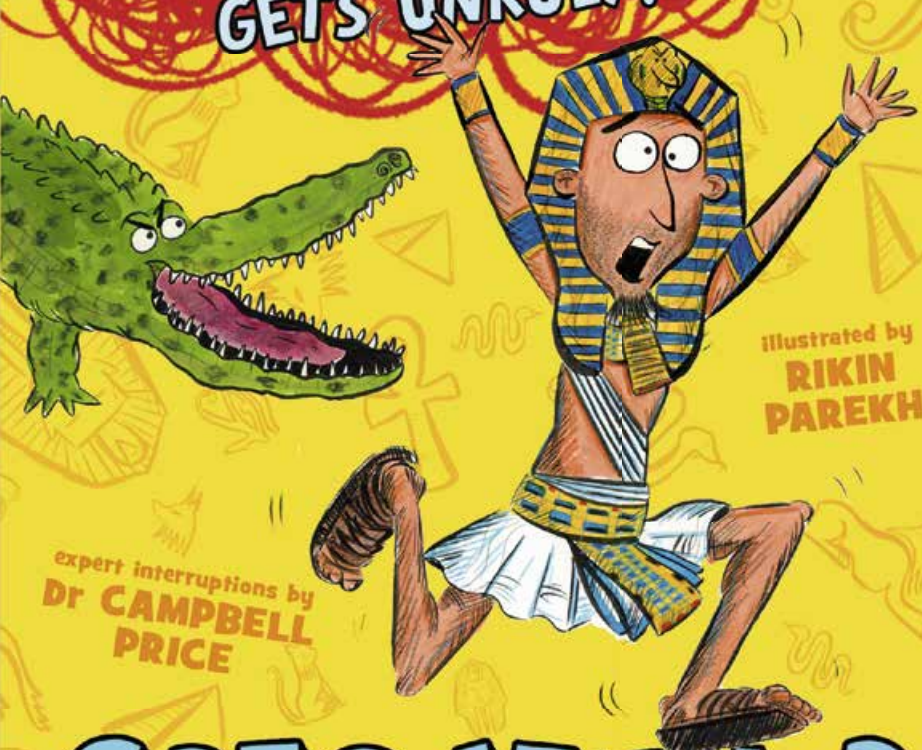
TOTALLY CHAOTIC HISTORY

ANCIENT EGYPT GETS UNRULY!



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GREG JENNER

with Dr CAMPBELL PRICE

illustrated by RIKIN PAREKH

WALKER BOOKS

1

WELCOME TO ANCIENT EGYPT!

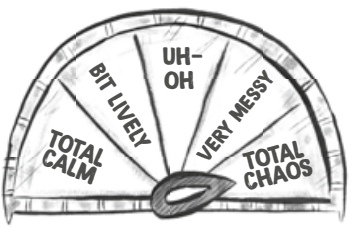
I guess you picked up this book because you like the sound of ancient Egypt? Maybe you want to know how to build a pyramid or make a mummy, or you'd like to meet some Egyptian gods and goddesses. Well, you're in luck – that's all in this book! But this isn't going to be a dull account of boring dates and dusty old names. Nope! Because this book is really about …

TOTAL CHAOS!!!

(… and also ancient Egypt)

Hello! I'm Greg. I'm a public historian, and my job is to convince you that history is thrilling! To do that, I'm going to take you on a rollicking, roller coaster race through the ENTIRE story of ancient Egypt, from its earliest beginnings to its collapse with Cleopatra. It'll be a wild ride, so maybe bring snacks. (I love snacks!)

As we're zooming along, keep an eye out for my trusty chaos meter. It will tell you whether we're in a period of calm, or if we're heading for TOTAL CHAOS!



Oh, and we won't be on this journey alone. There are lots of myths about ancient Egypt, so we'll need an expert to figure out what is most likely to have happened! Experts who study ancient Egypt are called Egyptologists, and I know the perfect one to help us. Please meet my super clever co-author, Dr Campbell Price, who is in charge of the Egyptology collections at Manchester Museum.

