



Life in Ancient Egypt Along the Nile River

What was ancient Egypt like?



SET 1

SLIDE 1

The country of Egypt is mostly a hot, dry desert. Long ago, the Nile River was the only thing that made it possible for people and animals to live there. The Nile is the longest river in the world, flowing north from deep within Africa. Every year, from July to September, the Nile floods its banks. When the flood waters go down, they leave behind a layer of black silt—rich mud that is ideal for farming.



Beyond the rich land surrounding the Nile are the barren, or dry, sands of the desert.

1. **Name three key elements of this environment. Explain your thinking.** *(main idea/supporting details)*
2. **The Nile used to be called “the river of life.” Why would this be a good name for it?** *(making inferences)*



SET 1

SLIDE 2

Drought

Farmers depended on the annual flooding of the Nile. The flood brought water to irrigate the fields and leave behind rich soil for farming. Sometimes the flood did not come and the area experienced a drought. Without the flood the farmers had less land to farm and much less food. A few times in ancient Egypt, drought caused a famine, a time of starvation.

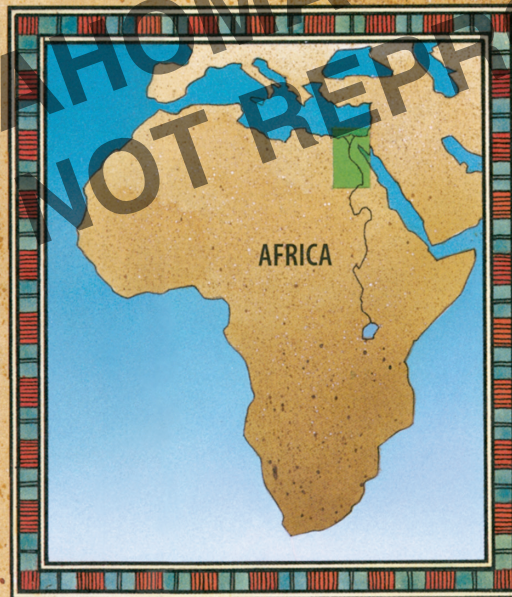
Lower Egypt

The land slopes downward into **Lower Egypt**. Here, the Nile divides into a **delta**—small branches that flow into the Mediterranean Sea.

The Egyptians lived on the banks of the Nile, where the land was **fertile**, or ideal for farming.

Upper Egypt

In the highlands of **Upper Egypt**—located in the south—the Nile passes through a valley.



3. What challenges did ancient Egyptians face in their environment?
(scanning)

How did ancient Egyptians use the Nile River?



SET 2

SLIDE 1

The fertile land around the Nile River was ideal for farming, so the people in Egypt could produce plenty of food. The country was stable and prosperous, or rich. Many people specialized in jobs besides farming.

The **papyrus** that grew along the water was used to make paper, sandals, mats, and boats.

Irrigation channels brought water to the fields.

Flax was grown to make linen. Most Egyptian clothes were made from white **linen**, a light fabric that reflects the sun and helps keep the people cool.

1. Why was ancient Egypt a “stable and prosperous” society? Explain.
(making inferences, scanning)



SET 2

SLIDE 2

Wheat and barley were used to make bread. Farmers used a tool called a **sickle** to cut the grain.

Crops were measured to find out how much tax the farmers owed.

Craftspeople, artists, and musicians created things people needed or wanted. Nobles, priests, and army officers made sure that the country ran smoothly and people were safe.

Egyptians used boats to travel up and down the Nile.

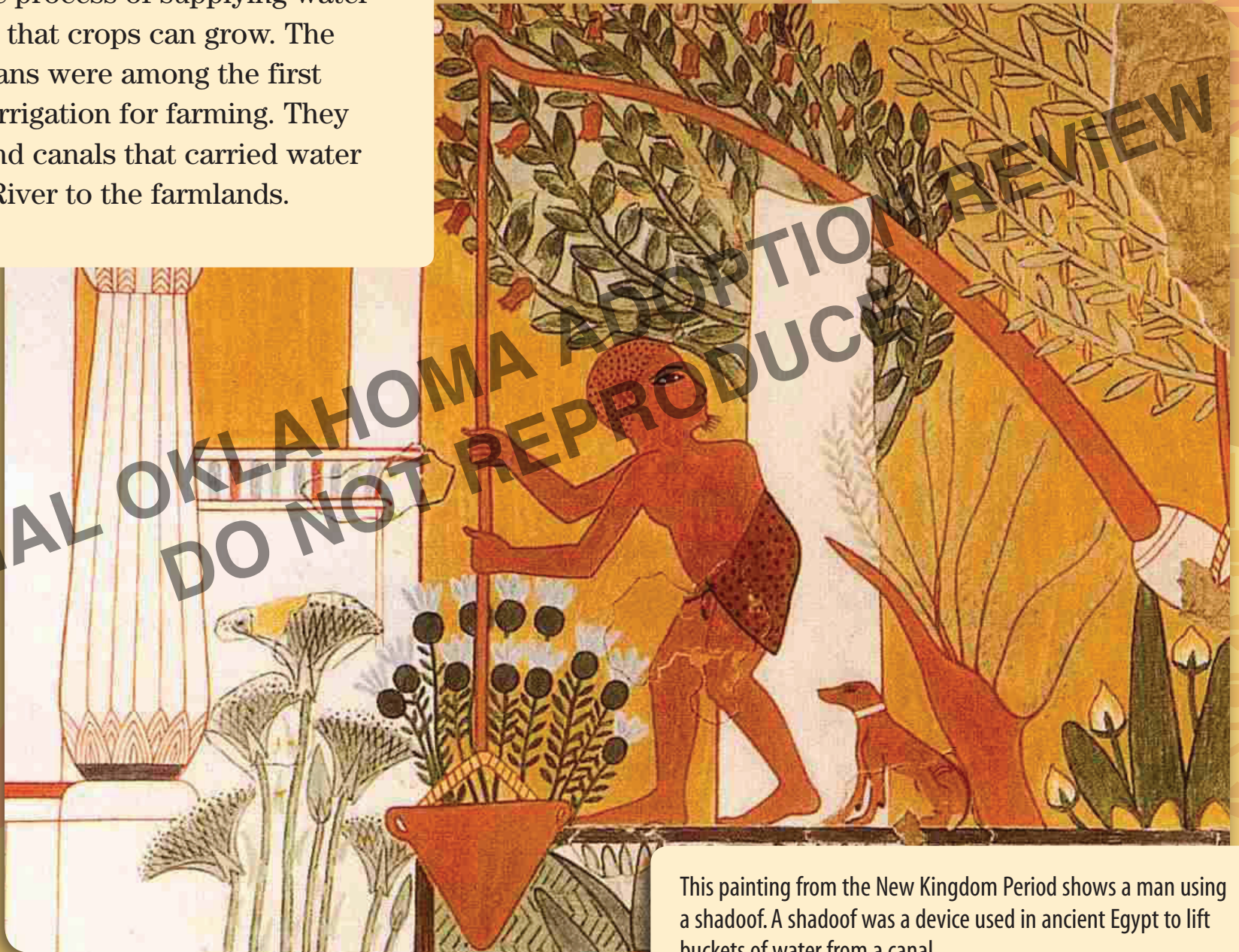
The river was teeming with wildlife, such as fish, birds, hippos, and crocodiles.

2. What natural resources were available to the ancient Egyptians? *(understanding visuals, scanning)*



Irrigation Along the Nile

Irrigation is the process of supplying water to dry areas so that crops can grow. The ancient Egyptians were among the first people to use irrigation for farming. They built ditches and canals that carried water from the Nile River to the farmlands.



This painting from the New Kingdom Period shows a man using a shadoof. A shadoof was a device used in ancient Egypt to lift buckets of water from a canal.

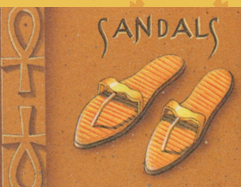
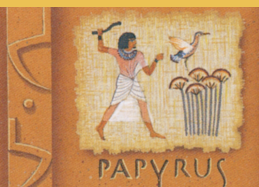
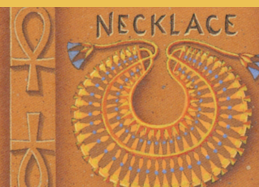
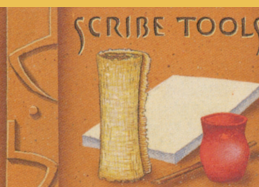
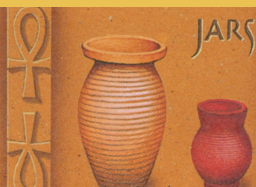
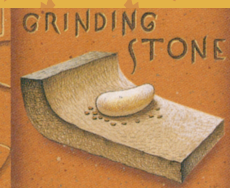


SET 3

SLIDE 1

What was it like to grow up in ancient Egypt?

