H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Scott Steadman. *The Egyptian News.* Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 1997. 32 pp. $15.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-56402-873-0.

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This colourful and engaging book presents an overview of Egyptian history and culture from 3000 B.C. to 1100 B.C. This time period saw the earliest stages of Egyptian civilization (best known for pyramids), foreign rule under the Hyksos and the flourishing of its Empire in the New Kingdom. For the most part, Ancient Egypt is presented to the young reader in the form of simplified, illustrated history books. This book has used the novel approach of a newspaper-style format, giving the information an immediacy and accessibility history books don't usually have. An 11-year-old friend of mine sat and read it two hours straight, asked questions about it later, and mentioned that a classmate of his had used it to write a report for school. This last point is not surprising, given the incredible amount of information the author has managed to get into thirty-two pages.

The book is divided into two sections. The first being "The News" in which major events in Egyptian history are presented as news stories. The cover-story ("Boy-King Murdered") leads the reader in to the story of Tutankhamun's death and burial on p. 7 ("Boy-King Dies"), placed alongside other New Kingdom stories on Hatshepsut ("Queen Rocks Nation") and Akhenaten ("Crazy King Causes Chaos"). Other happenings dealt with are the expulsion of the Hyksos ("Hyksos Hammered") and the attempted assassination of Ramesses III ("Murder Foiled"). The information is presented in short, easy to read sections with apt illustrations, (humorous cartoons, detailed paintings or maps). The second section, "Lifestyle," presents aspects of Egyptian culture as articles on economy (including tax and trade), farming, marriage and family life, work, fashion, and crafts, in addition to summaries of religion, building, and science. All the topics are framed as issues people actually had to deal with and prompt the reader the think about them in terms of their own experience. The pyramids are dealt with in both sections, with Zoser's Step Pyramid presented as a startling innovation in the first news story, and further on, an item on the logistics of building a pyramid on p. 20, where we are prompted to think of finding 100,000 bunches of onions and 200,000 loaves of bread everyday to feed the workers!

There are spoof advertisements throughout the book reinforcing information in the articles, such as job offers, advertisements for boat-builders, scribes, pots, and amulets and notices of houses for sale.

This book is packed with information, is engagingly written and skillfully presented. It is illustrated throughout with colourful paintings, maps, and humorous cartoons which enhance the text. It covers many aspects of Egyptian culture and history and includes accurate information on trade, economy, home life, religion and important historical events. At $15.99 this book is a value for the money and I heartily recommend it!

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