

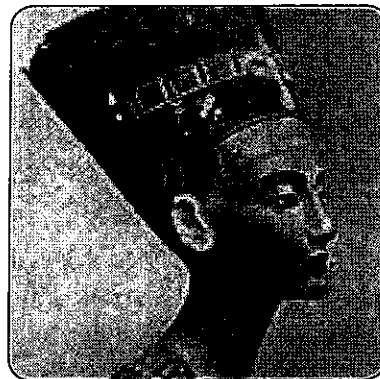
Nefertiti

c. 1372-1350 BC



HOW SHE AFFECTED THE REGION

Nefertiti is believed by many to have been one of the most beautiful women of ancient Egypt. Her influence over her husband Akhenaton is believed to have played a major role in the changes brought about during his reign.



As you read the biography below, think about how Nefertiti's beauty may have helped her become an important figure in Egyptian society.

Nefertiti was the wife of the Pharaoh Akhenaton, who ruled during Egypt's eighteenth dynasty. Nefertiti's name means "the beautiful woman has come." While little is known about the famous queen, archaeologists studying Egyptian ruins have found several references to Nefertiti. In fact, her image often appears alongside the images of the pharaohs.

Nefertiti practiced **monotheism**, the belief in one god. She believed in the god Aton, an Egyptian sun god. During this time, most Egyptians worshipped several gods. Some scholars believe that Nefertiti influenced her husband, Akhenaton, in his devotion to Aton.

Akhenaton declared that Egypt should stop worshipping all their different gods and pray only to Aton. Several large temples were built for this new religion. Religious ceremonies were conducted in the temples. Nefertiti often led these rituals. This was uncommon for a woman during that era. Before Nefertiti, even the Egyptian queens had not been allowed to take part in these ceremonies.

VOCABULARY

monotheism belief in just one god

Archaeologists have found many clues about Nefertiti's life among the ruins of ancient Egypt. Nefertiti's name was changed many times, but each time her name contained some reference to her beauty.

Nefertiti and Akhenaton had six daughters. A relief carving has been found that shows the royal couple with their children. Unlike previous rulers, Akhenaton and Nefertiti allowed artists to depict them realistically, showing them as ordinary people.

Nefertiti is not mentioned in historical records following 1360 BC. Some scholars believe that Nefertiti was banished from Egypt when she and Akhenaton had an argument over religion. Others think that she may have just died. It is believed that one of Nefertiti's daughters replaced her as queen.

While most of Nefertiti's life remains a mystery, her beauty is legendary, and Egyptians fondly remembered her. While most of the monuments and references to Akhenaton were destroyed after his reign, several statues and likenesses of Nefertiti have survived.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Draw Conclusions Why might Nefertiti's beauty have given her influence and importance?

2. Evaluate How do you think the people of Egypt felt when Akhenaton and Nefertiti demanded that people worship only one god? Provide reasons or examples to support your point of view.

ACTIVITY

Nefertiti's tomb has not yet been found. Write an epitaph that the people of Egypt might have inscribed on Nefertiti's tomb.