If you lived in ancient Egypt, the kind of life you would have would be decided when you were born. Your way of life would depend on whether you were a boy or a girl and whether you were rich or poor.





SET 3

SLIDE 2

Fathers teach young boys how to grow crops.

Imagine you are born a peasant: Your mother takes care of the house and children while your father farms. You pay part of the crops as taxes. You do not know how to read or write. You live in an extended family, including grandparents, or aunts and uncles. If you are a man, you might help build pyramids or temples during the flood season.

Mothers teach young girls homemaking skills.

1. Looking at Slides 1–2, describe some of the differences between poor and rich ancient Egyptians.
(comparing and contrasting)

Imagine you are born to wealthy parents: You live on an estate with courtyards, gardens, ponds, and a hall for visitors. When you marry, you might move into a separate house on the estate. If you went to scribe school, you might work with a tax collector or keep other records or accounts in the community. You enjoy taking your children fishing or hunting.

If you are a boy, you might go to scribe school and learn how to read, write, and do mathematics.

Mothers teach young girls crafts such as weaving.

2. Looking at Slides 1–2, how were the lives of men and women or boys and girls different? *(comparing and contrasting)*



SET 3

SLIDE 3





What happened at an Egyptian marketplace?

Most Egyptians had specialized jobs—they provided specific kinds of goods or services. But there were many things they needed to survive. There weren't neighborhood stores where ancient Egyptians could go to buy what they wanted. Instead, they went to a marketplace where they traded what they had for what they needed. No one used money in ancient Egypt.

1. Looking at Slides 1–3, what kinds of jobs did the ancient Egyptians have?
(understanding visuals)



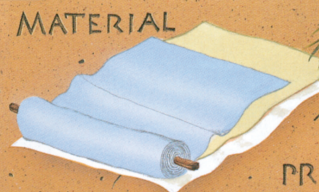
GRAIN



POTTERY



BREAD



MATERIAL



PRODUCE



SANDALS



FISH



SET 4

SLIDE 2

At the marketplace, you could find many different foods—salt, barley, onions, peas, beans, and many kinds of breads.

Fish was a staple, or common item, at the market place. You could buy fish fresh, salted, or dried.

A person who tried to steal or cheat at the market could be arrested and punished.

Cloth, leather, baskets, pots, jewelry—all these items were traded at the market.



SET 4

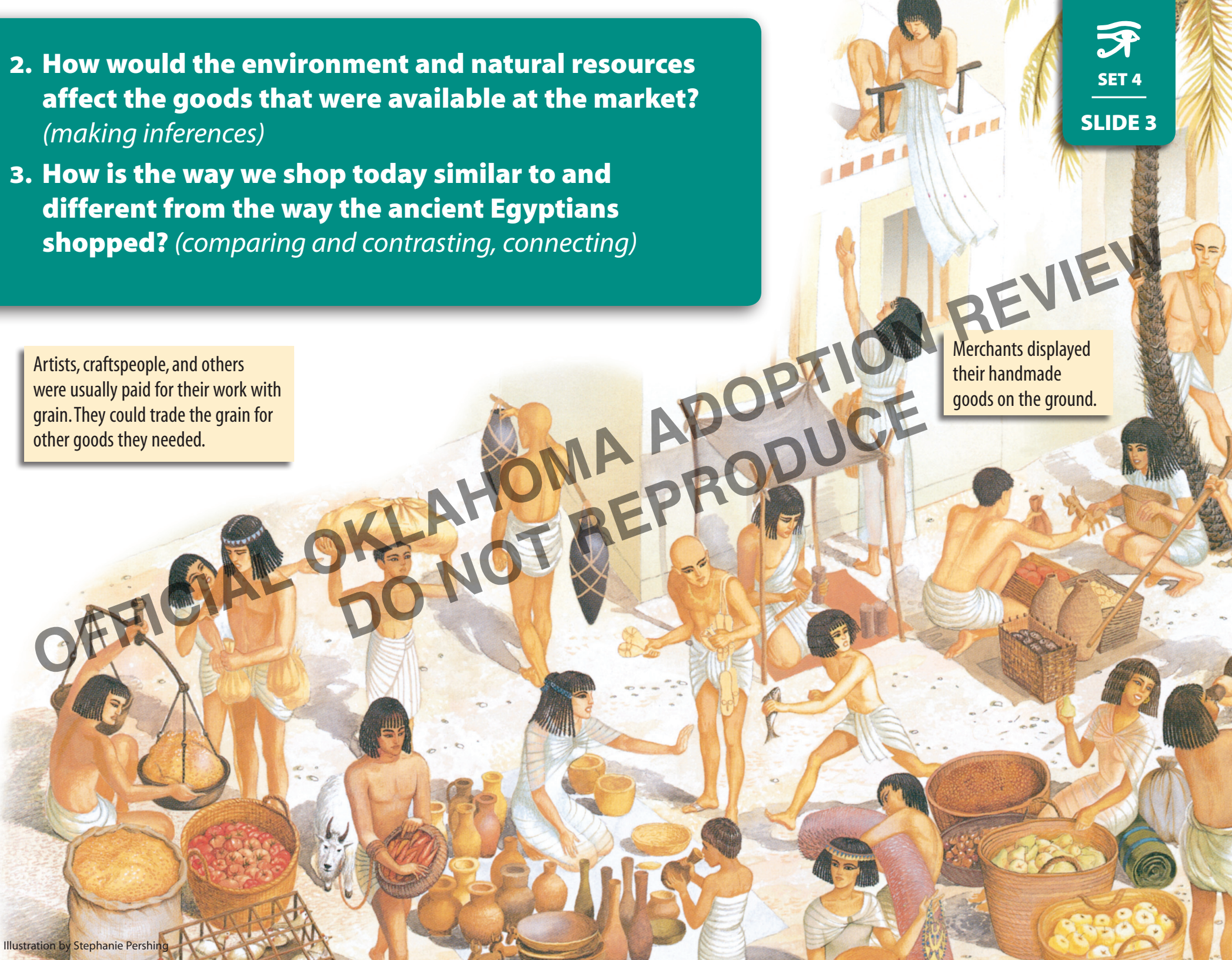
SLIDE 3

2. How would the environment and natural resources affect the goods that were available at the market?
(making inferences)

3. How is the way we shop today similar to and different from the way the ancient Egyptians shopped? *(comparing and contrasting, connecting)*

Artists, craftspeople, and others were usually paid for their work with grain. They could trade the grain for other goods they needed.

Merchants displayed their handmade goods on the ground.





Who was the pharaoh?

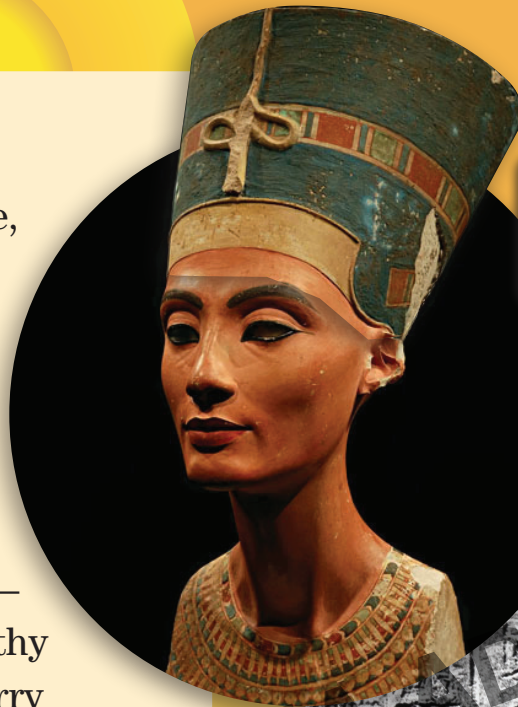
The pharaoh was the center of life in all of Egypt. The pharaoh was responsible for everything in the country—from collecting taxes to controlling the flooding of the Nile River. He, or sometimes she, was not only the ruler, military leader, and high priest; the pharaoh was considered to be a god. When a new pharaoh was appointed, he or she became the god Horus. Thus, the Egyptians saw themselves as being ruled by one being—Horus—through all time.

