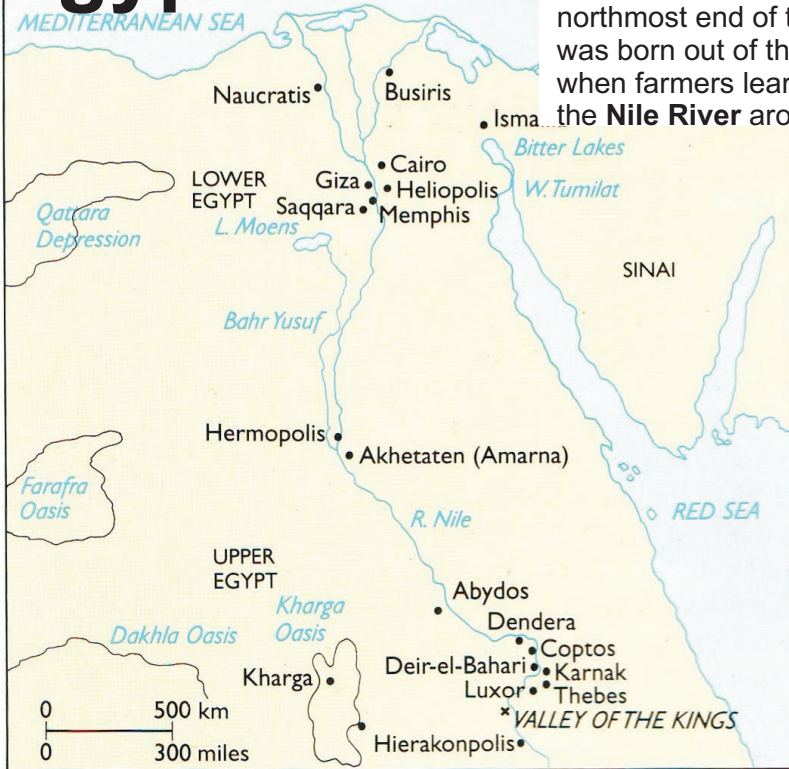


# Egyptian Art

The **Egyptian civilization** was one of the most advanced in the ancient world. Located in northeast Africa at the northmost end of the Great Rift Valley. The **Egyptian Empire** was born out of the **Neolithic Period. (New Stone Age)** when farmers learned to live with the seasonal changes of the **Nile River** around 4000 B.C.



## Painting

The art of the Egyptian Empire remained virtually unchanged for almost this entire span of time. This was largely due to the use of set rules or **canons** that all artists had to follow.

These rules were designed to express the concept that their civilization was constant and stable.

## Canons:

- 1) the more important a person was, the larger they were depicted
- 2) men are depicted with darker skin than women
- 3) faces, arms, legs, hands and feet are shown in profile
- 4) eyes (usually single eye) and chest are frontal
- 5) no mathematical perspective attempted
- 6) little or no overlapping
- 7) spaces are divided into horizontal bands or **registers** (like comic strips)
- 8) the left foot is forward on standing figures



**“Opening of the mouth ceremony” from the Book of the Dead of Hunefer.** New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty. Papyrus painting.

/34

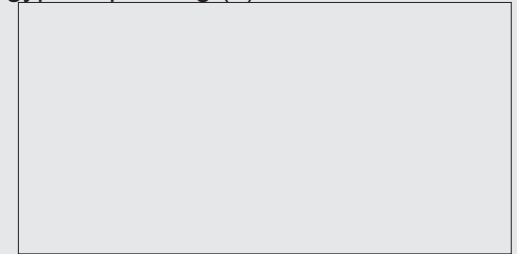
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Grade 9 - Egyptian Art Questions

1. The Egyptian empire was born out of what period? (1)

2. What major river snakes through the Egyptian empire? (1)

3. Make a small sketch of the 'Opening of the mouth ceremony' from the Book of the Dead of Hunefer and list the 8 canons of Egyptian painting (9)



