II) EGYPTIAN SOCIETY

Ancient Egypt had three main social classes--upper, middle, and lower. The upper class consisted of the royal family, rich landowners, government officials, important priests and army officers, and doctors. The middle class was made up chiefly of merchants, manufacturers, and artisans. The lower class, the largest class by far, consisted of unskilled labourers. Most of them worked on farms. Prisoners captured in foreign wars became slaves and formed a separate class.

Ancient Egypt's class system was not rigid. People in the lower or middle class could move to a higher position. They improved their status mainly through marriage or success in their jobs. Even slaves had rights. They could own personal items, get married, and inherit land. They could also be given their freedom.

The society was dominated by men. The man was the head of the family, but women had extensive rights, and could own and inherit property and participate in trade. Women could even divorce their husbands.

1) Read the text and complete the pyramid of the Egyptian social classes below.
Four important pharaohs

Khufu

Khufu was a Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt's Old Kingdom. He reigned from around 2589 BC to 2566 BC. Khufu is perhaps better known by his Greek name, Cheops. He was the builder of the Great Pyramid of Giza, the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World still standing. His Great Pyramid at Giza marks the climax in pyramid building in respect to both size and quality of construction.

Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut, the fifth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, is generally regarded by Egyptologists as one of the most successful female pharaohs. During her fifteen year reign (c.1473-1458 BC) she initiated a number of impressive building projects, including her superb funerary temple at Deir el-Bahari. One of the most spectacular architectural achievements of the ancient world, Hatshepsut's temple was decorated with numerous statues portraying her as a sphinx.

Tutankhamen

Tutankhamen ruled over ancient Egypt in the 14th century BC. He took the throne at a young age and died ten years later, at the age of about 18. Tutankhamen was buried in the Valley of the Kings in southern Egypt. His tomb remained undiscovered for thousands of years. In 1922 Howard Carter, a British archaeologist, located the tomb. Tutankhamun is famous because he is the only pharaoh whose tomb was found with nearly everything he was buried with. For this reason Tutankhamen became better known than other pharaohs who had lived longer and were more important in the history of Egypt.

Ramesses II

Ramesses (also known as Ramesses the Great) reigned from 1290 BC to 1224 BC. He ruled for a total of 66 years, becoming pharaoh at the age of 24 and dying in his 90th year. The most notable incident of his reign was the battle of Kadesh. It was one of the largest chariot battles ever fought, involving perhaps 5,000 chariots. Although Ramesses could not defeat his enemies in this battle he glorified his own part in it on numerous monuments. He constructed many impressive monuments such as Abu Simbel, and more statues of him exist than of any other Egyptian pharaoh.
1) Read the texts on the preceding page and write the name of the correct pharaoh into the empty spaces.

a) ________ is unusual as she was a female pharaoh, a rare occurrence in Egyptian history.

b) ________’s fame is assured by the tomb he built for himself: the Great Pyramid of Giza.

c) ________ fought the battle of Kadesh and build many monuments to magnify his name.

d) ________ is famous mainly for the treasures found in his tomb in the 20th century.

2) Match the texts with the correct picture.

I)  

II)  

III)  

IV)  