

Ancient Egypt Ancient Egyptian Gods and Goddesses History >> Ancient Egypt Religion played a big part in the lives of the Ancient Egyptians. They believed in a wide variety of gods and goddesses. These gods could take different forms, usually as animals. The same animal may represent a different god depending on the area, temple, or timeframe. Ra by Unknown Major Gods and Goddesses There were some gods and goddesses that were more important and prominent than others. Here are some of the more important ones: Ra - Ra was the sun god and the most important god to the Ancient Egyptians. Ra was drawn as a man with a hawk head and a headdress with a sun disk. At one point Ra was combined with another god Amun and the two made an even more powerful god, Amun-Ra. Ra was said to have created all forms of life and was the supreme ruler of the gods. Isis - Isis was the mother goddess. It was thought that she would protect and help people in need. She was drawn as a woman with a headdress in the shape of a throne. Osiris - Osiris was ruler of the underworld and god of the dead. He was the husband of Isis and father of Horus. Osiris was drawn as a mummified man with a feathered headdress. Advertisement | Report Ad Horus - Horus was the god of the sky. Horus was the son of Isis and Osiris. He was drawn as a man with the head of a hawk. The ruler of the Egyptians, Pharaoh, was thought to be the living version Horus. In this way Pharaoh was the leader of the Egyptian religion and the people's representative to the gods. Thoth - Thoth was the god of knowledge. He blessed the Egyptians with writing, medicine, and mathematics. He was also god of the moon. Thoth is drawn as a man with an Ibis bird head. Sometimes he was represented as a baboon. Temples Many Pharaohs built large temples in honor of their gods. These temples would have large statues, gardens, memorials, and a place of worship. Towns would have their own temples as well for their own local gods. Luxor Temple at night by Spitfire ch Some famous temples include the Luxor Temple, the Temple of Isis at Philae, the Temple of Horus and Edfu, the Temples of Rameses and Nefertiti at Abu Simbel, and the Temple of Amun at Karnak. Was Pharaoh considered a god? The Ancient Egyptians considered Pharaoh to be their main intermediary to the gods; perhaps more of a high priest than a god. He was, however, closely associated with the god Horus and may have, at times, been considered a god in human form. Advertisement | Report Ad Afterlife The Book of the Dead - Drawn on the walls of a tomb by Jon Bodsworth The Egyptians believed that there was a life after death. They thought that people had two important parts: a "ka", or life force that they only had while alive, and a "ba" which was more like a soul. If the "ka" and "ba" could be united in the afterworld the person would live in the afterlife. A key component was that the body be preserved for this to happen. This is why the Egyptians used the embalming process, or mummification, to preserve the dead.

Temples and Priests History >> Ancient Egypt Why did they build temples? The pharaohs of Egypt built the temples as houses for the Egyptian gods. Inside the temples, priests performed rituals in hopes of gaining the favor of the gods and to protect Egypt from the forces of chaos. There were two main types of temples built in Ancient Egypt. The first type is called a Cultus temple and was built to house a specific god or gods. The second type is called a Mortuary temple and was built to worship a dead pharaoh. Relief painting of a priest by Unknown Typical Design Over time, the temples of Ancient Egypt grew into large complexes with many buildings. At the center of the temple was the inner chambers and the sanctuary which housed a statue of the god. This is where the high priest would hold rituals and give offerings to the god. Only the priests could enter these sacred buildings. Advertisement | Report Ad Around the sanctuary, other smaller rooms would hold lesser gods and companions to the primary god of the temple. Outside the inner chambers would be other buildings including large halls filled with columns and open courts. The entrance to the temple often had tall pylons that served as guardians to the temples. Priests Working in the temples were the priests and priestesses. There was typically a high priest that was assigned by the pharaoh. The high priest

