

The Great Pyramid

From the Aztecs and Mayans to the Ancient Egyptians, pyramids have long been a staple of ancient architecture. Perhaps the most famous of all are the three pyramids at Giza. The Great Pyramid is one of the oldest wonders of the world. It is also one of the best examples of an ancient pyramid anywhere on Earth.

How was it built?

Archaeologists aren't entirely sure how any of the pyramids were built. The large blocks of stone sometimes had to be transported hundreds of miles without the use of cranes. It is most likely that they were sent along the Nile on boats. Scientists have also discovered that the Egyptians wet the sand as they slid the blocks along: this would have made it easier to push them.

When it came to building the pyramid, the blocks were probably dragged up the slope for the first part of the build and then a winding platform would have been built inside the pyramid. This would have made it easier to get the heavy stone to the top.



How many pyramids are there?

Depending on which source you use, there are between 80 and 120 known pyramids in Ancient Egypt. The Great Pyramid is one of three at Giza. Not all pharaohs were buried in pyramids; by the time of the New Kingdom, pharaohs such as Tutankhamun were buried in tombs cut out of rocks in the Valley of the Kings.

How much did it cost?

It's almost impossible to work out how much a pyramid would have cost to build in Ancient Egypt. Labour may have been free with the use of slaves, for instance. To build the Great Pyramid of Giza today would cost around **\$5 billion (£3.8 billion)**, even using modern technology!



How long did it take to build?

The earliest information we have about the construction of the Great Pyramid was written 2,000 years after it was built. Therefore, we have no idea how accurate it is. It says that it took 20 years to build using 100,000 slaves. Modern archaeologists think that it probably wouldn't have taken quite as long as that and it may not have needed any slaves at all.



RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. How much would the Great Pyramid cost to build today?
2. When did the Egyptians stop using pyramids?
3. How many pyramids are there at Giza?
4. If the old stories are true, how many slaves did it take to build the Great Pyramid?
5. What did the Egyptians do that made it easier to push the blocks of stone?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Why shouldn't we trust the oldest source of information about the building of the Great Pyramid?

P

Why don't you think modern Egyptian kings would be buried in a pyramid?

V

Find a word that tells you that something is important or common.

S

What had to happen once the stone blocks had been transported along the Nile?

P

What do you think impact of modern technology would be if we tried to build a pyramid now?

Answers:

1. \$5billion or £3.8billion
2. The New Kingdom
3. 3
4. 100,000
5. Wet the sand

I: Because it was so long after it was built that the story could already have changed

P: Look for the idea that it would be too expensive or it's not the modern belief system

V: Staple

S: They had to be pushed to the site of the pyramid

P: It would use fewer workers and be completed more quickly