

Nefertiti

c. 1372–1350 BC



HOW SHE AFFECTED THE REGION

Nefertiti is believed by many to have been one of the most beautiful women of ancient Egypt. Her influence over her husband Akhenaton is believed to have played a major role in the changes brought about during his reign.



As you read the biography below, think about how Nefertiti's beauty may have helped her become an important figure in Egyptian society.



Nefertiti was the wife of the Pharaoh Akhenaton, who ruled during Egypt's eighteenth dynasty. Nefertiti's name means "the beautiful woman has come." While little is known about the famous queen, archaeologists studying Egyptian ruins have found several references to Nefertiti. In fact, her image often appears alongside the images of the pharaohs.

Nefertiti practiced **monotheism**, the belief in one god. She believed in the god Aton, an Egyptian sun god. During this time, most Egyptians worshipped several gods. Some scholars believe that Nefertiti influenced her husband, Akhenaton, in his devotion to Aton.

Akhenaton declared that Egypt should stop worshipping all their different gods and pray only to Aton. Several large temples were built for this new religion. Religious ceremonies were conducted in the temples. Nefertiti often led these rituals. This was uncommon for a woman during that era. Before Nefertiti, even the Egyptian queens had not been allowed to take part in these ceremonies.

VOCABULARY

monotheism belief in just one god

Archaeologists have found many clues about Nefertiti's life among the ruins of ancient Egypt. Nefertiti's name was changed many times, but each time her name contained some reference to her beauty.

Nefertiti and Akhenaton had six daughters. A relief carving has been found that shows the royal couple with their children. Unlike previous rulers, Akhenaton and Nefertiti allowed artists to depict them realistically, showing them as ordinary people.

Nefertiti is not mentioned in historical records following 1360 BC. Some scholars believe that Nefertiti was banished from Egypt when she and Akhenaton had an argument over religion. Others think that she may have just died. It is believed that one of Nefertiti's daughters replaced her as queen.

While most of Nefertiti's life remains a mystery, her beauty is legendary, and Egyptians fondly remembered her. While most of the monuments and references to Akhenaton were destroyed after his reign, several statues and likenesses of Nefertiti have survived.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

- 1. Draw Conclusions** Why might Nefertiti's beauty have given her influence and importance?

- 2. Evaluate** How do you think the people of Egypt felt when Akhenaton and Nefertiti demanded that people worship only one god? Explain.

ACTIVITY

Nefertiti's tomb has not yet been found. Write an epitaph that the people of Egypt might have inscribed on Nefertiti's tomb.

Ancient Civilizations of Africa—Egypt**Biography**

Khufu

c. 2600 BC



HOW HE AFFECTED THE REGION Khufu was the founder of the fourth dynasty in Egypt. He is best known for his tomb, the Great Pyramid at Giza.



As you read the biography below, think about how important Khufu must have been to the Egyptian people to have such a tomb built.

Khufu, called Cheops by the Greeks, was the son of King Snefru and Queen Hetepheres. Little is known about Khufu's life. The contents of his tomb, which would have told more about his history, were stolen during ancient times. Instead, only a few clues remain about his life. The one major clue that tells us how important Khufu must have been is the Great Pyramid at Giza, near Cairo, Egypt.

Khufu's father Snefru is credited for building at least three pyramids in Egypt. Khufu is credited with the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza sometime around 2600 BC. The Great Pyramid is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It is the only wonder still standing today.

The pyramid of Khufu is the oldest and largest of the three pyramids at Giza. The pyramid covers about 13 acres at its base and was originally about 480 feet tall. It was made with more than 2 million solid limestone blocks, each weighing about 5,000 pounds. The stone was excavated in Eastern Egypt, and then floated down the Nile River. The Pyramid of Khufu originally had a surface casing of white, pearly limestone, but very little of this covering exists today.



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VOCABULARY

mummification process of preserving the body after death that includes wrapping it in cloth

Egyptian pharaohs were usually placed in a tomb with clothing, food, tools, and weapons. The Egyptians believed that the dead would need these items in the afterlife. The Egyptians also believed that the body had to be preserved to make life after death possible. They developed a process called **mummification**, in which the organs were removed from the body, which was then treated with chemicals and wrapped in cloth. Unfortunately, all of the items in Khufu's tomb, and even his mummy, were stolen long ago.

Khufu earned a reputation as a cruel and ruthless pharaoh. He reigned from around 2589 to 2566 BC, and was the founder of the fourth dynasty in Egypt. After his death, his successor was his son Djedefre. The tombs of Khufu's family members are located near his pyramid in Egypt.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

- 1. Analyze** Why is there very little known about King Khufu?

- 2. Compare and Contrast** Compare the Great Pyramid at Giza with modern tombs, such as those found in graveyards in the United States today. How are they alike? How are they different?

ACTIVITY

Using construction paper and markers, construct your own pyramid. Use a ruler to create lines horizontally across the pyramid, representing the blocks of limestone.