

In what ways are the Mayan and Egyptian pyramids alike and different?



You will read:

- ▶ **A MAGAZINE ARTICLE**
The Pyramids of Giza
- ▶ **DATA ANALYSIS**
The Great Pyramid at Giza
- ▶ **A TRAVEL GUIDE**
Visiting the Mayan Pyramids
- ▶ **INFOGRAPHIC**
El Castillo Mayan Pyramid
The Great Pyramid at Giza

You will write:

- ▶ **A COMPARISON / CONTRAST ESSAY**
In what ways are the Mayan and Egyptian pyramids alike and different?

Source Materials

AS YOU READ You will be writing a comparison-and-contrast essay about the Mayan and Egyptian pyramids. Carefully study the sources. For each text, annotate by underlining and circling information that may be useful to you when you write your essay.

Source 1: Magazine Article

THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZA

by Helena Gustafson

When you hear the word *pyramids*, what picture do you see in your head? More likely than not, you see three magnificent stone structures rising out of the desert sands. These are the pyramids of Giza, Egypt, famous not only for their stupendous size and dramatic shape, but also for the astonishing skill with which they were built thousands of years ago.



The pyramids at Giza



Silhouettes of the three largest pyramids at Giza: Menkaura, Khafra, and Khufu

The three pyramids at Giza were designed as monumental tombs for pharaohs (kings) of Egypt, to house their bodies after death and to help them achieve eternal life in the afterworld. Each was made by and for a different pharaoh: King Khufu built the Great Pyramid (the biggest) first, around 2550 BC; King Khafra built the second pyramid around 2520 BC; King Menkaura built the third (smallest of the three and last) in about 2490 BC.

Although there are a few passageways and chambers inside each pyramid, the structures are mostly solid stone. They were designed to be permanently sealed after the bodies of the pharaohs were placed inside. Neither the inside nor the outside of the pyramid had any public function other than to memorialize the powerful king buried inside.

As impressive as they look today, the Giza pyramids were even more striking when first built. Originally, the four faces of each

pyramid were covered with a smooth layer of bright white limestone blocks that would have gleamed and glittered in the sunlight. After these casing blocks fell or were stripped off hundreds of years ago, many were hauled away and used to build mosques and houses in the city of Cairo nearby.

The pyramids at Giza have been astonishing humanity for more than 4,500 years. Successive generations of travelers, invaders, and explorers have come across them and marveled: Ancient Greeks, Arab conquerors, even Napoleon.

Even in Ancient Egyptian times, the Giza pyramids were antiques. They were more than a thousand years old at the time of King Tutankhamen. The largest pyramid at Giza is the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that remains; to this day, it is a sight that amazes all who see it.

Discuss and Decide

If you were to write a travel brochure advertising a visit to the Giza pyramids, which facts would you highlight and why?

Source 2: Data Analysis

The Great Pyramid at Giza	
Pyramid Statistics	
Height	Originally 481 feet high, the pyramid; currently stands at 450 feet. It is higher than the Statue of Liberty, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, or Big Ben in London.
Base	Each side is 756 feet. The construction was so accurate, there is only a 7.9-inch difference between the longest and shortest sides of the base. Almost ten football fields would fit into the base.
Accuracy	The blocks were shaped and placed so perfectly that even today it is not possible to squeeze a knife blade between them.
How Was the Great Pyramid at Giza Built?	
Skilled laborers	Some archaeologists estimate it took 4,000 skilled laborers at least 20 years.
Materials	The pyramid is comprised of approximately 2,300,000 limestone and granite blocks, each weighing an average of 2.5 tons, for a total weight of 5,750,000 tons.
Transport	Some of the stone blocks were transported by boat from quarries as far as 500 miles away.
Construction	Stones were hauled into place on sleds pulled by teams of at least 30 men, without the help of engines, pulleys, or even wheeled carts.
Simple tools	The builders had copper, bronze, wood, and stone tools—no iron or steel. The Great Pyramid was built using simple, hand-held tools such as chisels, mallets, rock pounders and polishers, and small wooden clamps.
Largest pieces of stone	The largest slabs of stone are above the King's Chamber, inside the Great Pyramid. They weigh about 50 tons each.
Ramp	Archaeologists suggest that a huge ramp was built, allowing stones to be hauled to the top. The ramp would have to be raised as the pyramid grew taller.
Notable Records	
Tallest man-made structure	The Great Pyramid was the tallest man-made structure for more than 3,800 years.
Visibility	The three pyramids at Giza are visible from space.
Alignment	The four sides of the Great Pyramid align almost exactly with true north, south, east, and west; without the magnetic compass, the builders probably used the stars to make their calculations.