Amenophis I was pharaoh during the early years of the New Kingdom. During his reign he extended Egypt's southern borders.

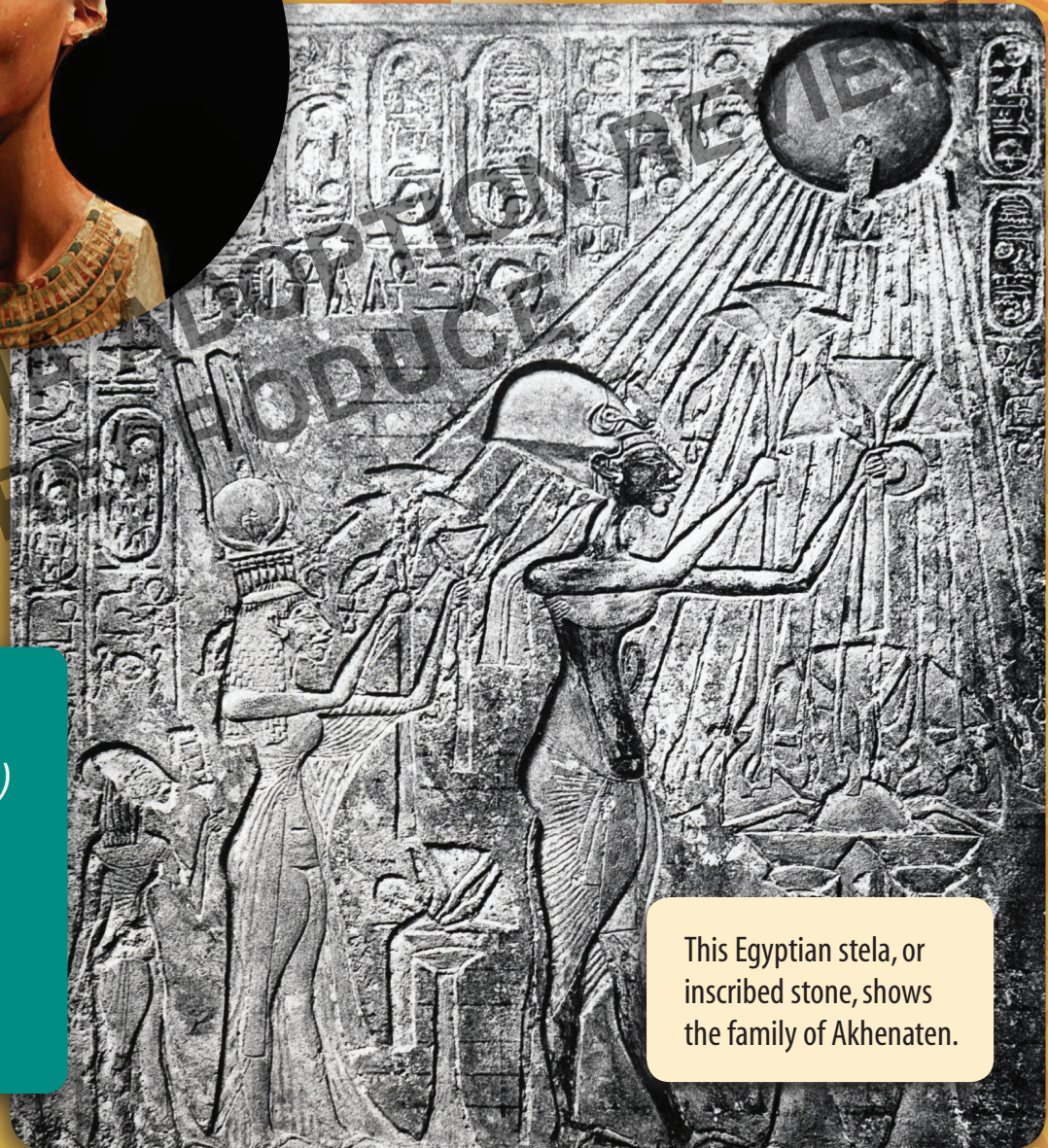
1. Why was the pharaoh important?
(main idea/supporting details)



The pharaoh had to rule with authority, but also with justice, considering the needs and wants of the people. The form of government was an autocracy, in which the leader is all powerful. For the most part, the pharaohs tried to be fair rulers. Viziers—advisors or judges—and wealthy nobles helped the pharaoh carry out the law. In times of trouble, the people looked to the pharaoh to convince the gods to help.



Queen Nefertiti was the wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten.



This Egyptian stela, or inscribed stone, shows the family of Akhenaten.

2. **What were the different roles and responsibilities of the pharaoh?** *(scanning)*
3. **How is the government of the ancient Egyptians the same and different from the government where we live today?** *(comparing and contrasting, connecting)*



SET 5

SLIDE 3

Tutankhamun

King Kid

Imagine you're the leader of a rich land where servants tend to your every wish and people think you're a god—and you're only 9 years old! It really happened to King Tutankhamun (TOOT-angk-AH-mun), the boy king who ruled Egypt from about 1347 to 1339 BC. Although he died at a young age, he is probably the best known of the Egyptian pharaohs. Why? Because the tombs of almost all the earlier pharaohs had been robbed—Tutankhamun's was intact, with more than 5,000 pieces of furniture, jewelry, clothing, weapons, and pottery. These pieces tell us what life was like when Tutankhamun lived.

Source: *Chicago Tribune*, September 23, 1997.



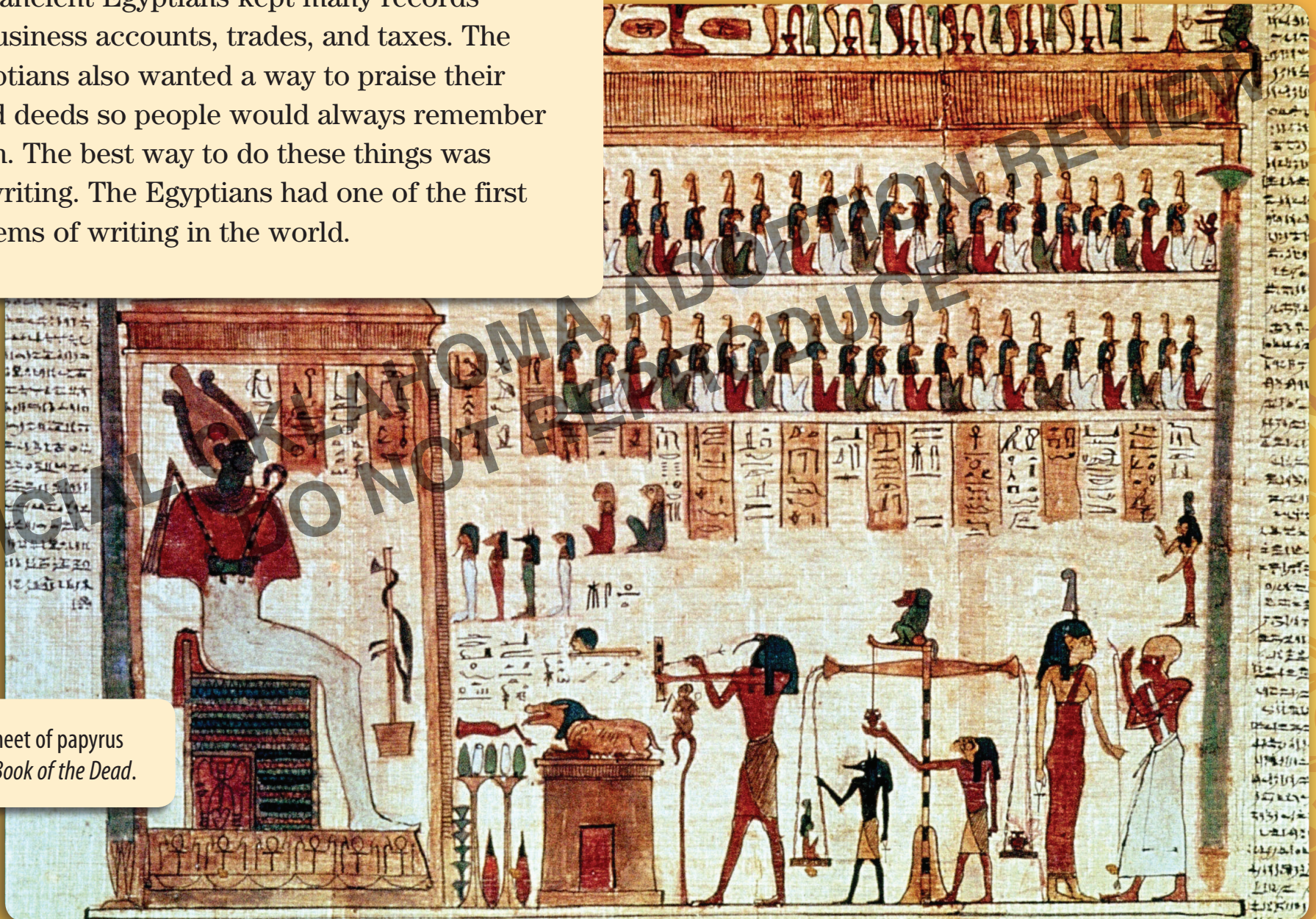
How did ancient Egyptians write?