If Campbell presses his accuracy alarm, it might be because previous "facts" have since been proven dodgy, or a rival theory may have been suggested. In fact, a group of historians is called an argumentation – we love to disagree!

I'll also scribble in the margins when we get to my fave bits!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?!

So, are you ready to get totally chaotic? Events in ancient Egypt may seem neat and obvious when we look back now, but no one living through them had any idea what was going to happen next! Ancient Egyptians didn't know when armies were about to invade, or powerful pharaohs were about to drop dead, or even if giant robot spiders were about to attack with space lasers. (OK, fine, maybe that last one didn't happen!)

Ancient Egyptians couldn't predict that their amazing civilization would last for 3,000 years, just like I have no idea who the prime minister will be in five years' time, or if my favourite football team will ever win a trophy again (I'm still waiting after sixteen miserable years!). And these Egyptians certainly wouldn't have called themselves ancient – they felt like MODERN Egyptians!

So hold on tight, because in this book we're going to imagine we're among the Egyptians, and experience every twist and turn of the ancient world with them!

This is Seshat, goddess of counting!

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW ANCIENT EGYPT?

Right, let's start with a question – what do you think of when I say ancient Egypt? Maybe you're imagining this…

Hey, you know what? None of that is wrong! But the story of ancient Egypt is waaaaaaaaay messier than just mummies, masks, monuments, pyramids, pharaohs and papyrus. It is the story of millions of people, over 3,000 years.

And even though the stuff in the picture is super famous to us now, did you know that…

- Pyramids were only built in the first half of ancient Egyptian history, then they were totally replaced by underground tombs!
- We have millions of papyrus documents, but most of these were written right at the end of ancient Egyptian history!
- Mummification happened throughout, but HOW it was done changed over time!
- Not all Egyptian pharaohs were from Egypt!

Chaotic, right? Basically we've got loads to smash through, and after we're done, you'll never see ancient Egypt in the same way again. Before we get started, let's take a look at a timeline of some of the ancient Egyptian highlights we'll be exploring, and just a few of the hundreds of pharaohs. You'll see it's divided up into the official time periods Egyptologists like Campbell use, and starts over 6,300 years ago…

There were at least 170, belonging to 30 groups called DYNASTIES!

TIMELINE OF

PREDYNASTIC ERA

(c.4300–3000 BCE)

In the Nile valley in north-east Africa, three rival kingdoms scrap for power. The writing system of hieroglyphs is developed.

EARLY DYNASTIC

(c.3000–2686 BCE)

King Narmer becomes the first pharaoh of all Egypt, starting the 1st dynasty. Thinis is the first capital city (it is now lost!), but it's quickly replaced by Narmer's new city called Memphis.

NEW KINGDOM

(c.1550–1069 BCE)

A golden age of famous and powerful pharaohs. They include Hatshepsut (18th dynasty), Akhenaten (18th dynasty), who tries to introduce a new religion with only one god, Tutankhamun (18th dynasty), who is buried in a borrowed tomb, Ramesses the Great (19th dynasty) and Ramesses III (20th dynasty), who gets murdered!

THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

(c.1069–664 BCE)

EVEN MORE political chaos!!! Assyria violently conquers Egypt, destroying major cities and capturing members of the royal family.

LATE PERIOD

(664–332 BCE)

Egypt faces more invasions. Greek historian Herodotus writes about Egypt – he misunderstands lots of things, but he's still an important source.

MACEDONIAN PERIOD

(332–305 BCE)

A new conqueror arrives: Alexander the Great of Macedon (northern Greece) conquers Egypt.

ANCIENT EGYPT

OLD KINGDOM

(c.2686–2161 BCE)

Here come the pyramids! The Step Pyramid is built by Imhotep (possibly) for Pharaoh Djoser (3rd dynasty). The Great Pyramid of Giza is built for Pharaoh Khufu (4th dynasty). The Great Sphinx of Giza is built for Pharaoh Khafre (4th dynasty).

FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

(c.2161–2055 BCE)

Everything goes wrong! The pharaohs no longer rule over all of Egypt, and people starve because the crops don't grow. We should probably call this THE DISASTER YEARS!