Source 3: Travel Guide

✈ Visiting the

MaYaN PYRaMiDs

Where can I find the Mayan pyramids?

If you want to find a Mayan pyramid, go to Central America! The Maya were a Mesoamerican civilization that arose around 1500 BC. They built most of their pyramids between the 3rd and 9th century AD, all across eastern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

What do they look like?

While Mayan pyramids come in a variety of shapes and sizes, most are step pyramids;



The ruins at Chichen Itza, a city in the Yucatán built by the Mayans.

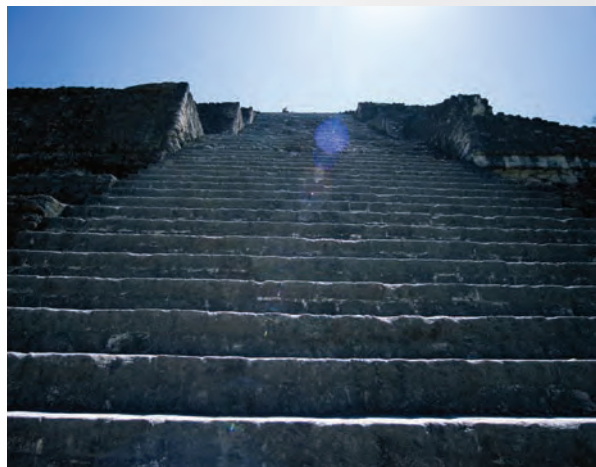


The entrance to the pyramid is at the very top, not the bottom.

the sides are not smooth but instead rise up in stages, like giant stairs. Often there are one or more actual staircases built on top of the steps, leading to a temple or sanctuary at the top.

Compared to the Egyptian pyramids at Giza, Mayan pyramids are mostly smaller, but steeper and more ornate. They were built of stone blocks held together with lime mortar. Some were covered with plaster and painted. The Maya were expert astronomers, so their pyramids were positioned and constructed to note important points in the calendar, such as the solstice and equinox.

The pyramids played an important part in the religious and community life of the people.



Looking up the terraces toward the top of the pyramid.

Mayan pyramids functioned as temples, whether or not they were also tombs of high-ranking officials. Only priests were allowed to climb the stairs to the top. There they performed religious rituals including sacrifices. The pyramids were often part of large complexes that included palaces, ball courts, plazas, and courtyards.

Sometimes a new pyramid was built on top of an old one. If you were to dig down inside a Mayan pyramid built in, say, 800 AD, you might find the ruins of one built hundreds of years earlier.

What else do I need to know for my visit?

Mayan civilization flourished between around 250 and 900 AD, at which point it went into a sudden and mysterious decline. Many cities and towns were abandoned and completely swallowed up by the jungle. Although the local people may have known about them—and although Spanish conquistadors had written about them—many of the most impressive Mayan archeological sites were not “rediscovered” by Europeans until 1839 and later. Even now there are Mayan pyramids hiding in the thick jungle, waiting to be “discovered” by an intrepid explorer.

Maybe that explorer will be you!