SET 6

SLIDE 1

The ancient Egyptians kept many records of business accounts, trades, and taxes. The Egyptians also wanted a way to praise their good deeds so people would always remember them. The best way to do these things was by writing. The Egyptians had one of the first systems of writing in the world.



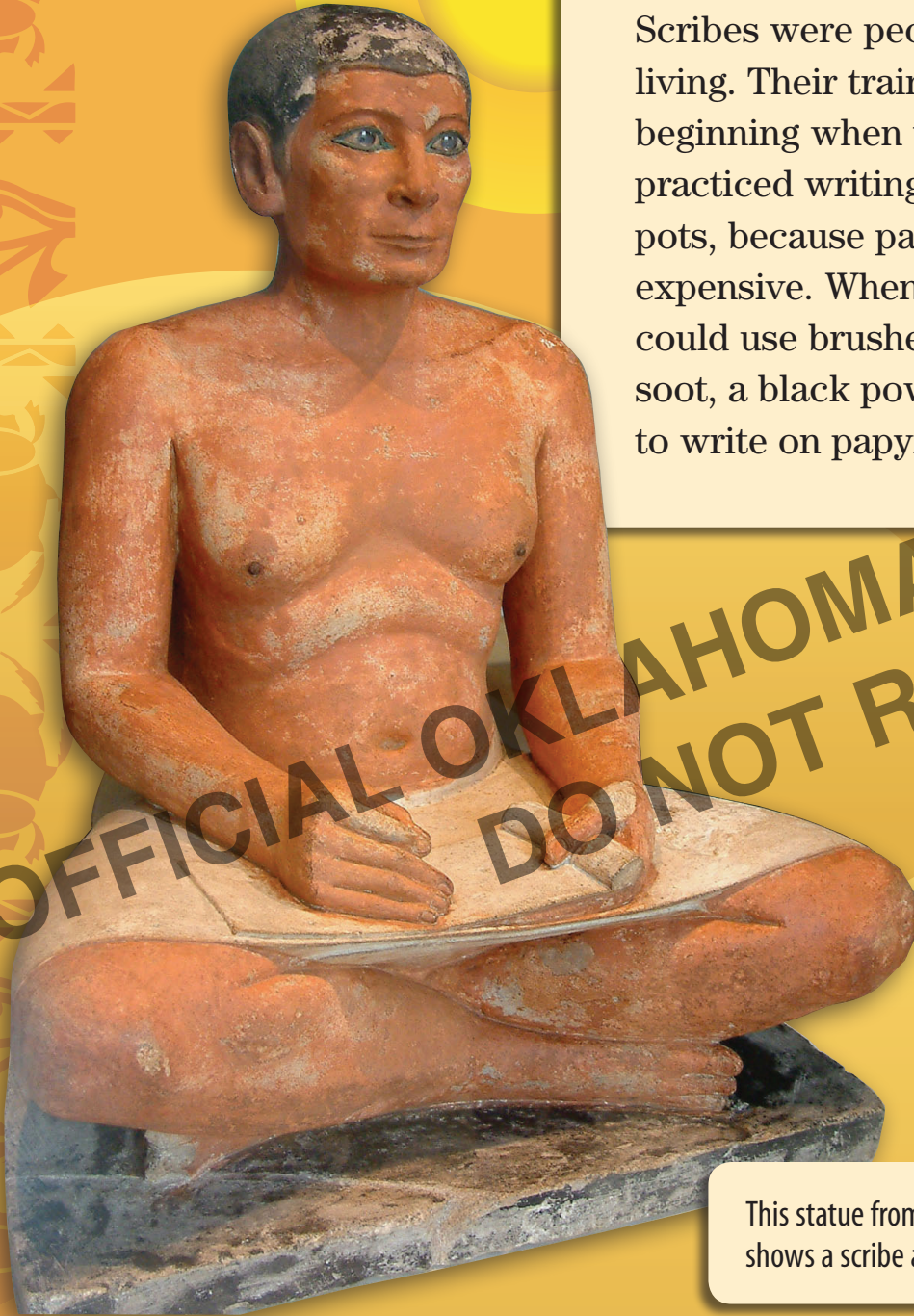
This is a sheet of papyrus from the *Book of the Dead*.



Scribes were people who read and wrote for a living. Their training was long and difficult, usually beginning when they were young. At first, they practiced writing on boards, rocks, or even broken pots, because papyrus, Egyptian paper, was very expensive. When they became skilled at writing, they could use brushes made of reeds and ink made of soot, a black powder formed in the burning of wood, to write on papyrus.

1. Why did scribes practice on boards and blocks? *(scanning)*

This statue from the Old Kingdom shows a scribe at work.





SET 6

SLIDE 3

Most children in ancient Egypt did not know how to read and write. Most boys and girls learned a trade or worked in the fields. Only the privileged learned how to read and write. Because they were scarce, scribes were in high demand.



A scribe's tools

2. If you lived in ancient Egypt, would you want to be a scribe? Explain. (*connecting*)



Hieroglyphs

The Egyptians didn't use an alphabet like ours. Instead, they used a system of about 800 picture symbols called hieroglyphs. The hieroglyphs represented sounds and could be used to spell out words. Hieroglyphs were written in both columns and lines. They were read from either left to right or right to left, depending on which way the symbols were facing. For about 2,000 years the meanings of these symbols were unknown because the language of the ancient Egyptians had been lost. Then, around 1822, Jean-François Champollion “decoded” the hieroglyphs using the Rosetta stone, an artifact with the same writing in three languages—hieroglyphics, Greek, and a later Egyptian language. This allowed scholars to decipher the hieroglyphs and learn more about the ancient Egyptian culture.