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

4. Egyptian painters were not concerned with realism except when it came to depicting what kind of subject matter? (1)

# Painting



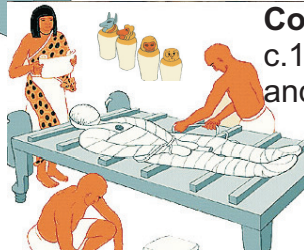
**Nebamun hunting birds, from the Tomb of Nebamun, Thebes, c. 1400 B.C.**

The Egyptians were not concerned with realism except when they depicted animals. As with prehistoric artists, they took great care in showing animals as they really looked, modern biologists can tell the sex, species and season of these painted beasts. Painted areas were usually solid and flat. The pigments that the Egyptians used were similar to those used by prehistoric artists with some additional colours: browns, yellows, reds - from clay; black from charcoal; blue from ground lapis lazuli; greens - from plants.

## Mummification

The Egyptians developed a 72 day process called **mummification** to preserve and embalm the deceased. The internal organs were removed and placed in jars, but the brain was discarded as useless. Chemicals were used to dry out the body, then wrapped in 20 layers of cloth.

The mummy was then placed in a wooden coffin and lowered into a tomb or **sarcophagus** (literally an eater, phagos of flesh, sarcos.) The cover of the coffin or sarcophagus contained an effigy of the deceased.



**Cover of Tutankhamun's coffin.** c.1340 B.C. Gold inlaid with enamel and semiprecious stones. 6ft. The tomb of King Tut had not been looted when found in 1929 by archeologists.

5. Describe the process of mummification. (1)

6. What does the word "sarcophagus" mean? (1)

7. Make a sketch of Tutankhamun's coffin lid and describe the mood/feeling you get from his facial expression. (2)

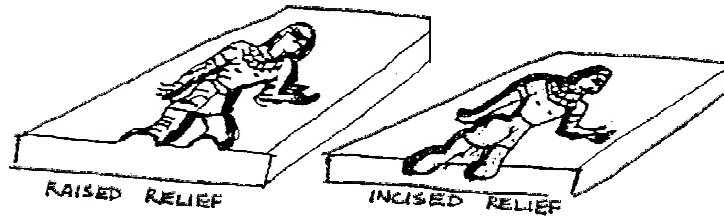


# Sculpture

Egyptian artists used two main sculpture techniques. Most of their work can be described as **relief**, which is to say that the figures were attached to the back of the stone.

These two techniques were **incised relief** where the surrounding background was left unworked and the subject was cut into the stone; and **low relief** where the background was cut away, leaving the subject sticking out from it.

If the subject stuck out very far, it was called **high relief**. As in painting, animals were realistic looking, but human were stylized.



**Palette of Narmer,**  
from Hierakonpolis,  
c. 2700 B.C.  
Slate,  
25 inches.



8. What are the two techniques used in Egyptian sculpture? (2)

9. Make a sketch of the Palette of Narmer and decide what the function of this artwork was. (Hint: look at the depiction of Narmer's enemies at the bottom) (2)



