edge of the city. They ruled during the 1400's and early 1500's until the Spanish came. The Aztecs were an extremely interesting people about which most people know little or nothing.

Conclusion

This report describes the history and making of the Great Pyramid. It discusses the people who lived in Egypt's old kingdom. Although this report discusses a few of the people involved with the pyramids, those mentioned are just a few among many hundreds of others who have contributed to the great time line that makes up the history of these pyramids.

The report spoke about the pyramids of America and the great city of Tenochtitlan. It discussed the different cultures, practices and gods of the Egyptians and the Ancient Americans. It described several ancient Egyptian pyramids and the life of the lowly people and how they helped build and use pyramids. There was also a summary of the life of a few noted archaeologists.

It is amazing that two completely different cultures, unknown to each other, created such similar structures. The pyramids of Egypt were used as tombs for pharaohs

whereas the pyramids of of the Americas were for worshiping their gods and sacrificing animals and people.

The Egyptian pyramids are notably more famous than those of the Americas but people have known about them for a longer period of time. Although the Latin American Pyramids were built a long time after those of Egypt, the pyramids of both cultures are exceptional. It is true however, that both types of pyramids are amazing and magnificent examples of time, architecture, and history.

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