



How Ancient Egyptians Built the Great Pyramids

KS2 HISTORY

ANCIENT EGYPT

Ages 9-12  4 min read

What Were the Pyramids?

The **pyramids** were enormous tombs built by **ancient Egyptians** around **4,500 years ago**. The most famous is the **Great Pyramid of Giza**, built for Pharaoh **Khufu**. It originally stood **146 metres tall** and took about **20 years** to complete. These monuments still amaze us today because they're so perfectly built.

How Did They Move the Stones?

The pyramids were built from **limestone blocks**, each weighing as much as **2.5 tonnes**. That's like lifting **50 grand pianos!** Workers didn't have cranes or modern machinery. Instead, they used ramps, rollers, and ropes. Historians believe they carved the blocks from quarries, then dragged them on wooden sledges across sand.

Think of it like building with Lego blocks — except each block is the size of a car and weighs as much as an elephant!

They probably used water to make the sand slippery, which made dragging the heavy stones easier. Wooden rollers underneath helped too. Teams of **workers** pulled the stones using ropes made from plant fibres.

Building the Pyramid

Once at the site, workers used ramps to move stones higher and higher. As the pyramid grew, they may have built spiral or zigzag ramps around it. Some experts think they used **copper tools** and **wooden hammers** to shape and position each block precisely. The stones fit together so perfectly that you can barely squeeze a piece of paper between them!

Think of it like stacking coins perfectly straight, except the 'coins' are huge stone blocks and it takes decades.

Who Built Them?

Contrary to old stories, **slaves** didn't build the pyramids. Recent evidence shows they were built by **paid workers** and skilled labourers. Workers ate well, received medical care, and some even lived in workers' villages near the site. Building a pyramid was a massive national project, like a modern construction site, but without electric tools.

Why Were They Built?

Pharaohs built pyramids as eternal resting places. Ancient Egyptians believed in the **afterlife**, so they filled pyramids with treasures, food, and objects the Pharaoh would need in the next world. Pyramids showed the Pharaoh's power and helped them achieve eternal life.

The pyramids remain one of history's greatest engineering achievements, proving that human ingenuity, teamwork, and determination can accomplish almost anything.