**Akhenaten and Nefretete and their children.**  
c.1370-1353 B.C. Limestone relief, 13 x 15 inches.

# Sculpture

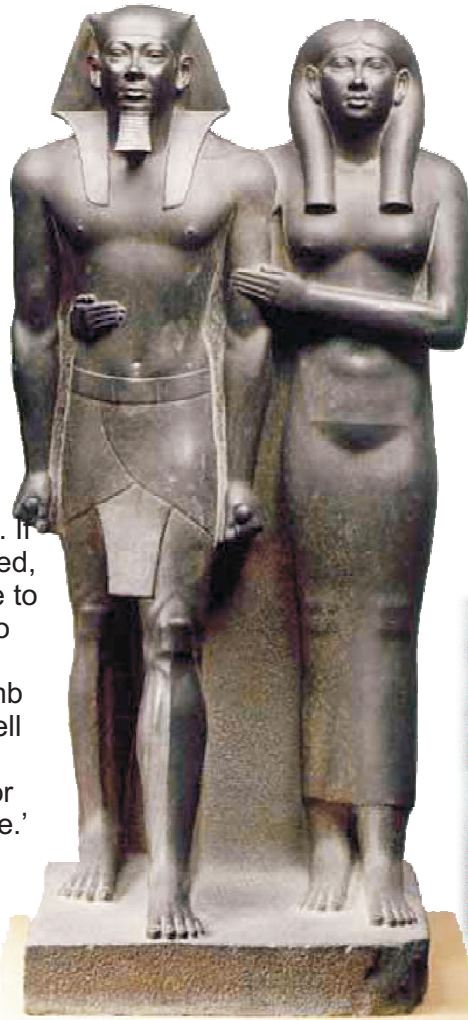
All freestanding sculpture shared the following characteristics:

- 1) They were very blocky and stiff.
- 2) In standing figures, the left leg was always forward.
- 3) Hands are always shown clenched at their sides, in men.
- 4) The negative space is left attached, not cut out.
- 5) They were often painted to enhance realism.

The Egyptians held the belief that the preservation of the body was not enough. If the likeness of the king was also preserved, it was doubly sure that he would continue to exist forever. So they ordered sculptors to chisel the king's head out of hard, imperishable granite, and put it in the tomb where no one saw it, there to work its spell and to help his Soul to keep alive in and through the image. One Egyptian word for sculptor was actually 'He-who-keeps-alive.'



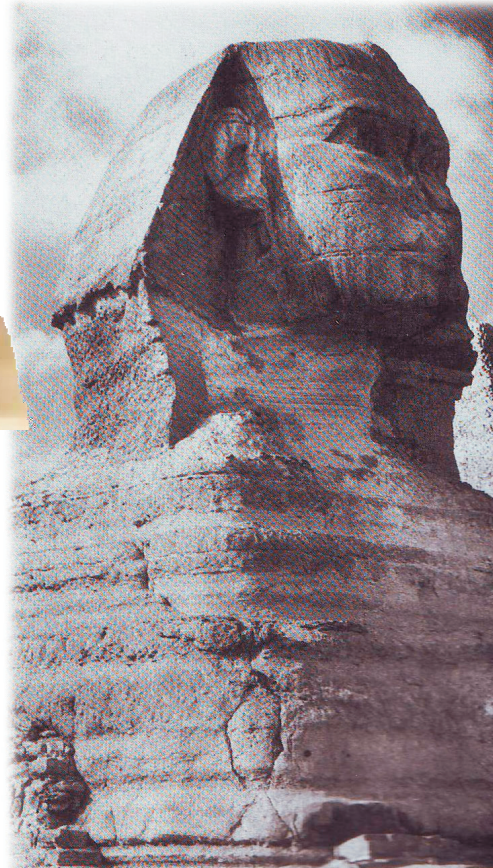
**Prince Rahotep and his wife Nofret.**  
c.2610 B.C., Painted Limestone,  
3 ft 11 1/4.



**Menkure (Mycerinus) and his queen,** from Giza.  
c. 2470 B.C., Slate, 1.42 m high.

**Colossal statue of Khafre as the god Hu, later known as the Great Sphinx, Giza.**  
c. 2500 B.C. Sandstone,  
20.12m high.

In Egypt lions guarded entrances, especially to temples and palaces. Lions were watchful particularly appropriate as guardians because they were thought to sleep with their eyes open. They were also associated with the sun as the eye of Heaven.



