Name: _____

Date: _____

AFTER THE PHARAOHS

The ancient Egyptians saw the Nile River as a miracle. While their neighbors toiled in the arid desert, their mysterious Nile provided the rich soil that allowed the Egyptians to thrive. Fearing that new ideas might dishonor the gods who had given them the Nile, the Egyptians became anchored in the past while other cultures moved forward.

THE NUBIAN PHARAOH

For centuries, the Egyptians traded with the Nubians who lived upriver to the south. Over time, the Nubians adopted the Egyptian gods as their own, and a king named Piye began to see himself as the champion of Amun, the god who protected the Egyptian people. As Piye led his forces downriver, he presented himself as a protector of Egyptian religion. By 730 BCE, even the Egyptian priests recognized him as their rightful Pharaoh.

FOREIGN RULERS

Beginning in 671 BCE, Egypt was invaded by rulers first from Assyria, and later by Persia. For most of the next two centuries, Egypt was forced to send its gold and grain to far-off empires. Then, a 24-year-old Greek general, Alexander the Great, arrived to liberate the country. By kneeling before the Egyptian gods and honoring their priests, Alexander respected the traditions the Persians ignored. When his army expelled the Persians, many Egyptians welcomed Alexander as a savior. Some Egyptians even began to worship him as pharaoh.

THE PTOLEMIES

Alexander died suddenly in 323 BCE, so his general, Ptolemy, seized control of Egypt. Unlike Alexander, the Ptolemies made little effort to learn Egyptian customs. For the next 300 years, Greek became the language of power and law. To survive or find success, ambitious Egyptians often had to adopt Greek culture.

CLEOPATRA

The last of the Ptolemy rulers was different. Cleopatra earned the loyalty and respect of her subjects. She learned their customs, spoke their language, and practiced their religion. Like Alexander before her, many Egyptians came to see their young Greek queen not as an outsider, but as their pharaoh. But Cleopatra soon faced a new rival.

In Cleopatra's time, Rome had become a world power. The ambitious young queen formed alliances with Roman generals Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. She even had children with both men. But a rival, Octavian, defeated Cleopatra in 31 BCE and ruled Egypt as a province. Once again, the Egyptians were under the control of foreigners who forced farmers to grow wheat to feed their massive armies.

The traditions of Egypt began to fade during five centuries of Roman rule. Many Egyptians converted to Christianity, and hieroglyphic writing was gradually replaced by a new system based on the Greek alphabet.

ISLAM COMES TO EGYPT

Meanwhile, about 500 miles east of Egypt, a prophet named Muhammad taught that he had received messages from an angel. His movement became known as Islam, and his followers were called Muslims. Islam quickly spread from its home, and by 642 CE, Muslim armies had captured Egypt. By this time, traditional Egyptian beliefs had faded, though Egypt has a substantial Christian minority today. The new rulers allowed Egyptian Christians to keep their faith but required them to pay an additional tax. Many Egyptians found this tax less oppressive than the heavy wheat burden demanded by Rome. Egypt remained under Muslim rule for centuries until European powers became involved in the late 1700s.

FRANCE, BRITAIN, AND INDEPENDENCE

Napoleon was a French general who also saw himself as a student of science and history. Fascinated by the mysteries of Egypt, he invaded the country in 1798 and brought a team of archaeologists to uncover its secrets. Napoleon's soldiers discovered the Rosetta Stone, an inscribed tablet that finally unlocked the mysteries of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Napoleon's army was defeated by the British, another colonial power, who controlled Egypt for more than a century. Finally, after 150 years of British control, a group of Egyptian military officers overthrew the British. Since then, Egypt has been an independent nation for the first time since the era of the pharaohs.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the Blanks

Ancient Egypt depended on the N_____ River, which made life possible in a d__s__rt region. Over time, Egypt interacted with N__b__a, where King P_____ ruled as p__a__a__h around 730 BCE. Later, Egypt was conquered by A__s__r__a and P__r__ia and forced to pay t__i__u__e. In 332 BCE, A__e__a__d__r the G__e__t defeated the Persians and was accepted as pharaoh. After Alexander's death, P__o__e__y founded a G_____k dynasty, and G_____k became the language of power. Cleopatra, the Ptolemaic ruler, formed a__l__a__c__s with Rome but was defeated by O__t__v__an. Egypt became a Roman province. Egypt later adopted C__r__s__i__n__ty and I__l__m, and eventually gained i__d__p__n__e__ce after centuries of f__r__i__n rule.

Answer in complete sentences

1. Near the end of the era of the pharaohs, why were many Egyptian fearful of new ideas.

2. Why did many Egyptians honor Alexandr the Great and Cleopatra as pharaohs?

3. Do you think the Ptolemy's were popular with many Egyptian people? Explain your reasoning.

4. List six cultures that controlled part of all of Egypt at one time. (Your answer does not have to be in a complete sentence).

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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