

Project glossary

afterlife

The life that is believed to begin after death.

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ancient Egypt

A civilisation that existed around the banks of the Nile from c3100 BC until 30 BC.

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ancient Sumer

The first civilisation in the world that existed in Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq, from c4500 BC until c1900 BC.

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archaeologist

A person who studies human history by excavating sites and analysing artefacts.

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archaeology

The study of human history by excavating sites and analysing artefacts.

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artefact

An object that was made in the past, such as a tool.

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canopic jar

A wood, stone or clay container with a lid used in ancient Egypt to hold organs from a mummified body.

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civilisation

The developed culture and way of life of a society.

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cuneiform

Ancient writing used by the Sumerians made up of simple pictures.

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Fertile Crescent

The area of land in the Middle East where the first ancient civilisations began.

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floodplain

A fertile area of low-lying land near a river that often floods when the river rises.

hierarchy

A system in society where people are organised into different levels of importance from highest to lowest.

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hieroglyph

A picture or symbol representing a word used in ancient Egyptian writing.

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Indus Valley

The area next to the Indus River in modern-day Pakistan and north-west India where the Indus Valley civilisation developed from c2500 BC to c1700 BC.

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irrigation

The digging of channels to allow water to flow through a field to water crops.

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lugal

The name for a king in ancient Sumer.

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Mesopotamia

An ancient historical area in modern-day Iraq where the Ancient Sumerian civilisation developed in c4500 BC.

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mummification

The process of preserving a dead body by drying and wrapping that was used by the ancient Egyptians.

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necropolis

A large cemetery belonging to an ancient city.

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nomad

A person who travels from place to place to find food, water and shelter.

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papyrus

A material made in ancient Egypt from the stem of a water plant and used in sheets for writing or painting.

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pharaoh

A ruler of ancient Egypt.

pyramid

A structure with a square or triangular base and sloping sides used as a royal tomb in ancient Egypt.

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sarcophagus

A stone coffin usually decorated with carvings or inscriptions used in ancient Egypt.

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scribe

A professional writer.

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shaduf

An irrigation device from ancient Egypt that used a lever mechanism to raise water from a water source onto the land.

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vizier

The pharaoh's chief minister in ancient Egypt.

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ziggurat

A large pyramid in ancient Sumer made from mud bricks, with a temple on top.