10. Make a sketch of Menkure (Mycerinus) and his queen and list the 5 characteristics of Egyptian free-standing sculptures. (5)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

11. What was one Egyptian word for sculptor? (1)



# Architecture

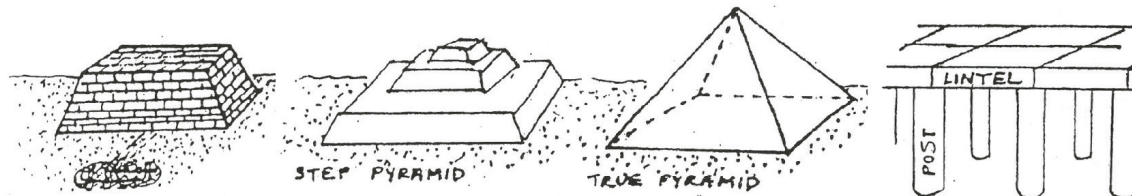
The Egyptians' religion believed strongly in the 'afterlife'. Pharaohs spent much of their life preparing for death and they built huge tombs that we still see today, e.g. **The Great Pyramids**.

The first tomb built was called a **mastaba**. It was a four-sided (the sides sloped or tapered upwards) brick or stone block, solid structure. The dead person was buried underground beneath the **mastaba**. In around 2,600 B.C., King Zoser (Djoser) had his architect, Imhotep (the first time the name of an artist has been recorded in history) designed a new kind of tomb at Saqqara. It was made by stacking successively smaller mastabas one on top of another like a 'stairway to heaven' and so, it is called a **step pyramid**. The pyramid did not stand alone in the middle of the desert however, but was part of an entire funerary district (**Necropolis**) with temples and other buildings for celebrating both during and after the pharaoh's life.

Soon, architects smoothed-out the stepped sides and created **true pyramids** like

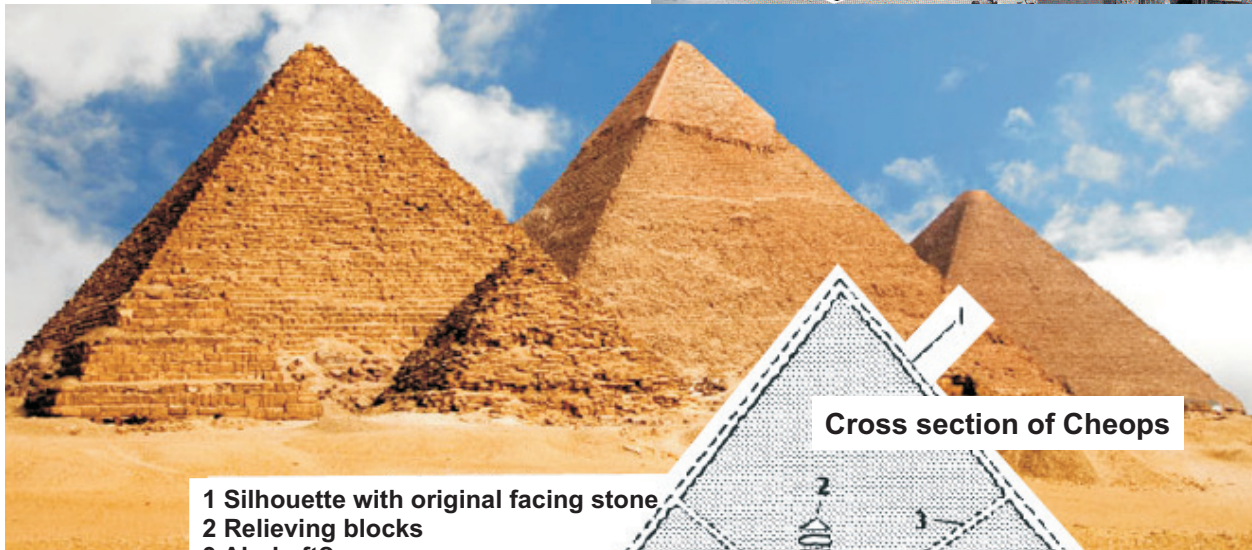
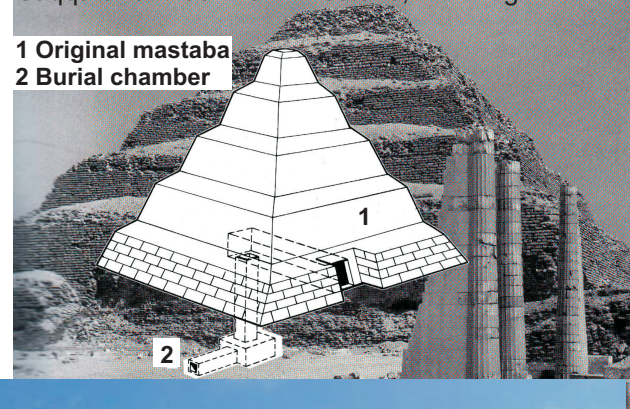
the most famous ones at **Giza**. These pyramids all have four triangular sides and a square base with one side facing north. The sloping sides of the pyramids represent the rays of the sun and one of the pyramids is inscribed, "The Pharaoh mounts to the heavens on the rays of the sun (Ra)." These pyramids and the **Sphinx** located with them are part of a large funerary district built by three different Pharaohs: **Cheops (Khufu)**, **Chefren (Khafra)** who also built the Sphinx and **Mycerinus (Menkaure)**. This entire period is referred to as **Old Kingdom**.