Rosetta stone

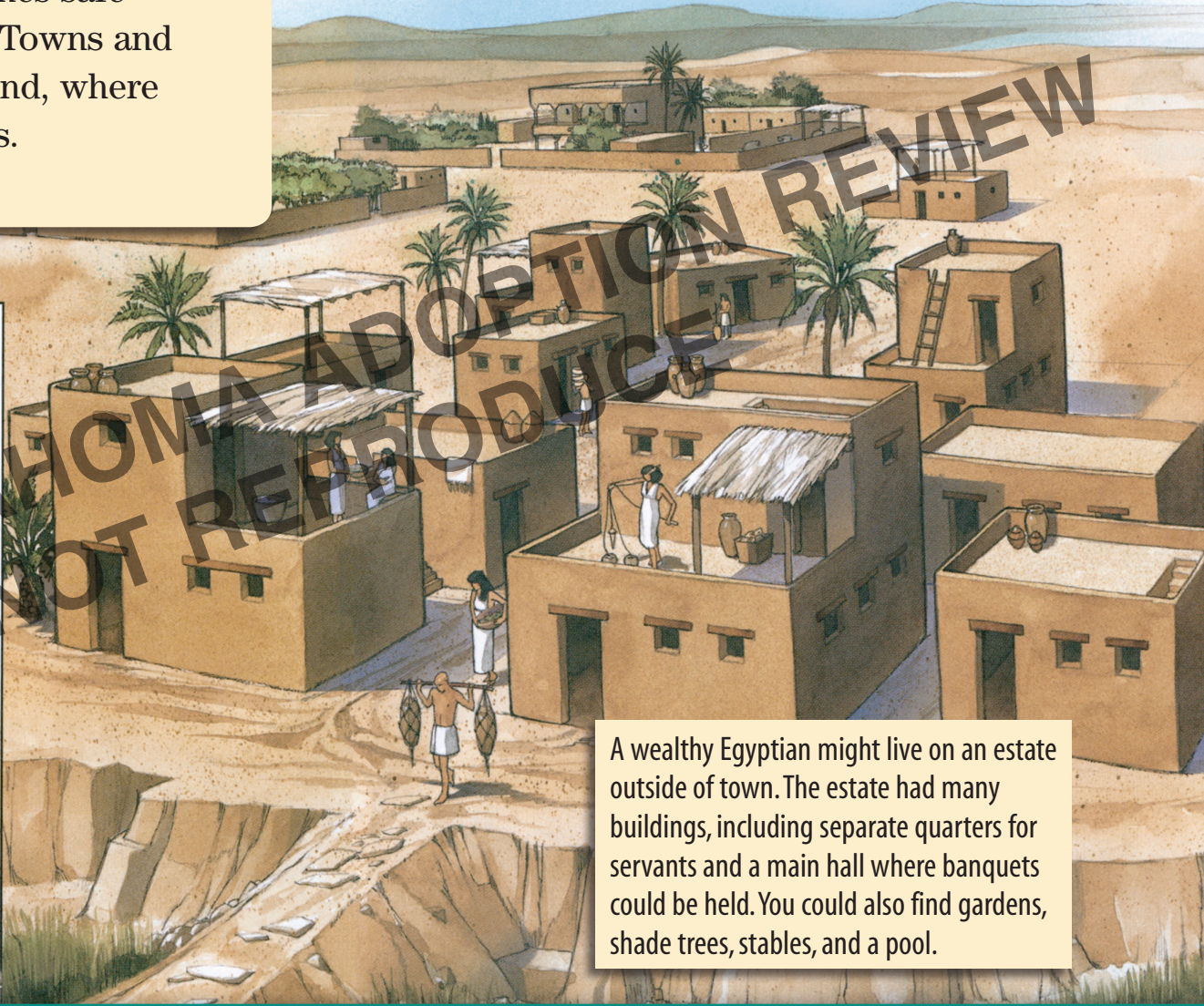
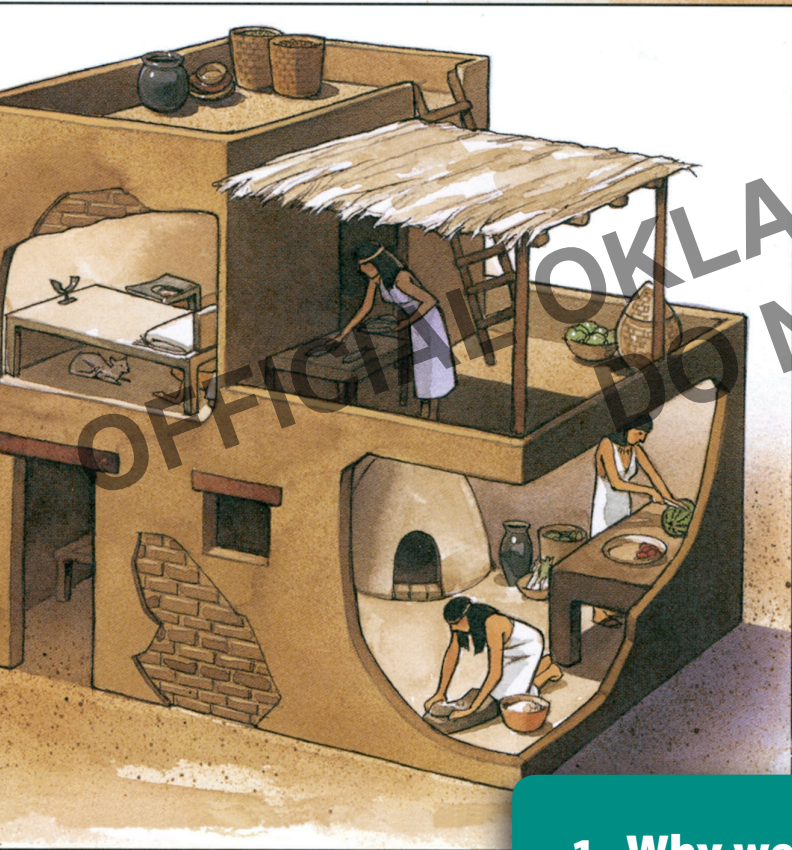
What were Egyptian homes like?



SET 7

SLIDE 1

The Egyptians needed the Nile to flood, but they also needed to keep their homes safe from the rising waters every year. Towns and villages were located on high ground, where they would be safe from the floods.



A wealthy Egyptian might live on an estate outside of town. The estate had many buildings, including separate quarters for servants and a main hall where banquets could be held. You could also find gardens, shade trees, stables, and a pool.

1. Why were ancient Egyptian homes built on high ground? (*scanning*)
2. Why were houses built of mud and straw? (*making inferences*)



SET 7

SLIDE 2

This figure, from around 2100 BC, shows an Egyptian kneading dough.



In ancient Egypt, pots were used to store water or wine.

What kinds of art did the ancient Egyptians create?



SET 8

SLIDE 1

Because the natural environment provided for the people's needs, the ancient Egyptians had time for other interests. They created sculptures, paintings, and jewelry to use as decorations and religious symbols. Many of these filled the temples and tombs of the dead.

Cats appear in ancient Egyptian art as sacred animals.



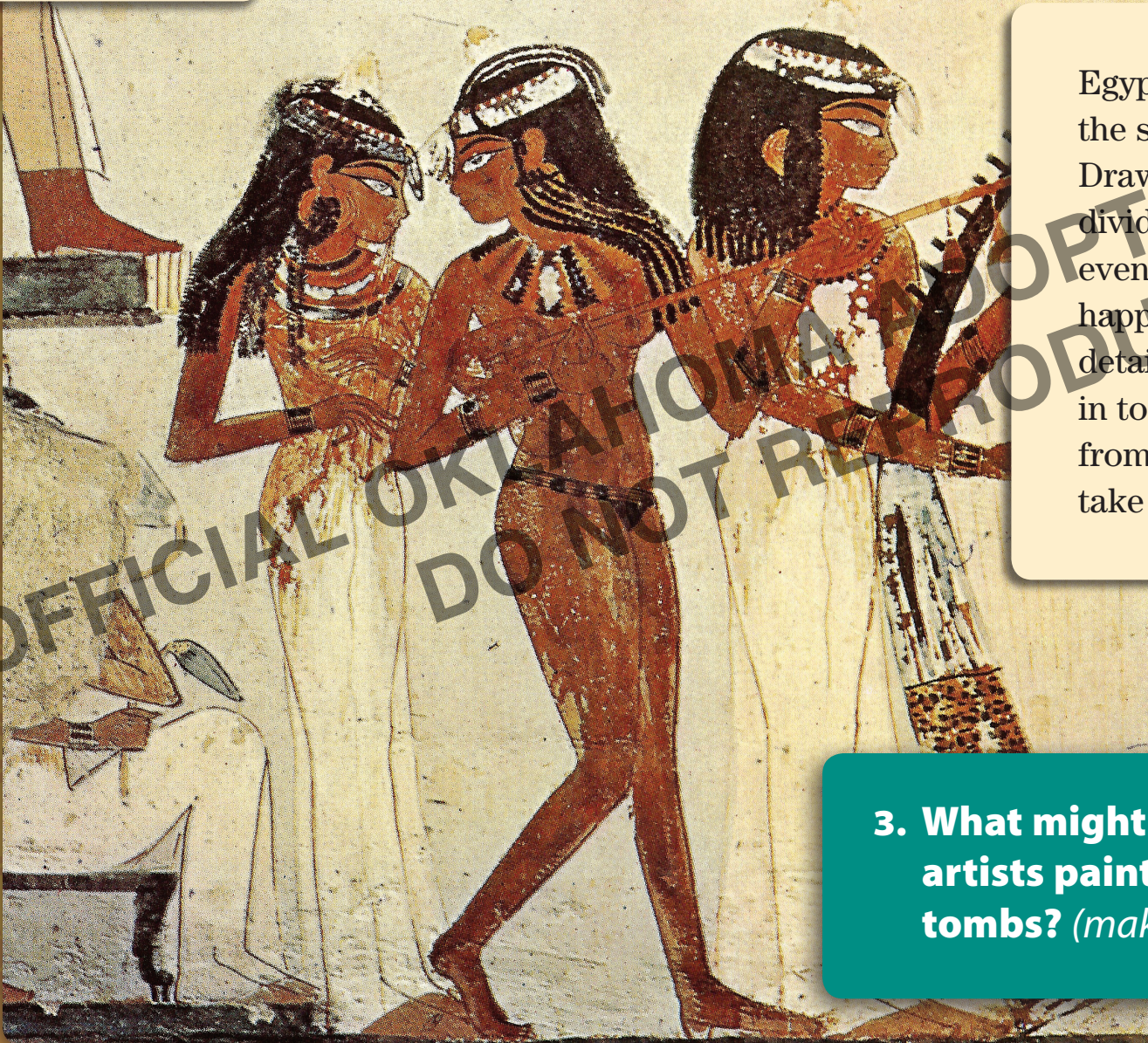
This is a bronze statue of an Egyptian offering wine to the god Hemen.



