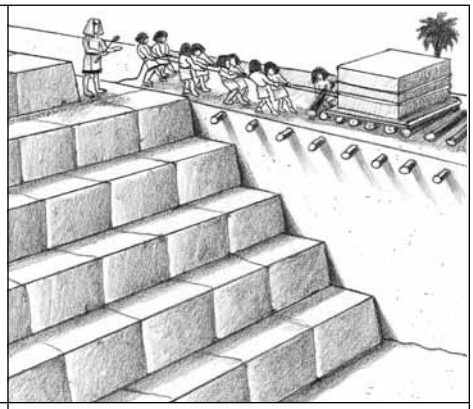
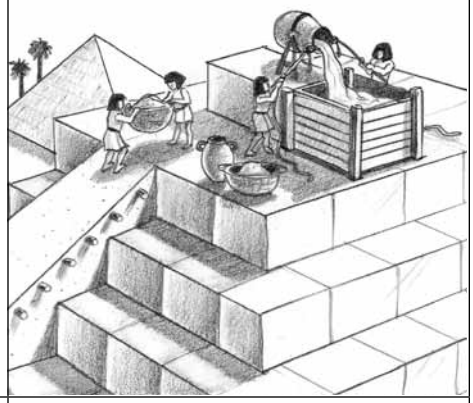
How Was the Great Pyramid Built?

For centuries, people have wondered how the ancient Egyptians were able to build the Great Pyramid. Remember, the Great Pyramid is over 450 feet tall, and it is constructed of more than 2 million huge blocks, many of which weigh 3 tons or more. And yet most scientists agree that it was likely built in just 20 years.

There have been several hypotheses put forth to explain how the Great Pyramid was built.

Which hypothesis do you think best explains how the Great Pyramid was built? Be prepared to explain why you made this choice.

Hypothesis #1: Ancient Egyptians cut the huge stone blocks from the earth and dragged the blocks to the site of the pyramid. At the site, the blocks were pulled up a long, sloping ramp and then pushed into position on the pyramid.	
Hypothesis #2: Egyptians used local materials to create a cementlike substance, which workers carried up the pyramid. The cement was poured into a mold and mixed with water to form the huge blocks. These molds were placed directly on the pyramid so that when the mixture dried and the mold was removed, the block sat perfectly in place.	
Hypothesis #3: Extraterrestrials either built the Great Pyramid or gave technical knowledge to the ancient Egyptians for building it.	

What Happened to the Great Temple of Ramses II?

The Great Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel was one of the most incredible architectural achievements of the New Kingdom. Probably the most outstanding features of the temple are the four enormous statues of Ramses, some of which are more than six stories tall. This monument survived for over 3,000 years.

Then, in the 1940s, the Egyptian government decided to build a new dam on the Nile River to generate electricity. Once the dam was built, water would back up behind the dam and bury the temple under hundreds of feet of water. The Egyptian government considered several different options for dealing with this problem.

- **Option A:** Abandon the project and do without the electricity that would have been provided to the Egyptian people.
- **Option B:** Find a new location for the dam, one that would not threaten to flood the Great Temple.
- **Option C:** Continue with the project, even if it meant flooding the Great Temple.
- **Option D:** Cut the entire temple away from the cliff side and move it to a higher location that would not be in the flood zone created by the dam.

Which option would you have recommended to the Egyptian government and why?

Writing a Letter About Your Tour of Ancient Egypt

On a separate sheet of paper, write a letter to a friend or relative about your imaginary tour of ancient Egyptian monuments. Use your Reading Notes to help you complete the letter. Be sure to use correct grammar and spelling. Your letter must include these features:

- A proper greeting.
- A short paragraph that describes where you traveled, what you did, and the type of transportation you used.
- Two paragraphs, each describing a different place on the tour. Each paragraph should explain at least one essential and interesting thing you learned about that monument, and at least one relevant detail about the pharaoh who had built it.
- A proper closing.
- At least two "photos" taken from your tour. These can be original drawings or copies of photographs from books or from the Internet. Make sure that they relate to what you wrote about in your letter. Write a caption for each image and tell where you found it.
- The use of three or more of the following terms in your letter: *pharaohs, Khufu, Senusret I, Hatshepsut, Ramses II.*

As you make sure that

ideas in your letter are expressed clearly so the reader will understand them.

- each paragraph states a main idea and includes supporting details.
- your paragraphs use transitions—such as *At the next site, or After visiting the Great Pyramid*—to ensure a logical flow from one to the next.