performed the most important rituals and managed the business of the temple. Working as a priest was considered a good job and was a sought after position by wealthy and powerful Egyptians. Priests had to be pure in order to serve the gods. They washed twice a day, shaved their heads, and wore only the cleanest linen clothing and leopard skins. Rituals Priests performed daily rituals in the temples. Every morning the high priest would enter the sanctuary and anoint the god's statue with sacred oil and perfume. He would then put ceremonial clothing and paint on the statue. After that he would make offerings of food such as bread, meat, and fruit. Advertisement | Report Ad Other rituals and offerings would be made throughout the day in shrines outside the inner sanctuary. Rituals sometimes included music and hymns. Festivals Throughout the year, the temples would celebrate events with festivals. Many festivals were open to the local people and not just the priests. Some of the festivals involved large processions where one god would visit the temple of another god. Economics The larger temple complexes were major economic hubs in Ancient Egypt. They employed thousands of workers to supply food, jewelry, and clothing for the offerings as well as the many priests. The temples often owned land and collected grain, gold, perfumes, and other gifts from people wanting to earn the favor of the gods. Interesting Facts about the Temples and Priests of Ancient Egypt Columns and pillars in the temples often were designed in the shape of sacred plants such as papyrus and lotus. These plants were believed to grow on the mythical Island of Creation. Sometimes priests served as judges for the local people. The temples grew in size over time as new pharaohs added to them. Some temples started out as small shrines in early Egyptian history and ended up as large complexes by the end of the New Kingdom period. The high priest was a powerful person in both Egyptian society and the government. Grain surpluses held by the temples helped to feed the people during times of famine.

Mummies History >> Ancient Egypt The afterlife was an important part of Ancient Egyptian culture. One of the ways they prepared for the afterlife was to try and preserve the body as long as possible. They did this through a process called embalming. These embalmed bodies are called mummies. Coffin and mummy of pharaoh Amenhotep I by G. Elliot Smith How did they embalm the mummies? The Egyptians went through an elaborate process to preserve the body and keep it from decaying. It's a little gross, so we won't go into too much of the gory details. The main thing they did was try to get all the water and moisture out of the body. It's water that causes much of the decay. The Egyptians started out by covering the body with a salty crystal substance called natron. The natron would help to dry out the body. They would also take out some of the organs. With the body covered and stuffed with natron, they would let the body dry out for around 40 days. Once it was dry, they would use lotions on the skin to preserve it, reinforce the empty body with packing, and then cover the body in wraps of linen. They would use many layers of strips of linen wrapping, covering the entire body. Resin was used to glue the layers of wrap together. The total process could take up to 40 days. Advertisement | Report Ad Once the body was all wrapped up, it was covered in a sheet called a shroud and placed in a stone coffin called a sarcophagus. Why did they care so much about the dead bodies? The tomb of Sennedjem by Unknown In the Egyptian religion, the body was needed in order for the soul or "ba" of the person to unite with the "ka" of the person in the afterlife. The body was an important part of the afterlife and they wanted to preserve it forever. Did everyone get this fancy embalming? Only the very rich could afford the best embalming. It was important to everyone, though, so they got the best that they could pay for and most of the dead were made into mummies. It is estimated that 70 million mummies were made in Egypt over the 3,000 years of the ancient civilization. Famous Mummies Tut's Tomb from the New York Times There are still mummies of some of the ancient Pharaohs around. Both Tutankhamun and Rameses the Great were preserved and can be seen at museums. Advertisement | Report Ad Fun Facts about Egyptian Mummies Over the past few thousands of years, many of the Egyptian mummies have been

destroyed in interesting ways. Some were burned for fuel, some were ground into powder to make magical potions, and some were destroyed by treasure hunters. The heart was left in the body because it was considered to be the center of intelligence. The brain was thrown away because it was thought to be useless. Sometimes the mummy's mouth would be opened to symbolize breathing in the afterlife. It is probably this custom that led to the superstition that mummies come back to life. Mummies are studied by scientists without unwrapping them by using CAT scan and X-Ray machines.