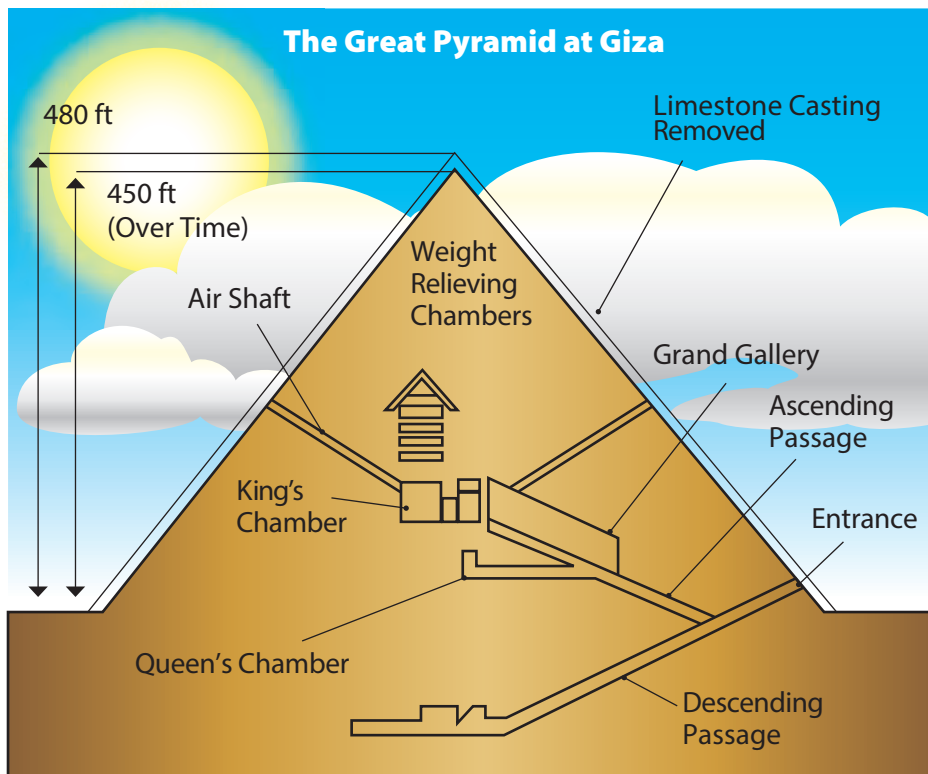
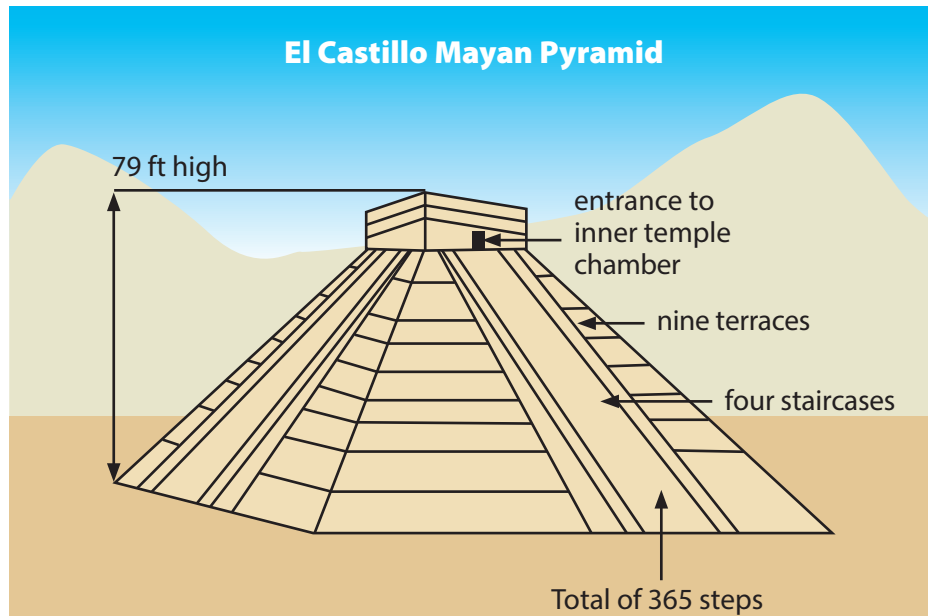


The Mayan Civilization

Discuss and Decide

Explain at least three differences between Mayan and Egyptian pyramids, and the reason for one of these differences. Cite text evidence in your discussion.

Source 4: Infographic



Discuss and Decide

What information about Egyptian pyramids does the infographic provide that the previous two sources do not?

Respond to Questions on Sources

The following questions will help you think about the sources you've read. Use your notes and refer to the sources as you answer the questions. Your answers will help you write your essay.

- 1 Why are the pyramids at Giza so astonishing?
 - a. They were made with such skill that they endure to this day.
 - b. The materials used to construct the pyramids were later used to build mosques and houses.
 - c. They were designed as monuments to the pharaohs.
 - d. They were the first pyramids ever constructed

- 2 Which words describe why the pharaohs built their pyramids?
 - a. "... designed to be permanently sealed after the bodies of the pharaohs were placed inside."
 - b. "... designed as monumental tombs for pharaohs ... of Egypt, to house their bodies after death and to help them achieve eternal life in the afterworld."
 - c. "The pyramids at Giza have been astonishing humanity for more than 4,500 years."
 - d. "... many were hauled away and used to build mosques and houses in the city of Cairo nearby."

- 3 Which of the reasons below might explain why the entrance to the Mayan pyramids was located at the top?
 - a. The Mayans did not have the skill to place entrances at the base of the pyramids.
 - b. The Mayans were afraid to visit the tombs below.
 - c. The Mayans constructed the pyramids to note important astronomical events.
 - d. The pyramids were built on top of one another, covering up entrances that once existed on the bottom.

- 4 Which of the following claims is *not* true?
- a. The pyramids at Giza were built by different pharaohs
 - b. The pyramids at Giza are visible from space.
 - c. The staircases on Mayan pyramids played a role in religious rituals.
 - d. The pyramids at Giza were less stunning when they were first built.
- 5 Which of the selections below best support the correct claim in Question 4?
- a. "Mayan pyramids functioned as temples, whether or not they were also tombs."
 - b. "King Khufu built the Great Pyramid (the biggest) first, around 2550 bc ..."
 - c. "Even in Ancient Egyptian times the Giza pyramids were antiques."
 - d. "... the faces of each pyramid were covered with a smooth layer of bright white limestone blocks that would have gleamed ..."
- 6 **Prose Constructed-Response** What do the graphic representations of the Mayan pyramid and the Great Pyramid at Giza help you better understand about pyramids? Explain.

