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**Egyptian Pyramids**

BUILT ABOUT 4500 years ago, the 80 or so **pyramids** in Egypt are the oldest human made structures in the world. Of these, the famous three at **Giza**, near Cairo, are the most impressive. Their construction is an amazing feat of technology. Yet no one knows for sure how they were built. The ancient Egyptians had only simple tools made of stone, wood and bronze. They had no cranes, computers, rock cutters or heavy earthmoving equipment.

Pyramids and rock tunnels

From about 2500 BC, the **mummies** and treasures of important people such as pharaohs were usually entombed in pyramids. This practice lasted only about 500 years, though, because robbers were a major problem. Thereafter, tombs for such people were dug into mounds and cliffs in the Valley of the Kings. But even these were not completely safe. Over time, they were all raided, except one — the tomb of the pharaoh Tutankhamen.

The **Great Pyramid** at Giza, built around 2550 BC, was the tomb of the pharaoh Khufu. The other two were built for his son Khafre and grandson Menkure. The Great Pyramid, the biggest of the three, is close to 150 metres high and contains around 2 300 000 granite blocks, each of which weighs around 2.5 tonnes.

Pyramid mysteries

Some say that the technology of the pyramids is so astonishing that they must have been built by an alien intelligence. Another view is that those who built the pyramids at Giza, and the **Great Sphinx** that guards them, used knowledge and skills passed down from a very old, but highly advanced civilization that existed way before the **Old Kingdom** in Egypt.

Heavenly sails

One treasure the robbers missed in the Great Pyramid was a 43-metrelong boat, built to carry Chufa to the **afterlife**. It was not found until 1954. It had been broken into 1224 pieces before being packed into a rock cavity near the base of the pyramid. The cavity was so tightly sealed that when archaeologists broke into it they could still smell the cedar oil in the wood — after 4500 years!

**After you have read each paragraph, summarize it in one sentence!**