

## Story

“Today’s lesson is going to start with a story about our friends the Egyptians. Now let’s remember that a long time ago, around 10,000-5000 years ago the climate of a large span of northern Africa became desiccated. An ecosystem reliant on lush vegetation was ended, as the water dried up. The Sahara desert formed. This forced the hunters and gathers of the region to move eastwards towards where water flowed. The place where water flowed was a very large river. It is a famous river, called the Nile and it seemed a miracle to them. This is a river running thousands of miles through arid land and that gushes over it’s banks between July and October, the driest time of the year!

They began to settle along it’s banks especially near the delta where the river separates into the Mediterranean. They learned to count on the rivers regularity, planning ahead by working together to store the surplus water for when the land did not produce because it lacked water. This took a community effort, so soon they developed a central organization with a distinct hierarchical structure. They had one ruler at the top known as the Pharaoh and he was divine in status. He ruled with the help and support of all the lower social levels. There were the many illiterate peasants who tilled the floodplain of the Nile, artisans responsible for creating the handiwork, and priests and scribes who devised the picture-writing script known as hieroglyphics (meaning ‘holy engravings). Everyone in Egypt belonged to the Pharaoh.

The Egyptian artisans responsible for creating the handiwork we enjoy today were not at liberty to create what they wanted. Their undertakings were commissioned under a preordained set of rules and specifications. There was no value in original art work.

If we look at the vast images of the human body found in the many tombs and building in Egypt we immediately notice how remarkably alike the bodies are. Their proportions look identical, their repertoire of movement strictly limited. Heads are in profile, but with eyes are shown front-on. Shoulders are frontal too, making arms, hands and fingers fully visible. Backsides, legs and feet are all depicted sideways. So each body is a predictable group of distinctive parts. This gives an orderly overall effect. The bodies follow a preconceived arrangement, there are no signs of individuality among the thousands of humans depicted.

What was discovered in an unfinished burial site was a grid that covered the wall with a human body partial draw within the grid. The lines were fine red lines that had been applied by dipping a length of string in red paint and stretching it taut on the tomb wall. By snapping the string a straight line was left. Their purpose was clear enough, they were guide lines to draw the human body! The grid can be respectively tried for size wherever images of the body are and a similar pattern emerges. All figures are 19 squares tall, the face is two squares, ten squares are allowed for the neck to the knees and six from the knees to the sole of the feet. They used this tool of a grid to draw the same proportioned human for thousands of years!





