Name: _____

Date: _____

THE EGYPTIAN PHARAOHS

The people of ancient Egypt believed their kings were also gods. Modern people refer to these rulers as pharaohs, but pharaoh originally referred to the palace where the king lived. It was not used as a title for the ruler until the later part of ancient Egyptian history, but today we use the term to describe all of these rulers.

Egypt was once two kingdoms: a lower kingdom in the north and an upper kingdom in the south. Southern Egypt is on higher land than northern Egypt, so unlike most rivers, the Nile River flows north.

Menes Unites Egypt

Menes (MEN-es) came from Upper Egypt. Around 3100 BCE, he became the first ruler of a united Egypt by conquering Lower Egypt. He wore a double crown of red and white that symbolized that unification. The Egyptians believed the crown had magic powers; it was the single item an Egyptian ruler could not take to the afterlife. A historian named Manetho reported that Menes ruled Egypt for 62 years and was killed by a hippopotamus. We cannot be sure of Manetho's account because he lived almost 2,000 years after Menes.

Thutmose III and Hatshepsut

Ancient Egypt was occasionally ruled by women. The most famous was Hatshepsut, who followed the customs of her day by wearing the false beard of a king. Around 1500 BCE, Hatshepsut married her half-brother, the pharaoh Thutmose II. Royal families often intermarried because they did not want to produce children with ordinary people.

Thutmose II had a son, Thutmose III, by another wife. When Thutmose II died, his son became pharaoh, but Hatshepsut served as regent because Thutmose III was too young to govern Egypt. A regent governs for a monarch who is too young to rule. Once Thutmose III was old enough, he and Hatshepsut ruled Egypt together until Hatshepsut's death.

Akhenaton and the Worship of Aton

The ancient Egyptians were polytheistic, which means they believed in many gods, but about 1350 BCE, the pharaoh Amenhotep IV came to think of Aton, a god of the sun, as superior to the other gods. Amenhotep IV changed his name to Akhenaton, meaning "he who is beneficial to Aton." He seized the temples to other gods, removed the Egyptian priests from power, and urged the Egyptian people to worship only Aton. Akhenaton and Queen Nefertiti built great statues of Aton and ordered statues honoring any other god to be destroyed. Despite Akhenaton's passion for Aton, most Egyptians did not take their leaders' faith, and after the pharaoh's death, later rulers returned to their traditional beliefs.

Tutankhamun

A nine-year-old boy named Tutankhamun became pharaoh shortly after Akhenaton's death. The "boy king" never became a "man king" because he died only nine years into his rule. Tutankhamun's reign was unremarkable, but the young pharaoh is remembered most for the treasures found in his tomb. Thieves robbed most of the burial places of pharaohs over the centuries, but Tutankhamun's tomb remained intact – by accident. It was buried by rock chips dumped from the cutting of a tomb of a later pharaoh. So, Tutankhamun's treasures remained safely hidden for more than three thousand years until British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the boy king's resting place in 1922.

Ramses II

Ramses II led armies that conquered many faraway lands, but he did not expand the borders of Egypt to include the lands he conquered. The ancient Egyptians believed their land and culture were superior. This may help explain why Ramses II's army forced the conquered lands to pay tribute but did not impose Egyptian culture on them. Tribute is payment for protection. Ramses II used that wealth to build palaces and temples throughout Egypt. More than 3,300 years after his death, more monuments to Ramses II survive than for any other pharaoh.

Name: _____

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Answer in complete sentences

1. Explain why Menes wore a double crown of red and white.

*2. What reason is presented in the text for the marriage of Thutmose II and his half-sister Hatshepsut?

3. Why would a nation be ruled by a regent?

*4. Do you think the Egyptian people were pleased with the rule of Akhenaton and Nefertiti? Explain your reasoning.

5. What did Howard Carter find in 1922? Why was Carter's find so surprising?

6. "What reason does the text suggest for why Ramses II did not make the lands he conquered part of Egypt? What did he want from those lands?"

7. What did Ramses II do with his great wealth?

*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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