Ancient Egypt: Life Along the Nile with Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the significance of the River Nile and the social hierarchy of Ancient Egyptian society.

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of Ancient Egyptian history to provide detailed answers. Remember to use the word bank to help you express your ideas clearly.

Ellie the elephant has been travelling back through time to explore the banks of the River Nile. She has discovered that the annual flooding of the river was essential for life, turning the dry desert land into fertile ground. She also noticed that the people were organised into a strict social structure, from the powerful rulers at the top to the farmers and labourers who built the great monuments.

Word bank: Pharaoh · Silt · Irrigation · Hierarchy · Scribe · Papyrus · Afterlife · Shaduf

1. Explain why the annual flooding of the River Nile was considered a 'gift' by the Ancient Egyptians. How did it affect their ability to grow crops? (2 marks)

2. Describe the role of a scribe in Ancient Egyptian society. Why were they highly respected members of the community? (2 marks)

3. If you were to draw a social hierarchy pyramid for Ancient Egypt, which person would be at the very top and why? (2 marks)

4. How did the invention of the 'shaduf' help farmers manage the water from the Nile more efficiently? (2 marks)

5. Ancient Egyptians spent a great deal of time and wealth preparing for the afterlife. Give two examples of items or practices they used to ensure someone was ready for the journey after death. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a diagram of the Ancient Egyptian social hierarchy in the shape of a pyramid. Label the different levels, placing the Pharaoh at the peak and the farmers/labourers at the base.

Extension challenge: Imagine you are a merchant in an Ancient Egyptian market. Write a short diary entry describing three items you are selling and how much they cost in ancient currency (e.g., in units of grain or copper). Explain why these items are important to your customers.