MIDDLE KINGDOM

(c.2055–1650 BCE)

Everything calms down a bit. Pyramids are built by workers kept in the town of Hetep-Senwosret. Spells known as the "Book of the Dead" are first written on coffins.

SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

(c.1650–1550 BCE)

More chaos with a weirdly boring name! The Hyksos people (from the Middle East) conquer Egypt. But the Hyksos pharaohs later lose power.

PTOLEMAIC DYNASTY

(305–30 BCE)

Macedonian general Ptolemy becomes the first of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt. But this is the final dynasty: when Cleopatra VII dies she is the last of all the pharaohs ever!

ROMAN

(30 BCE–395 CE)

Egypt becomes a part of the Roman Empire.

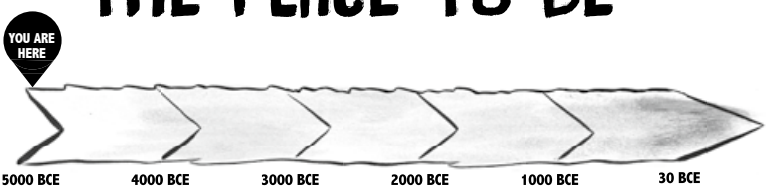
It all looks pretty straightforward in a neat timeline, right? Unfortunately the reality is a teensy bit more messy! So, if you're ready, let's jump head first into the Nile, and soak up some Egyptian history!

Ancient Egyptians thought of time as both a set of cycles and as one super-long bendy snake stretching eternally into the future!

Where it all began: Predynastic Egypt – meaning before the pharaohs.

2

THE NILE IS THE PLACE TO BE



Let's start right back at the beginning, 7,000 years ago, in a time before the pharaohs, the pyramids and everything else recognizably Egyptian. We're in a fertile land in North Africa, with heavy summer rains (called monsoons) filling up the lakes and providing fresh water for drinking wells. People here have learned to farm crops, build villages and keep animals for food and milk. At a place called Nabta Playa, they have built the oldest stone circle in the world (much older than Stonehenge!) and they worship and sacrifice sacred bulls. It's all going rather well.

But then **DISASTER STRIKES!**

The rains stop falling, and the land quickly dries out. Imagine a vast, hot, dry desert – its golden sands warm

beneath your feet, and the heat shimmering off the reddish earth. There is no water anywhere; whatever you plant fails to grow and your cows are thirsty and exhausted. Oh, and watch out for stinging scorpions! Now imagine trying to live in this desert – it's tricky, right? So what does everyone do?

Some people become wandering nomads, living in the Arabian and Western deserts, but others head off in search of new lands to settle. Eventually they bump into their salvation. Or rather they TUMBLE head first into it, because they've found a MASSIVE river: the Nile. And it's this discovery that leads to the start of Egypt as we know it!

