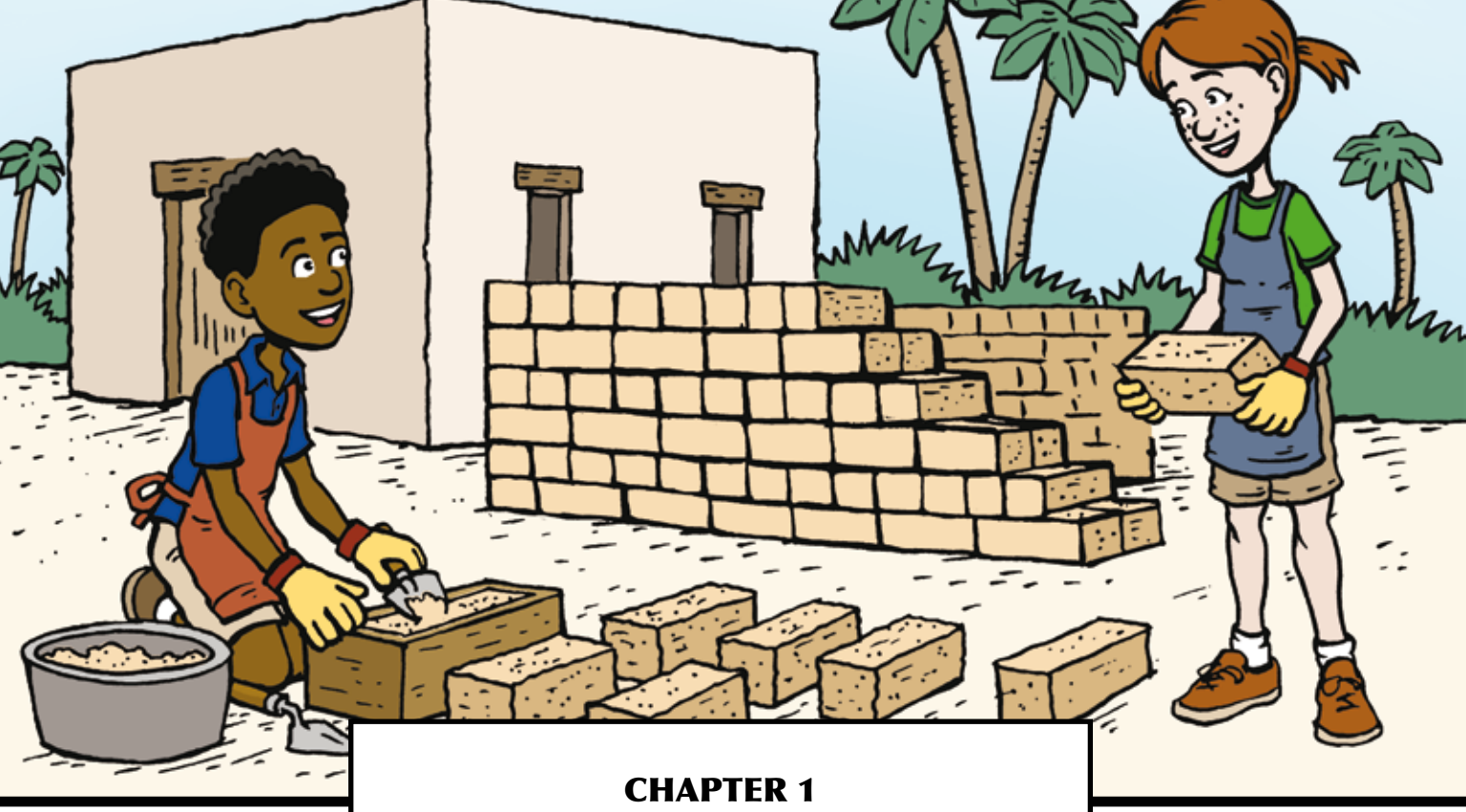

CHAPTER 1

EGYPTIAN HOMES

Depending on where you are and what resources you have, you might live in a house made of bricks, wood, adobe, or even canvas! The type of house you live in is often decided by the climate. Today, it's pretty easy for people to get different materials from all around the world, but in ancient times, people had to use whatever they had available in their area.