Later, in the period known as the **New Kingdom**, Egyptian architects developed an important architectural technique known as the **post and lintel system**. **Columns** were lined up in rows and large flat cut stones were overlapped on top of them to form a roof. These buildings were dark inside and full of tall posts with little open spaces. If posts were too tall, they broke or fell down and if they were too far apart, the lintels broke.

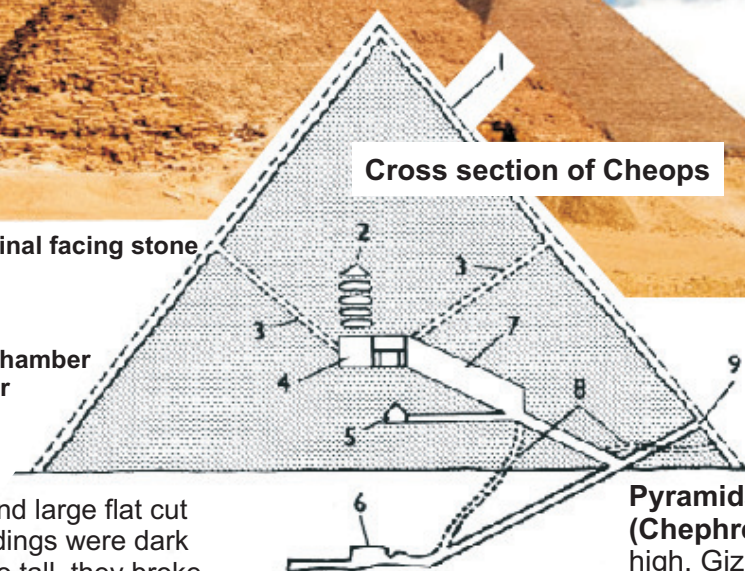


**Step pyramid, funerary complex of King Zoser, Saqqara. c.2750 B.C. Limestone, 71 m high.**

1 Original mastaba  
2 Burial chamber



1 Silhouette with original facing stone  
2 Relieving blocks  
3 Airshaft?  
4 King's chamber  
5 So-called queen's chamber  
6 False tomb chamber  
7 Grand gallery  
8 Thieves tunnel  
9 Entrance



**Pyramids of Menkure (Mycerinus), Khafre (Chephren), and Khufu (Cheops), 146 m high, Giza. c.2570-2530 B.C. Limestone.**

12. What was the name of the first artist whose name has been recorded in history and was responsible for designing the Step Pyramid? (1)

13. What are the names of the three pyramids built at Giza? (3)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

14. Look at the cross section of the Cheops pyramid, why do you think a false tomb chamber was built? (1)

15. Make a sketch of the post and lintel system and label it. (2)

16. What animal did the Egyptians believe were good guardians? (1)