

16 Read the passage and answer questions 1–10.

## THE PHARAOHS OF ANCIENT EGYPT

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A pharaoh was a political and religious leader of Ancient Egypt. He – or, less often, she – enjoyed two titles: ‘Lord of the Two Lands’ and ‘High Priest of Every Temple’. ‘Two Lands’ referred to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, which occurred during the First Dynasty in about 3150 BCE. King Menes (now believed to be King Narmer) was the first to be depicted wearing the two crowns of Egypt. The word pharaoh is the Greek form of ‘pero’ or ‘per-a-a’, which literally means ‘great house’, a reference to the royal residence. The honorific title first appeared in what is now known as the New Kingdom period of 1570–1069 BCE. Prior to that, the pharaohs were known as kings and addressed as ‘Your Majesty’ by both members of the court and foreign dignitaries. A tradition which started during this period and was maintained into the Pharaonic period was that foreign rulers addressed the king or pharaoh as ‘Brother’.

As time passed, the pharaoh came to be considered a god on earth, a kind of intermediary between gods and humans. It was believed that after death, a pharaoh became Osiris, god of the dead. As such, probably their key role in Ancient Egyptian society was a religious one. In particular, each pharaoh oversaw the building of great monuments and temples to pay homage to the gods, as well as statues commemorating their own achievements. It was the pharaoh who chose the site of temples and officiated at religious ceremonies.

In addition to the religious duties, the pharaoh had civil duties such as making laws, collecting taxes and deciding on the work to be done, and he owned all the land in the country. According to Joshua J. Mark ([www.ancient.eu](http://www.ancient.eu)), the pharaoh’s chief responsibility was to maintain Ma’at or Universal Harmony, and warfare was an essential part of this. As well as defending the borders, it may have been considered necessary for the sake of harmony to attack neighbouring lands to gain natural resources.

Most of the pharaohs were male. In *Exploring Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw notes that there were only two or three women who were pharaohs, though many women held considerable power as the ‘great wife’, the first wife of the reigning pharaoh. Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh, who ruled from 1473 to 1458 BCE made her mark on history. Owen Jarus points out that statues depicted Hatshepsut, whose name means ‘foremost of noblewomen’, as a male king complete with beard. She is remembered for her building projects, which were more ambitious than those of her ancestors. These included several obelisks and a Palace of Ma’at. She is buried in the Valley of the Kings in a huge funerary complex. However, her memory was not honoured. Egyptologist Joyce Tyldesley claims her tomb was defaced by her nephew and successor, Thutmose III, who wanted to take credit for her achievements. Hatshepsut’s mummy was discovered in 2007. She had died aged 50, balding and suffering from diabetes. In spite of the desecration of her tomb, history remembers her as a great leader.

In Ancient Egypt kingship usually passed from father to son. However, changes of leadership were not always peaceful, nor did they always happen according to tradition. Some, like Hatshepsut, seized power illegally, and when they did so they typically claimed divine right. Sometimes crown princes were prepared for their future role in advance by being appointed co-regent, which would help them become accustomed to the importance of their role. Enthronements were major events, which celebrated a new beginning. The new reign, it was hoped, would signify an end to evil and injustice. The pharaoh had great, but not absolute, power. To achieve his aims, it was usual for the pharaoh to lavish gifts of power and possessions on those who could help him, such as military leaders, members of the priesthood and the scribal elite.



New information about the pharaohs is still coming to light. A new burial site, potentially as important as the Valley of the Kings, was discovered in 2014 by archaeologists from the University of Pennsylvania in the United States. Danish archaeologist Kim Ryholt first speculated about the existence of a lost dynasty of Ancient Egypt, while legendary Egyptologist Flinders Petrie discovered the site in 1902 but never excavated it, believing the tomb to be of too modest a size to be of significance. The discovery of the mummy of King Senebkay at this site in Abydos, about 100 km north-west of the Valley of the Kings, is the first definitive proof of another pharaonic dynasty.

According to the archaeologist on the project, Forster Mueller, there were more kings and therefore certainly more tombs nearby. Although the tomb had been vandalised by ancient looters, the team from Pennsylvania managed to piece together most of King Senebkay's skeleton. Another project member, Josef Wegner, admits that what they are hoping for is an intact tomb that somehow escaped the looters, though realistically it is fragments they

are looking for. They deciphered Senebkay's name from hieroglyphics found inside the tomb. The 3,600-year-old King had been tall for his time at 1.75m and had died in his late 40s. This evidence of a third dynasty of pharaohs is an exciting discovery for all those interested in the history of Ancient Egypt. Even in the twenty-first century, the great pharaohs may still have more secrets to reveal.



### Questions 1–6

Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer? Write

- YES** if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer  
**NO** if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer  
**NOT GIVEN** if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this

- 1 Conflict with other countries was seen as compatible with maintaining peace in Egypt.
- 2 Pharaohs' wives often exerted great influence.
- 3 The first female pharaoh was particularly influential.
- 4 Hatshepsut came to power in the traditional way.
- 5 Military leaders, priests and scribes would attend enthronement ceremonies.
- 6 King Senebkay's skeleton was stolen by grave robbers.

### Questions 7–10

Look at the following statements and the list of people below.

Match each statement with the correct person, A–E.

- 7 He believed a specific burial site was unimportant.
- 8 He acknowledges the prospect of finding an undamaged grave is unlikely.
- 9 He believed that there were probably more pharaohs buried close to Abydos.
- 10 He claimed there had been a pharaonic dynasty that no one knew about.

#### List of people

- A Kim Ryholt
- B Flinders Petrie
- C Forster Mueller
- D Josef Wegner
- E Ian Shaw