Most ancient Egyptian homes were simple. The outsides weren't very colorful and they didn't have much furniture. Other ancient Egyptian homes were pretty fancy. These homes belonged to the wealthy.

INVESTIGATE

How did the climate affect the type of houses ancient Egyptians lived in?

Regardless of how big or fancy they were, ancient Egyptian houses were built from resources found in the desert.

WELCOME HOME!

A typical ancient Egyptian home had a simple, rectangular design and one or two bedrooms. It was about 350 to 400 square feet, the same size as a modern-day, two-car garage.

Because wood was hard to find, ancient Egyptians used mudbricks to build their houses. To make a mudbrick, a builder mixed clay from the banks of the Nile with straw and pebbles and water. Then, the mixture was poured into molds and left to dry in the sun. After a few days, the mudbricks were ready to use to build a house.

WORDS TO KNOW

resources: anything people use to take care of themselves, such as water, food, and building materials.

climate: the typical weather conditions in an area during a long period of time.

mudbricks: bricks made of a mix of clay, pebbles, straw, and water and dried in the sun.

clay: a material found in nature that is sticky and easily molded when wet and hard when baked or dried.

reflect: to redirect something that hits a surface, such as heat, light, or sound.

DID YOU KNOW?

While most ancient Egyptians went to the bathroom outside, the wealthy had indoor toilets. These ancient toilets were wooden benches with a hole in the middle and a bowl underneath the hole.

Ancient Egyptians painted their houses white. The white reflected the sun's light and helped the houses stay cool. To keep the sun (and bugs) out, ancient Egyptians hung mats over their windows.

The homes of wealthy Egyptians were bigger and nicer than the homes of common folks. The rich could afford houses that were two or three stories high. Their homes had beautiful gardens and pools for decoration. There was room for servants and space for a business.

No matter if they were small and simple or big and fancy, Egyptian homes were colorful inside. People painted their walls with designs or scenes from nature. The walls also had special shelves for statues of household gods.

UP ON THE ROOF

Ancient Egyptian families often slept on their roofs. Sometimes, they cooked on their roofs, too. They were able to do this because their roofs were flat. In some cities or countries around the world, people still hang out, sleep, or cook on their flat roofs. There are many reasons for this—space, pretty views, or the lack of electricity. This last one is why many ancient Egyptians often spent time on their roofs. There were no air conditioners or fans in ancient Egypt. Sleeping and cooking outdoors was a good way to keep cooler.

PETS

Do you have a pet? Many ancient Egyptians had pets. They kept birds and monkeys, cats and dogs. In fact, cats were worshipped in ancient Egypt. Artists made statues of them. At one point in history, you could be punished by death just for hurting a cat. Dogs were highly valued, too. Ancient Egyptians considered dogs to be family members. How do we know this? Because they gave their dogs names, and ancient Egyptians believed names had magical powers. Pet cats weren't usually given names.

THE SARCOPHAGUS OF THE CAT OF THE CROWN PRINCE THUTMOSE

CREDIT: LARAZONI (CC BY 2.0)

linen: a lightweight fabric made from the flax plant, used to make clothes in ancient Egypt.

WORDS TO KNOW

FURNITURE FOLLIES

Ancient Egyptians, even the rich, had very little furniture. Some people used beds made out of simple, wooden frames with leather or wood slats. One thing interesting about these beds—they were slanted so that your feet were lower than your head! Footboards kept people from sliding out of bed. If the bed had a mattress, it was made from material stuffed with straw. Linen was used to make sheets.

Most ancient Egyptians just slept on mats on the floor—it was probably cooler on the ground. Ancient Egyptians rested their heads on crescent-shaped stands called headrests instead of on pillows.