1. Why did the ancient Egyptians have time to create art? (*scanning*)
2. Describe some examples of ancient Egyptian art. (*understanding visuals*)



Musicians were often hired to perform at banquets or for rich nobles.



Egyptians also created art to record the scenes of life around them. Drawings and paintings were often divided into frames that showed events in the order that they happened. Workers were shown in detail, doing their jobs. Paintings in tombs showed tools and scenes from daily life that the dead could take with them to the Next World.

3. What might be one reason that Egyptian artists painted scenes from daily life, in tombs? *(making inferences)*



This gold necklace was found in the tomb of King Tutankhamun.

Ancient Egyptian Jewelry

People in ancient Egypt wore as much jewelry as they could afford. The rich wore jewelry made of gold and silver. Poorer people wore jewelry made of copper. Both men and women wore earrings, bracelets, and anklets.

Some jewelry, such as amulets, was designed to protect the wearer from harm. Many Egyptians wore amulets shaped like a scarab, or beetle, which was believed to bring good luck.



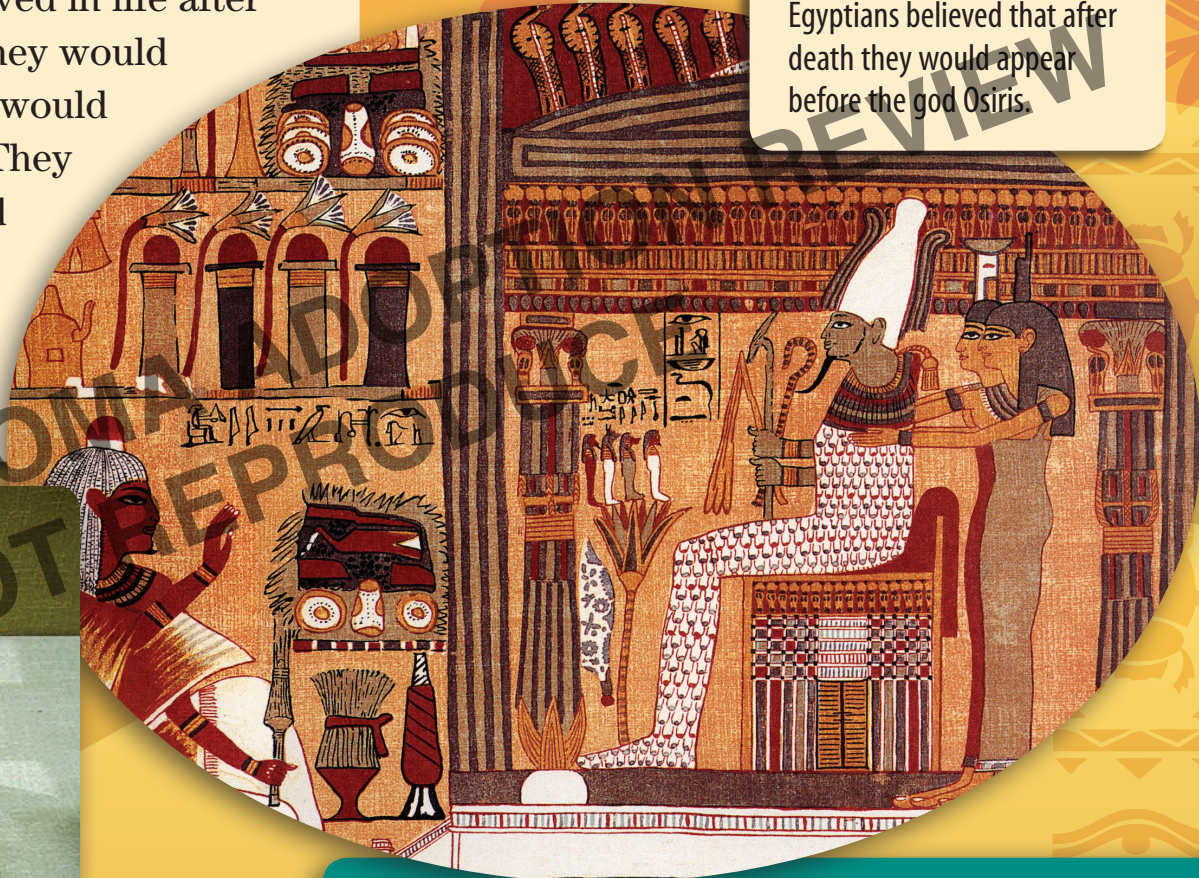
The Eye of Horus was one of the most common amulets of ancient Egypt.



What did the ancient Egyptians believe about life after death?

From very early times, the Egyptians believed in life after death. They believed that after they died they would live in the Next World, a place where they would live forever in the presence of their gods. They believed that in the Next World they would enjoy a life similar to, but even more enjoyable than, their life on Earth. Eternal life was not guaranteed, though.

Egyptians believed that after death they would appear before the god Osiris.



Egyptian mummies are not only of people. These mummies are of cats.

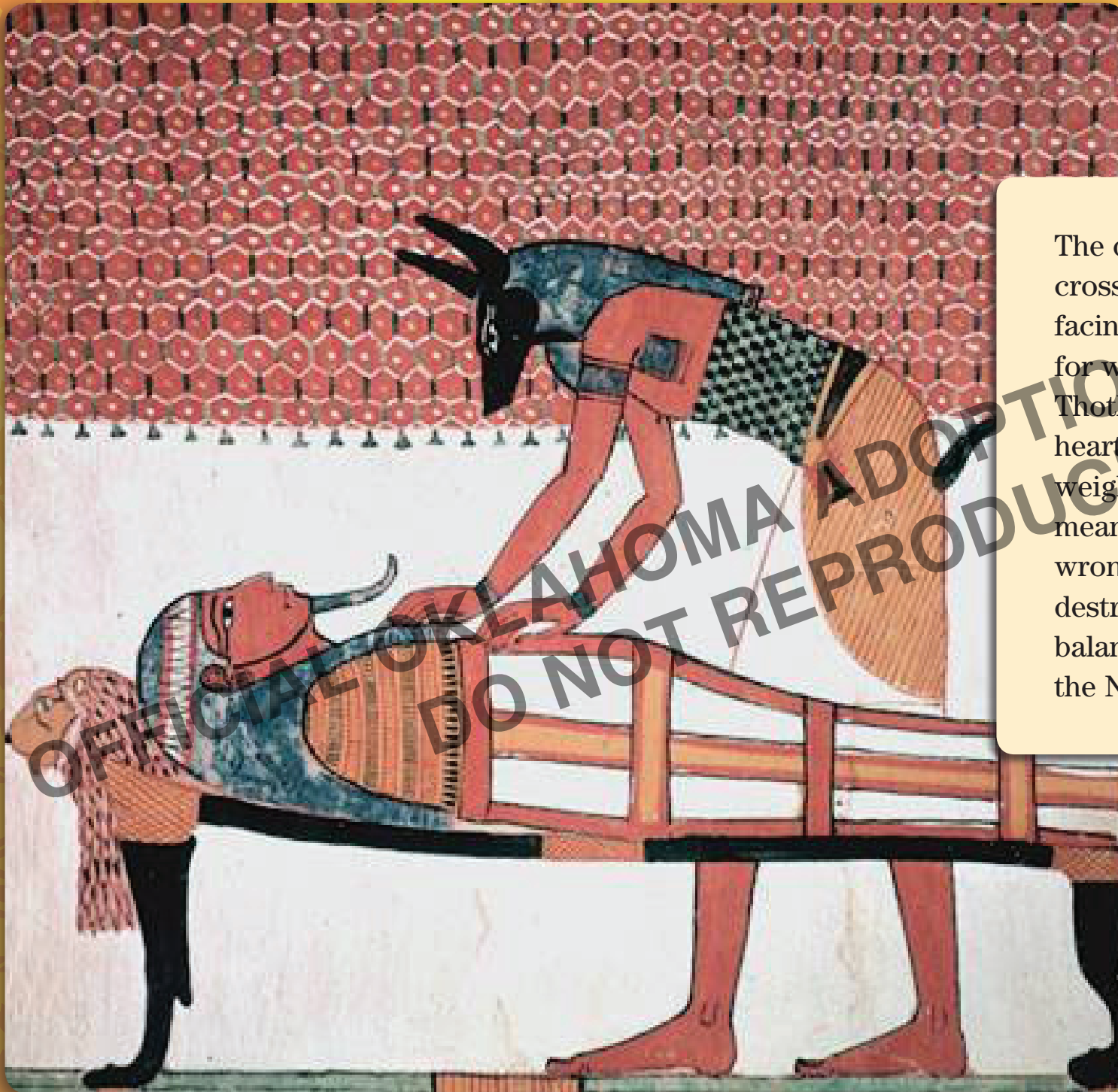


1. What did the ancient Egyptians believe about the Next World?
(main idea/supporting details)
2. What might be a reason to mummify a pet?
(making inferences)



SET 9

SLIDE 2



The dead took a long journey, crossing the River of Death, facing danger and standing trial for wrongdoing. The gods Osiris, Thoth, and Anubis weighed the heart against a feather. If the heart weighed more than the feather, that meant the heart was made heavy by wrongdoing—the person would be destroyed by a monster. If the scale balanced, the deceased could go to the Next World.

