Name: _____ Date: _____

Study Guide #3**: On the Banks of the Nile**

Early Steps Toward Civilization. There is evidence that people lived in the Nile Valley by at least 12,000 B.C. Eventually these groups built settlements and began farming the rich land. As with the rivers in Sumer, floods left behind a deposit of silt. The floods of the Nile, however, occurred at the same time each year and were less destructive.

People in the Nile Valley began writing as early as 3000 B.C. They developed a system of **hieroglyphics** that consisted of more than 600 signs representing words or sounds. Egyptians also developed **papyrus**, a paperlike material they used to write on.

Modern scholars did not learn how to read Egyptian hieroglyphics until the 1820s. The discovery of the Rosetta Stone, which had inscriptions in Greek, hieroglyphics, and another type of Egyptian writing, helped scholars learn how to decode hieroglyphics.

Egyptian Civilization. Over the centuries two kingdoms formed: Lower Egypt in the north, and Upper Egypt in the south. Sometime after 3200 B.C., Menes, the king of Upper Egypt, united the two kingdoms. He founded a **dynasty**, which is a family of rulers in which the right to rule is passed down to the king or queen's son or daughter.

Historians divide ancient Egypt into four periods—the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, the New Kingdom, and the Late Period. The Old Kingdom spanned about 2650 B.C. to 2180 B.C. The **pharaoh** was the head of Old Kingdom society. Gradually, government officials in the upper class became nobles. Toward the end of the Old Kingdom, the royal authority collapsed, and nobles fought with each other to win power. This period of civil war led to Egypt's decline.

In about 2040 B.C. a new line of pharaohs from the city of Thebes united Egypt again. This began the period known as the Middle Kingdom, during which time Egypt was at peace and produced great works of art, architecture, and literature. By the 1780s B.C., however, the power of the pharaohs began to weaken, as nobles and priests again fought for power. Within 20 years foreign invaders were attacking Egypt.

Egyptian Society and Culture. Despite many changes in dynasties, Egyptian culture remained stable during the Old and Middle Kingdoms. This stability allowed agriculture, trade, the arts, education, and religion to flourish.

Egyptian farmers grew more food than was needed for the Egyptian people, and Egypt was able to trade this surplus for other products. Egyptians built ships to trade along the coasts of the Mediterranean, Red, and Aegean Seas, and merchants traveled by land to Asia and south into Africa. Another accomplishment was the building of the pyramids, which served as tombs for the pharaohs. Egyptian engineers and architects were among the most skilled in the ancient world.

Egypt developed a complex governmental structure known as a **bureaucracy** in which civil servants carried out specialized tasks. Many scribes were needed to keep records, so boys were usually taught by their fathers to read and write. During the Middle Kingdom actual schools began to appear.

As in Mesopotamia, people in Egypt saw life in terms of religion. The gods of Egypt, in keeping with the regular flooding of the Nile, were generally seen as predictable and gentle. Over the centuries local gods and goddesses who shared associations became united into one greater god or goddess. During the dynastic era people even believed that the pharaoh was a great god in a human form. Because they believed that humans would need their bodies in the afterlife, the Egyptians developed the process of **mummification**, which preserved bodies for centuries.

Answer the questions below in your own words. Highlight your evidence.
NOTE: Please use ink blue or black when writing your responses.

1. How did the flooding of the Nile River help to draw people to the Nile Valley?

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2. What were the two important achievements of King Menes?

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_____
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3. How did the noble class affect the rise and fall of Egyptian rulers?

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4. What trade links did the Egyptians establish?

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5. How did the Egyptian bureaucracy lead to educational advancements?

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6. What were some of the ancient Egyptians' religious beliefs?

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