- 7 **Prose Constructed-Response** What is the main idea of the article "The Pyramids of Giza"? be sure to state the main idea of the selection, as well as its supporting details. cite text evidence in your response.

Assignment

Write a comparison/contrast essay to answer the question: In what ways are the Mayan and Egyptian pyramids alike and different?

Planning and Prewriting

When you write a compare-and-contrast essay, first decide what main idea your reading brings to mind. For your essay, you should find facts that show similarities and differences between the two types of pyramids.



You may prefer to do your planning on your computer.

Decide on Key Points

Summarize the key points that you will include in your essay.

Characteristics	Mayan Pyramids	Egyptian Pyramids
1. Physical Appearance		
2. Purpose		
3. Construction Method		
4. Permanence		

Developing Your Topic

Before you write your essay, decide how you want to arrange your ideas. You can use one of the patterns of organizing described below or come up with your own arrangement—whatever works best for your subject. Your essay will begin with an introductory paragraph and end with a concluding paragraph.

Point-by-Point Discuss the first point of comparison or contrast for both topics, then move on to the second point. You read across the rows of this chart.

Point	Mayan Pyramids	Egyptian Pyramids	If you use this organizational structure, your essay will have a paragraph comparing and contrasting the physical appearance of Mayan and Egyptian pyramids followed by paragraphs comparing and contrasting the other points in your chart.
1. Physical appearance			
2. Purpose			
3. Construction method			
4. Permanence			

Subject-by-Subject Discuss all the points about one topic before moving on to the next. You read across the rows of this chart.

Selection	Physical Appearance	Purpose	Construction Method	Permanence
1. Mayan pyramids				
2. Egyptian pyramids				
If you use this organizational structure, your essay will have one or two paragraphs addressing all your points as they relate to Mayan pyramids, followed by one or two paragraphs addressing all your points as they relate to Egyptian pyramids.				

Finalize Your Plan

Use your responses and notes from previous pages to create a detailed plan for your essay. Fill in the chart below.

- ▶ Hook your audience with an interesting detail, question, or quotation.
- ▶ Identify what you will be comparing and contrasting and state your main idea.

- ▶ Choose the text structure:
Point-by-Point Compare and contrast both subjects, one point at a time; or
Subject-by-Subject Discuss all the points relating to the first wind event before moving on to the second.

- ▶ Include relevant facts, concrete details, and other evidence.

- ▶ Summarize the key points and restate your main idea.
- ▶ Include an insight that follows from and supports your main idea.

Introduction
Key Point 1
Key Point 2
Key Point 3
Conclusion

Draft Your Essay

- ▶ **Your Audience:** Your teacher
- ▶ **Your Purpose:** Demonstrate your understanding of the specific requirements of an informative essay with a comparison/contrast text structure.
- ▶ **Style:** Use a formal and objective tone.
- ▶ **Transitions:** Use words and phrases such as *for example* or *because* to create cohesion, or flow.

Revise

Revision Checklist: Self Evaluation



If you drafted your essay on the computer, you may wish to print it out so that you can more easily evaluate it.

Use the checklist below to guide your analysis.

Ask Yourself	Tips	Revision Strategies
1. Does the introduction grab the audience's attention?	Underline sentences in the introduction that engage readers.	Add an interesting question, fact, or observation to get the reader's attention.
2. Is each point of comparison supported by textual evidence, facts, and concrete details?	Circle textual evidence.	Add textual evidence if necessary.
3. Are appropriate and varied transitions used to connect and contrast ideas?	Place a checkmark next to each transitional word or phrase.	Add transitional words or phrases where needed to clarify the relationships between ideas.
4. Does the concluding section sum up key ideas? Does it give the audience something to think about?	Double underline the summary of key points in the concluding section. Underline the insight offered to readers.	Add an overarching view of key points or a final observation about the significance of the comparison and contrast.

Revision Checklist: Peer Review

Exchange your essay with a classmate, or read it aloud to your partner. As you read and comment on your classmate's essay, focus on how clearly the comparison and contrast have been supported by details. Help each other identify parts of the drafts that need strengthening, reworking, or even a complete new approach.

What To Look For	Notes for My Partner
1. Does the introduction grab the audience's attention?	
2. Is each point of comparison supported by textual evidence, facts, and concrete details?	
3. Are appropriate and varied transitions used to connect and contrast ideas?	
4. Does the concluding section sum up key ideas? Does it give the audience something to think about?	

Edit



Edit your essay to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.