In this scene, Anubis, god of the dead, prepares a body for the journey to the Next World. After a body was mummified, it was often placed in a sarcophagus, or elaborate coffin.



SET 9

SLIDE 3

Mummies

Egyptians believed that they needed their bodies to live in the Next World. That's why the dead were mummified. At first, only the rich and royal were mummified. Later, all bodies were mummified to some degree. The more money someone had, the more complicated the process would be. The first step in mummification was the removal of most of the internal organs. These were preserved in jars and placed in the tomb. The heart was left in the body to be weighed by the gods. The brain was not preserved. The body was covered for many days in a special salt called natron, treated with special ointments, and, finally, wrapped in long strips of linen. The whole process took about 70 days.

This is the mummy of King Ramses III.



3. How were the dead mummified? (*scanning*)

Why did the ancient Egyptians build pyramids?



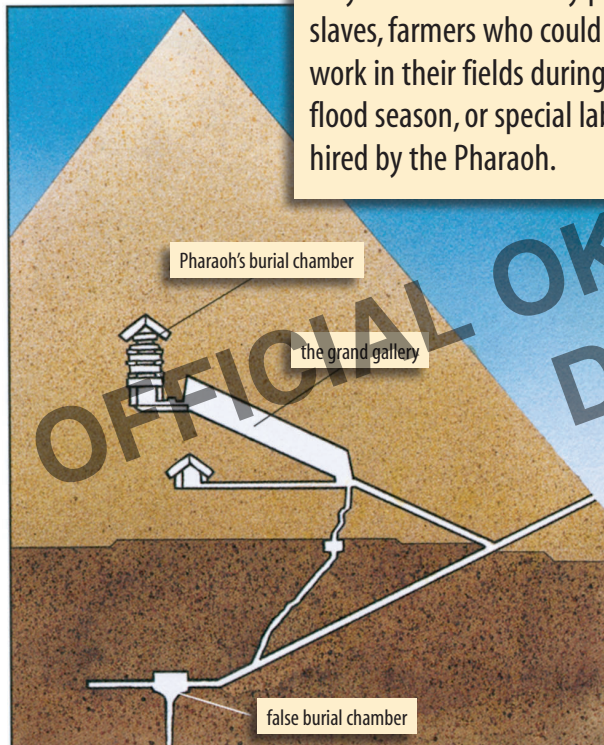
SET 10

SLIDE 1

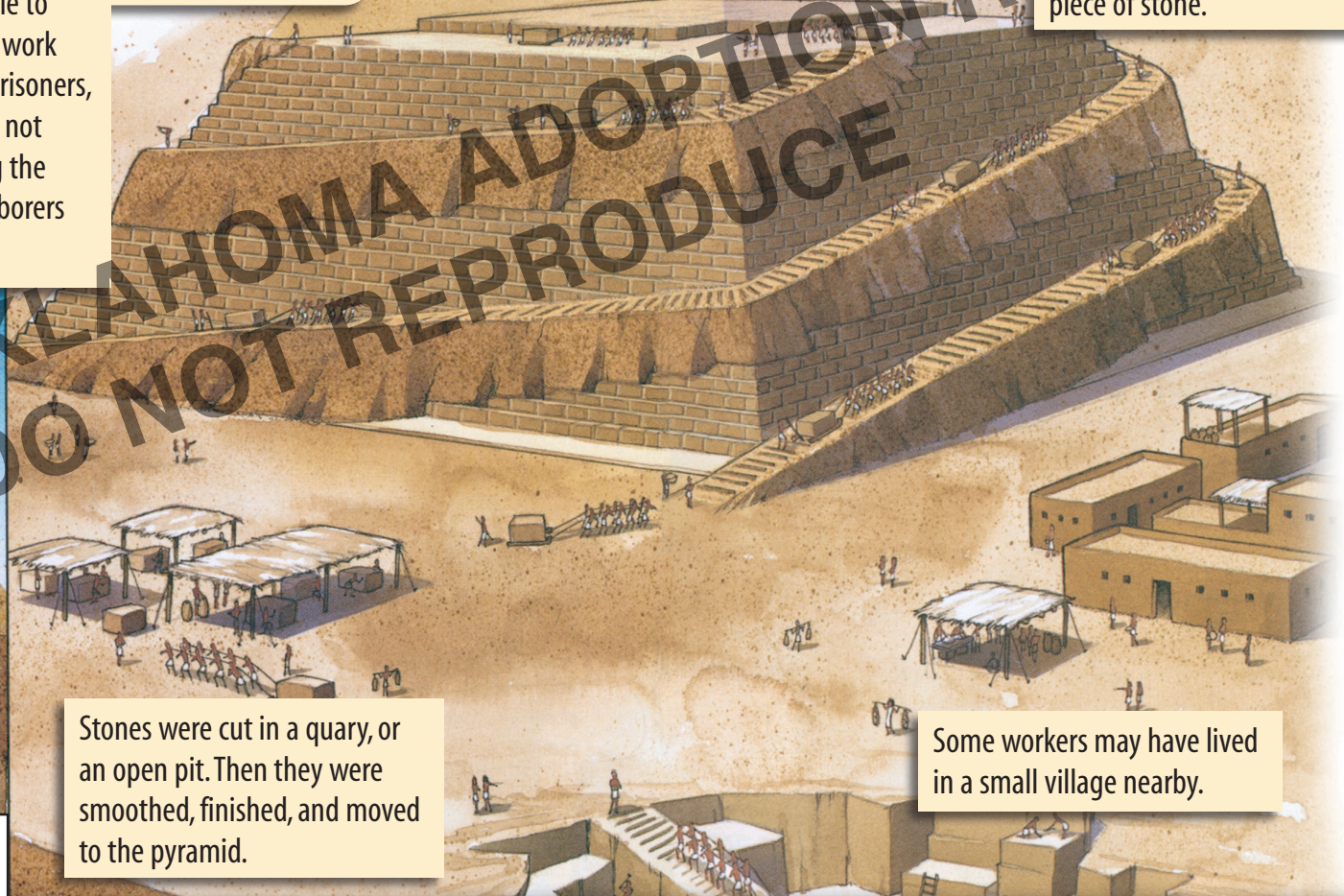
Egyptians were buried with the objects that they would need for life in the Next World, including their clothes, furniture, jewelry—even statues of servants to help them in the next life. The tombs of the Pharaohs were elaborate and filled with riches.

It took thousands of people to build a pyramid. The hard work may have been done by prisoners, slaves, farmers who could not work in their fields during the flood season, or special laborers hired by the Pharaoh.

When finishing stones were added to the base, the pyramids looked like they were carved from a solid piece of stone.



This is a cross section of the Great Pyramid. It is the largest pyramid ever built, and it took at least 20 years to complete. The design of the pyramids show that the ancient Egyptians knew much about geometry, architecture, and even astronomy.



Stones were cut in a quarry, or an open pit. Then they were smoothed, finished, and moved to the pyramid.

Some workers may have lived in a small village nearby.

1. What was inside the pyramids? *(scanning, understanding visuals)*



The first pyramid was built in about 2600 BC for King Djoser. He wanted his tomb to be higher and more visible than those of the previous pharaohs. The builders added layer after layer until it looked like a pyramid. Later pyramids had finishing stones added to make the sides smooth.



Djoser's step pyramid

- 2. How were the pyramids built?** *(understanding visuals)*
- 3. What was the significance of the shape of the pyramids?** *(scanning)*



SET 10

SLIDE 3



The Great Pyramid

Temple of Luxor



Eventually, the pharaohs stopped building pyramids, but they continued to build luxurious tombs for themselves and temples for the gods. These monuments have kept the pharaohs' names alive through history.