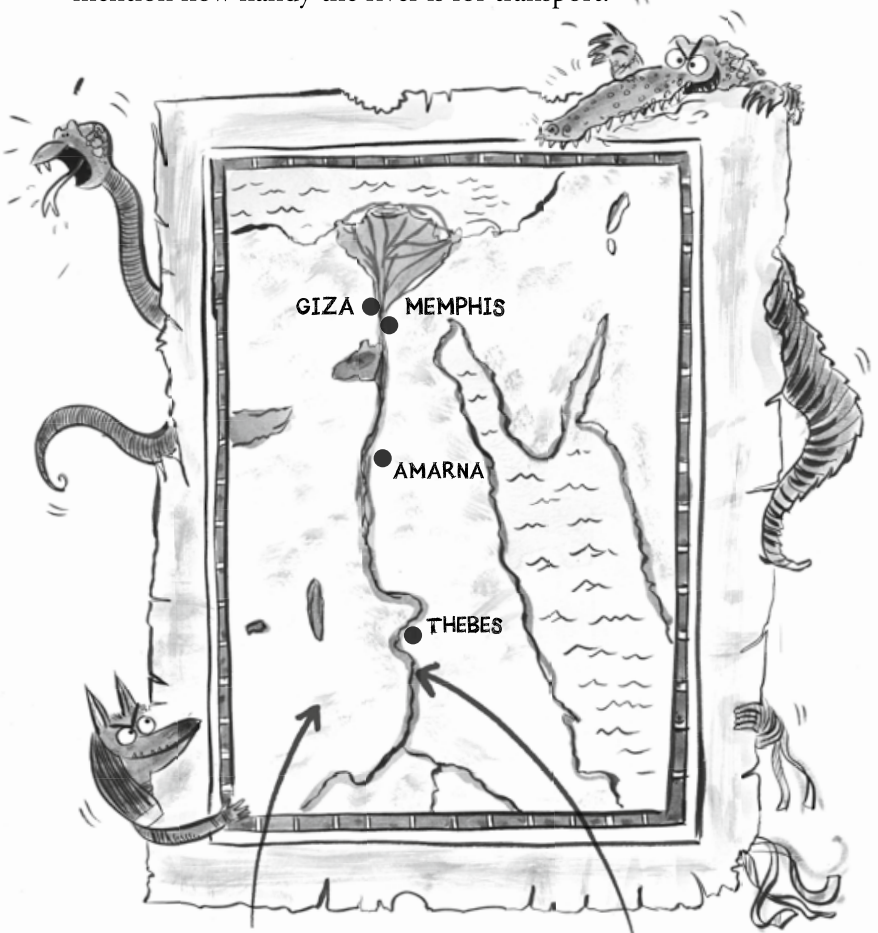
A VERY BIG RIVER

How massive are we talking, here? Well, the Nile is possibly the longest river on the planet! Annoyingly, some modern scientists are trying to ruin my fun by saying the Amazon (in South America) is slightly longer, but I don't care… I mean, **DOES THIS LOOK LIKE A BOOK ABOUT AQUATIC MEASURING TECHNIQUES TO YOU??!!**

Anyway, the Nile is an astonishing 6,648 kilometres in length and snakes its way through the centre of Egypt, and then fans out into a wide delta where it meets the sea. The Nile actually draws water from two separate branches: the Blue Nile and the White Nile. Oh, and other smaller tributaries, and… **AARGH! WE'RE DOING RIVER SCIENCE AGAIN!**

Greek historian Herodotus said the only reason Egypt could exist was thanks to the "gift of the Nile".

Quick, let's look at a map! See how all the ancient cities hover so close to the Nile's banks, but then you get nothing for thousands of miles either side? That's because of the dark fertile soil there that's very useful – not to mention how handy the river is for transport.



Ancient Egyptians called these barren deserts Deshret ("the Red Land").

Ancient Egyptians called this Kemet ("the Black Land").

The Nile was called Iteru in the ancient Egyptian language.

NILE = LIFE

Of course, you can't farm crops in the middle of a river, can you? Where would you plant stuff – crammed into hippo bums? Balanced on crocodile backs? Yeah, good luck with that! No, you need soil for plants to grow. And those wandering Egyptians who settle along the river discover the Nile's yearly gift is to swell up, thanks to super-heavy rains in the highlands of Ethiopia (6,500 kilometres away!), so that – from July until October, every year – the Nile gushes out onto the nearby farmland, leaving behind the rich soil of Kemet.

This means ancient Egyptians don't keep four seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter like we do. They divide their calendar into three seasons of four months: akhet (flood), peret (growing) and shemu (harvest).

Because this yearly flood keeps everyone alive, the Nile itself is sacred. Now, the Egyptians worship lots of gods and goddesses (don't worry, we'll get to them soon!), and anyone who drowns in the Nile or is chomped by a Nile crocodile gets an extra special mummification and becomes a mini god. But mainly it's the yearly flood that is worshipped through the god Hapy. Let's meet them!

FACT FILE: HAPY

Hapy is a blue-skinned figure with a long wig and nice beard, who is often shown offering drinks and food. Hapy is also drawn with a round belly, so is thought to maybe be a pregnant god who combines male and female elements to create new life. Hapy is usually depicted with a papyrus plant on their head, with crocs and frogs hanging out near by. I guess water gods need watery pals!

