PYRAMIDS

Pyramids were built as **tombs** for the pharaohs. They were always located on the **west** bank of the Nile because this is where the sun would set and where the Egyptians believed the afterlife was located. Egyptians were **mummified** once they died and placed in the pyramids with many **things** they would need in the afterlife such as, **jewelry**, **chariots**, **furniture** and **clothes**. (All the items they needed while they were living) Fresh **food** and wine was often brought to the tombs so the dead could eat.

The **building** of the pyramids were huge tasks. Usually pharaoh's would start building their **pyramids** as soon as they started to **rule**. Workers cut limestone and granite **stones** and floated them up the **Nile** on barges. Other workers would unload the **stones** and push them up **ramps** built alongside the pyramid using **sledges**. The bricks averaged about 2,000 pounds each!

There were over 80 pyramids. The largest one is called the **Great pyramid** of Giza. It was built by pharaoh **Khufu** in 2600BC. It took over 20 years and 100,000 workers to build. It is over 480 feet tall! His son, **Khafre**, also built a huge pyramid in Giza as well as his son **Menkaure**. The famous **sphinx** guards over the three pyramids. It was built by pharaoh **Khafre** from the left over pyramid stones. It has his face and the body of a **lion**, which symbolizes the **power** of the pharaoh.
The very first pyramid was the *step* pyramid built for pharaoh Zoser.

Pharaohs use to be buried in small mud brick mounds called *mastabas*, but Zoser wanted more. He had his famous vizier Imhotep design a grand tomb that was actually *four* mastabas on top of each other. The result was a step pyramid that was over 200 feet tall and had a wall surrounding it. This tomb was known throughout all of Egypt and many pharaohs sought to *copy* it. One pharaoh that tried to imitate it was *Snefru*. He ended up building *three* pyramids because he couldn't get it right. First he built a *step* pyramid but it crumbled. Then he built what was known as the *Bent* pyramid and finally he was successful with the *Red* pyramid.

Pyramids were built to *protect* the pharaoh's body from *floods*, *animals*, and *robbers*, but because they were so eye-catching they were easy *targets* for tomb robbers. These bandits were searching for *gold* and *jewels* and because this was big business in Egypt, they were willing to defy the *gods*. Many *hieroglyphs* were built into the pyramids to prevent them from being robbed, but all the pyramids were eventually ransacked! Finally, pharaohs started building their tombs into the sides of *cliffs* in an area known as the *Valley of the King*. Although they had *secret* entrances and they tried to keep their construction a *secret*, they too, were eventually *robbed*.

The only tomb not discovered was that of *King Tutankhamen* until *Howard Carter* discovered it in 1922 on an archeological dig. Much of what we know about the wealth of pharaohs comes from Carter's *excavations*. 