

Abydos

On land | Egypt | 3200 BCE-400 CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

Abydos has a stone wall listing 76 kings of Egypt, like a giant history class carved in rock.

Read the story

Abydos is one of the oldest holy places in Egypt. More than 5,000 years ago, Egypt's very first kings were buried here, before anyone built a pyramid. Later, Egyptians came to believe that the god Osiris was buried at Abydos, so it became the most sacred place in the land to be remembered after death.

Every year, people came for a big festival that acted out the story of Osiris. Many families set up small stone markers called stelae here so their loved ones could join in forever, even if they were buried far away.

Around 1290 BCE, Pharaoh Seti I built a beautiful temple here, and his son Ramesses II finished it. Inside is the famous King List, a carved row of 76 royal names. It helped modern historians put Egypt's rulers in order. Abydos stayed holy for thousands of years, until the old religion faded under Roman and Christian rule.

How it ended

Abydos was never wiped out in one disaster. As Egypt came under Roman rule and later became Christian, temples to the old gods closed. Sand drifted in, people moved away, and the great temples sat quietly until archaeologists cleared them.

Key words

- stela: a stone slab carved with words or pictures, often to remember someone
- pilgrim: a person who travels to a holy place
- afterlife: a life that some people believe comes after death

Wow facts

- Scientists found 14 wooden boats buried in the desert at Abydos, about 5,000 years old, some of the oldest planked boats ever found.
- The Seti I temple has some of the finest painted carvings in all of Egypt, and many still show their colors.
- Abydos has a strange underground building called the Osireion, which sometimes fills with water.

Talk about it

1. If you made a list of the most important leaders of your country, who would be on it?

2. Why do you think so many people wanted to be remembered at Abydos?

Try this

Draw a map of Abydos as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Which god was Abydos most connected to?
 - A. Ra
 - B. Osiris
 - C. Anubis
 - D. Thoth
2. What does the Abydos King List show?
 - A. Names of 76 kings
 - B. A map of the Nile
 - C. A recipe for bread
 - D. Star charts
3. Which pharaoh built the famous temple at Abydos?
 - A. Khufu
 - B. Tutankhamun
 - C. Seti I
 - D. Cleopatra

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/abydos/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. B. Egyptians believed Osiris, god of the afterlife, was buried at Abydos.
2. A. It is a carved row of 76 royal names in the Temple of Seti I.
3. C. Seti I built it, and his son Ramesses II finished it.