So for maximum happiness Egyptians need maximum Hapy! This god's sacred floodwaters bring life … but not every year. The Nile can bring chaos! If the water level is too low, not enough land is fertilized, and you get **STARVATION AND FAMINE!** But if the flood levels go too high, then the water doesn't drain away fast enough and the crops don't grow, and then you get **STARVATION AND FAMINE!**

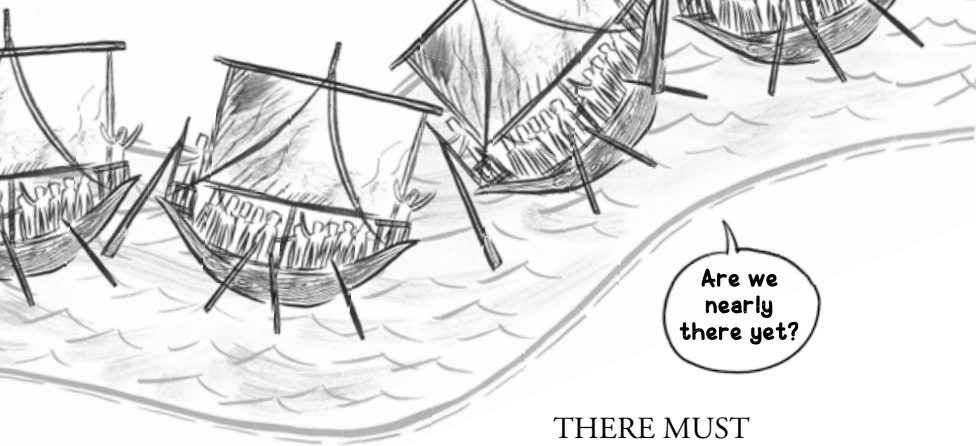
Yes, water is a matter of life and death – yikes! You can see why ancient Egyptian priests obsessively measure the river's height, using little marks on the walls called nilometers (a bit like when grown-ups stand you against a wall and draw a pencil mark to see how much you've grown!).

ROW YOUR BOAT

The Nile isn't just helpful for farming. If you want to get anywhere as a civilization, you need to be able to GET places – that means using the river to travel. The Nile is like a huge blue highway connecting the country. Egyptians don't use wheeled vehicles as much as other ancient societies; they're more into boats! Boats for fishing, boats for transporting stuff, boats for leisure… Even in death, rich Egyptians have model boats in their tombs or boat pictures on the walls. It's fascina—

In art, boats shown with their sails up are travelling south and boats with oars are going north!

OH NO, I TOTALLY FORGOT! We've got to get to the first pharaoh next, but that's 2,000 years away! How do I squeeze all that history into only half a page?! AARGH! DON'T PANIC, GREG!



THERE MUST BE A WAY TO... Aha, yes! I just found a handy fast-forward button over here! I'll pop it on 10x speed to get us to the next bit...

You'll never fit it all in, Greg!

FAST-FORWARD BUTTON

When people settle on the banks of the Nile, 7,000 years ago, there are no kings! It's just small villages, which grow into towns, and people learn new crafts (pottery, carpentry, beer-brewing, metal-working), and they build bigger buildings for worship, and the rich get richer and more powerful, until you end up with local rulers in charge of cities, and they convince their people to make weapons, and go and conquer nearby cities, so you get lots of small kingdoms, and they fight each other, and eventually you end up with three big kingdoms tussling it out (we think maybe they're called the Tjeni, Nubt and Nekhen), and eventually the Tjeni triumph, and their king becomes the first ever pharaoh of all Egypt. Oh, and his name is Narmer. Done!

Phew, I think we got away with it – onwards! It's time to meet our first pharaoh!

Hold on tight, history is about to get

TOTALLY CHAOTIC!

Think you know **ANCIENT EGYPT?** Think again!

Jump onboard for a **CHAOTIC JOURNEY** through history and discover how to make a mummy, meet mighty gods and even solve a pharaoh's murder.

Historian Greg Jenner takes you on a **WHIRLWIND RIDE** from ancient Egypt's brilliant beginning to its epic ending ... you'll never believe what happens next!

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