

Explore More—Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great!

Directions: Listen to your teacher talk about two Egyptian pharaohs—Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great. Refer to the maps in your Explore Geography Picture Dictionary to locate the places your teacher mentions. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

Egypt—A Land Ruled by Pharaohs

The history of ancient Egypt is divided into three major time periods: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

Have students point to Egypt on the class world map

The New Kingdom lasted about 500 years, from 1570 to 1070 B.C. During the New Kingdom, Egyptians began calling their ruler “pharaoh.” Egyptian society had many levels and the pharaoh was at the very top. The pharaohs controlled everything; they owned all the land and received all the taxes. Ancient Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was a god in human form. When the pharaoh died, his oldest son usually became the next ruler. In this way, power was kept in the family.

Hatshepsut

According to custom, when Pharaoh Thutmose II died c. 1504 B.C., his son Thutmose III should have taken the throne.

Point to this date on your class time line.

However, Thutmose III was very young, so Thutmose II's wife, Hatshepsut, ruled for him. Later, she pushed him aside and called herself pharaoh. Hatshepsut felt she had the right to rule because she was the daughter of one pharaoh and the wife of another. This was a significant event in ancient history—women had taken over for kings before, but Hatshepsut was the first woman to call herself pharaoh. Hatshepsut proved her strength as a ruler by sending a trading expedition to Punt, which was probably located in modern-day Somalia.

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This expedition established trade with the people of Punt. It brought Egypt into contact with other peoples of Africa. Egyptians learned about new spices, ivory, ebony, and even animals and trees never before seen in Egypt. Hatshepsut's rule helped Egypt grow both culturally and economically.

Ramses the Great

Ramses the Great is considered one of Egypt's greatest pharaohs. He came to power in 1289 B.C. at the age of 24.

Point to this date on your class time line.

Ramses was a great warrior. He spent much of his reign fighting the Hittites who controlled an empire in present-day Turkey, Mesopotamia, and northern Syria.

Have students point to these areas on the class world map.

War with the Hittites went on for many years. Eventually, both sides realized that a peace treaty would be the best compromise for both kingdoms. This treaty, signed in 1270 B.C., was the first peace treaty in recorded history.

During his reign, Ramses also built many temples and monuments. Some of the most impressive monuments in all of Egypt were built under Ramses the Great, including a statue of Ramses seated at a grand throne. This is one of the largest statues ever made. When many of the monuments were built, Ramses ordered that the stories of great events of his life be carved on the walls. As a result, archaeologists have been able to learn much about his life and about life in ancient Egypt. ❖

YOUR TURN!

Write your answers to the following questions.

1. What is a pharaoh?

2. On the time line below, indicate when Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great lived:

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3. Why is Hatshepsut significant?

4. Why is Ramses the Great significant?

Questions for further discussion:

- What would you like to know more about in terms of Hatshepsut and Ramses the Great? Frame questions that you can answer by historical study and research. Conduct this research and discuss your findings.
- What role do you think chance played in Hatshepsut gaining power and succeeding as a ruler?
- Was are the positive and negative consequences of a pharaoh controlling everything in Egypt?
- Think about how the role of pharaoh compares to leadership positions in other ancient civilizations (e.g., emperor, dictator, oligarchy). Then discuss the central role and problem with each type of ruler, and place the rulers in a matrix of time and place.