

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

Modern Marvels

Pyramids: Majesty and Mystery

This episode of *Modern Marvels* explores the ancient mystery, beauty and grandeur of the great pyramids. Marvels of architecture and design, pyramids have graced the deserts of Egypt and the lands of South America for centuries. Yet, they remain an enigma to modern historians and architects. How were these ancient peoples able to build such perfect examples of symmetry and geometry without any of the modern machines or technology available to later generations? *Pyramids: Majesty and Mystery* would be useful for classes on World History, Ancient History, Ancient Civilization and Cultures, Geometry and Science. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

- [Aesthetic](#)
- [Coaxed](#)
- [Conception](#)
- [Geometric](#)
- [Insignificant](#)
- [Inspiration](#)
- [Juxtaposition](#)
- [Majesty](#)
- [Masonry](#)
- [Primordial](#)
- [Relics](#)
- [Sarcophagus](#)
- [Transparent](#)
- [Urbane](#)

Discussion Questions

1. The pyramid shape has been used for everything from burial sites to gambling halls. Why is this shape so alluring? Why are people so drawn to this complex, yet amazingly simple design?
2. Discuss some of the uses for ancient pyramids in different parts of the ancient world.
3. Pyramids are not only a design of the past; they are designs of the present and the future. How does usage for modern day pyramids differ from pyramids of the past? How might the pyramids of tomorrow be used differently?
4. Designers of Las Vegas's Luxor Hotel choose a pyramid-shaped design. Why do you think the designers of this hotel choose a pyramid? What does the pyramid symbolize?
5. In 1988, construction of the pyramid in the courtyard of the Louvre Museum was completed. Why was the construction of this pyramid so controversial?
6. The TransAmerica building in San Francisco is the most recognizable building in that city's skyline. But when the TransAmerica pyramid building was first designed and constructed, it generated controversy. Why was this building controversial? How did events at the time of the building's construction contribute to the controversy?
7. Discuss some of the advantages of pyramid shaped buildings.
8. Why did Egyptians build complex tombs for their leaders? How do some of our monuments reflect the same type of veneration for our leaders?

Extended Activities

1. Design a modern pyramid building.