

# People of Ancient Egypt

Together, the ancient Egyptians formed an early society. A **society** is an organized group of people who follow the same set of rules and traditions.

Early Egyptian society was made up of several different **social classes**. A social class is a group of people all with the same level of importance.

At the very top of society stood the pharaoh. No one could match the ruler of all Egypt in importance.

Just below the pharaoh were the priests, government workers, and soldiers. Next were the scribes, who kept written records for the government.



EGYPTIAN CRAFTSPEOPLE

The scribes were followed by the merchants and skilled workers. Among the many different skilled workers were furniture makers, jewelers, painters, and stonemasons.

At the bottom of Egyptian society were the farmers. Farmers made up the largest social class. Most Egyptians made a living growing crops. It was the work of the farmers that kept the rest of society fed.

Some people living in ancient Egypt were not even thought of as a part of Egyptian society. These were the slaves. Most slaves were people who had been captured by the Egyptians during wars. Others were Egyptians who sold themselves into slavery to repay what they owed to others.

Men and women were treated more equally in Egyptian society than in many other early societies. Like Egyptian men, Egyptian women could own property and run businesses. Most Egyptian women spent much of their time caring for their home and their children.

## Review

### CHECK UNDERSTANDING

1. What kind of work did most people in Egypt do?
2. Who was at the top of Egyptian society?

### THINK CRITICALLY

3. Why do you think scribes held a fairly high place in Egyptian society?

### SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

**Diagram Activity** Some people think of ancient Egyptian society as being like a pyramid. Think about why this might be so. Then, make a triangle-shaped diagram that shows the different classes of Egyptian society.