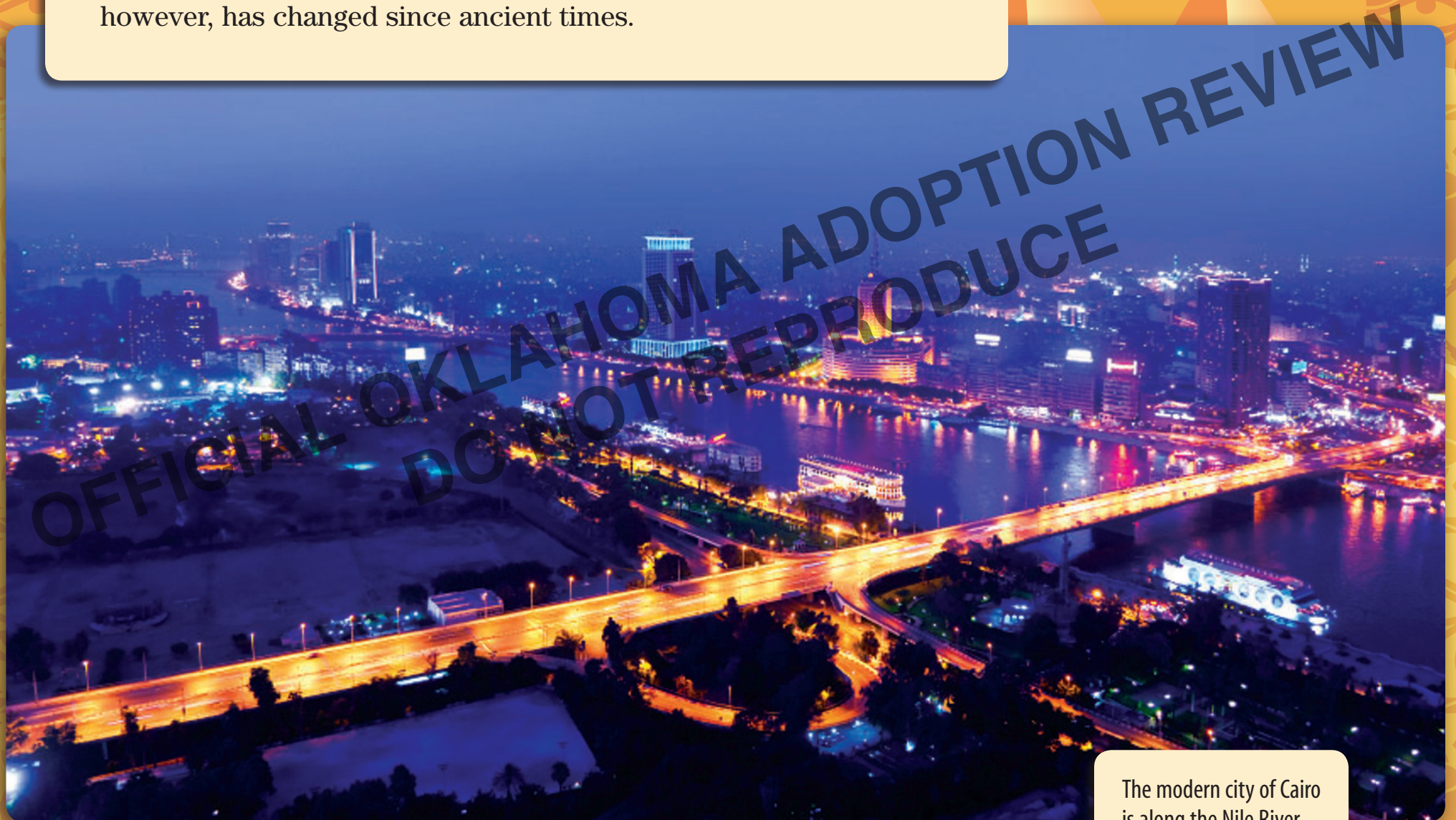
What is Egypt like today?



SET 11

SLIDE 1

Like the people of ancient Egypt, the people of modern Egypt still depend on the Nile River. Even today, only 4% of the country's population lives away from the river. Much about the country, however, has changed since ancient times.



The modern city of Cairo is along the Nile River.



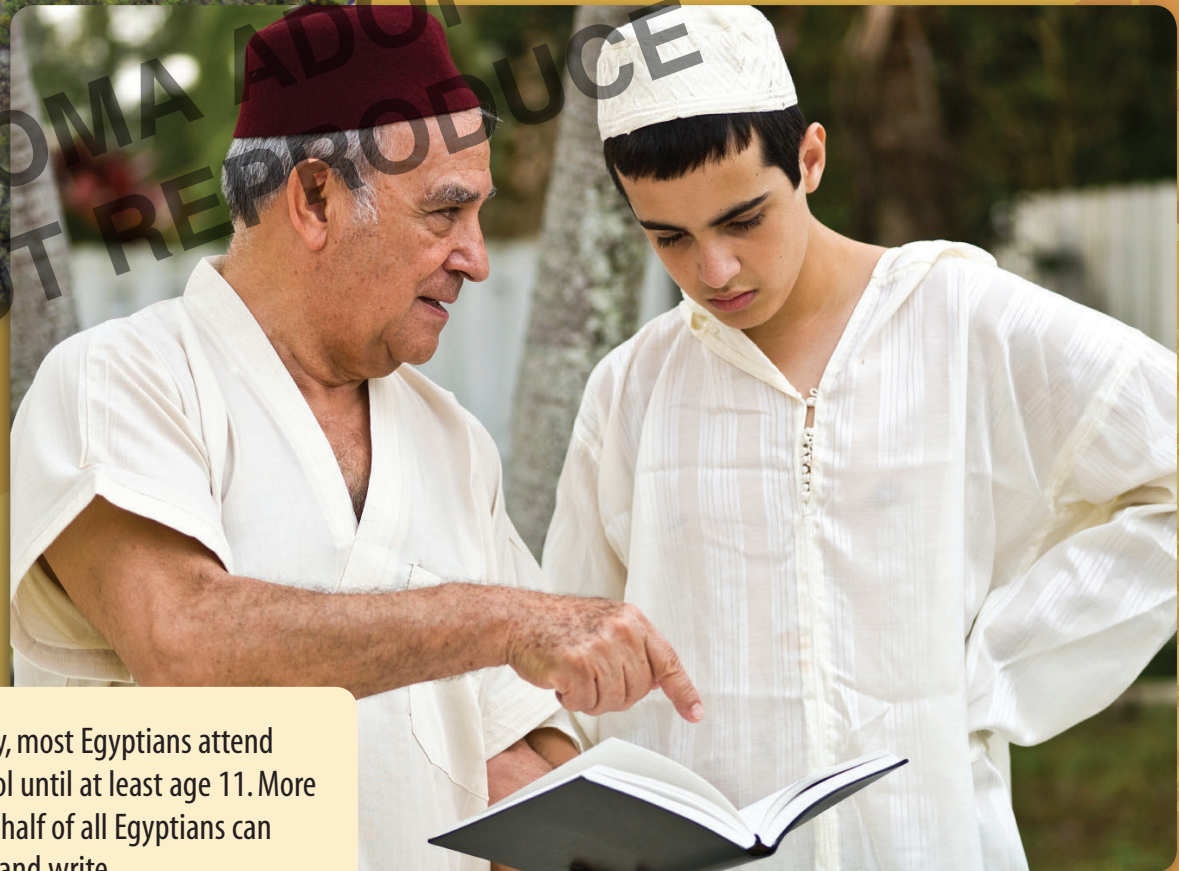
SET 11

SLIDE 2



Like the marketplace of ancient times, today's Egyptian marketplace is usually held in an open street.

1. How is life in Egypt today different than it was for the ancient Egyptians? How is it similar?
(comparing and contrasting)



Today, most Egyptians attend school until at least age 11. More than half of all Egyptians can read and write.



Egyptologists

For a long time, little was known about how the ancient Egyptians lived. Their language died out, and their buildings were buried under desert sand. But the artifacts and writing found at archeological sites help us learn how they lived. Today, people called Egyptologists study this culture from the past.

An excavation on the southern edge of Djoser's step pyramid.

2. What do you think we might learn by studying the ancient Egyptians? *(making inferences, connecting)*
3. What Egyptian symbols and styles can you find in the art and architecture in your life? *(connecting)*