Homes usually had a table, which was built low to the ground. These were often made of wood or stone. Small cabinets were also common.

Ancient Egyptians stored their food, clothes, makeup, and other belongings in reed baskets or wooden boxes.

Most ancient Egyptians didn't have chairs. They sat on benches, mats, or short stools that they carried from room to room. If a family did have a chair, it was saved for guests or for the head of the household.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many chairs had just backs and no armrests. Chairs with armrests were only for the really rich or powerful, such as a pharaoh.

AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TABLE

god: a being believed to have special, superhuman powers. A female god is called a goddess.

Taweret: the ancient Egyptian goddess of mother and children.

Bes: the ancient Egyptian god of fun and games.

WORDS TO KNOW

GODS AND GODDESSES

Many ancient Egyptians kept small statues of gods in their homes. They believed in many different gods. Two of the most popular household gods were Taweret and Bes.

Taweret was the goddess who protected mothers and children. She had the head and body of a pregnant hippo, the back of a crocodile, and the paws of a lion. Ancient Egyptians made her look this way because they knew lions, hippos, and crocodiles are protective of their young. They wanted Taweret to have the same quality.

Bes was a strange-looking god. He had the body of a dwarf, big animal ears, and a lion's face. He is often shown sticking out his tongue! Bes was the god of fun and games.

WORDS TO KNOW

underworld: the world of the dead.

Would you like to meet a few other ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses? Statues of these beings could be found in many homes.

- **Ra:** the sun god.
- **Osiris:** god of the afterlife, also called the underworld.
- **Isis:** goddess of motherhood and wifehood. She was married to Osiris.
- **Horus:** the son of Osiris and Isis.
- **Ma'at:** the goddess of order and truth.
- **Atum:** the creator god.
- **Hapy:** the Nile god.

Now that we know what kinds of houses ancient Egyptians lived in, let's take a closer look at what their lives were like—starting with what's for dinner!

CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

It's time to consider and discuss: How did the climate affect the type of houses ancient Egyptians lived in?

PROJECT!

HOT AND COOL COLORS

The ancient Egyptians painted their houses white and wore light-colored clothes to keep cool. In this experiment, you can see for yourself if white really does keep things cooler and if black really does heat things up. You'll need a warm, sunny day for this project.

SUPPLIES

- 2 ice cubes, both the same size
- 2 shallow dishes, both exactly the same
- 1 piece of white construction paper
- 1 piece of black construction paper
- science journal

1 Place an ice cube in each dish. Carry the dishes and paper outside. Find a sunny spot to set up your experiment.

2 Place one of the dishes in the middle of the white piece of paper. Place the other dish in the middle of the black piece of paper.

3 Form a hypothesis about what you think will happen to the ice cube on each piece of paper. Write it down in your journal.

4 Observe what happens to the ice for the next hour. You don't have to stay outside the whole time. You can go inside and check on your experiment every 15 minutes if you'd like. Record your observations in your scientific journal.

THINK ABOUT IT! Which ice cube melted the fastest? Did it melt a little faster or a lot faster? Feel the corners of the pieces of paper. Which one feels warmer? Why do you think this is? Was your hypothesis correct?

PROJECT!

SPINE TIME

SUPPLIES

- your body
- space to move
- towel or yoga mat (optional)

We don't know for certain why ancient Egyptians slept on slanted beds and used headrests, but it probably had to do with taking care of their spines. Our spines are a very important part of our bodies. Doing yoga is a great way to keep your back healthy. Here are some easy poses you can do at home.

1 The Sphinx Pose. (Read about the Great Sphinx in Chapter 6.)

2 Cat Pose. (Read about Egyptian cats in Chapter 1.)

TRY THIS! Head to the library to discover the answers to these questions! You'll find the answers in the resources section.

- How many bones are in the spine?
- What is the spinal cord?
- The spine and the _____ make up the central nervous system.
- Is the spine flexible?

WORDS TO KNOW

yoga: a spiritual and physical practice from India.