Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egyptian society was divided into a number of social classes. At the top, below the pharaoh, were nobles and priests. Next were government officials and soldiers, followed by scribes (clerks), artisans, and merchants. The lowest class consisted of peasants, who were mostly farmers. At the bottom of the social order were thousands of slaves obtained in war. Despite these clear-cut divisions, it was possible for people at all levels to move from one class to another.

Family life was important to the ancient Egyptians. Women were respected in their roles as wives and mothers, and children were treasured and pampered. Egyptian women also enjoyed more individual rights than women in other ancient societies. They could own businesses and buy and sell property.

Religion was also important to the ancient Egyptians. They worshiped the sun and other forces of nature. They were among the first people to believe in life after death. They attempted to preserve bodies for the afterlife through a process known as mummification. Pharaohs built huge pyramids as special tombs where they believed their spirits could travel undisturbed to the next world.

In addition, the ancient Egyptians were a fun-loving people who enjoyed games and sporting events. Wall paintings from tombs depict them hunting, fishing, and engaging in athletic contests. Other paintings show them playing senet, a game similar to checkers.

Decide whether the following statements are true or false. Write T or F in each blank.

1. T A person in ancient Egypt was not destined to stay in the same class for life.
2. F Ancient Egyptian women could buy and sell property.
3. F Merchants made up the highest social class in ancient Egypt.
4. F The ancient Egyptians were monotheistic; they believed in only one god.
5. T Religion played an important role in ancient Egyptian society.
6. T The ancient Egyptians enjoyed games and other forms of amusement.
7. T Unskilled laborers held the lowest position in ancient Egyptian society.
8. T Mummification and the building of pyramids were related to the ancient Egyptian belief in life after death.
9. F Life was difficult for ancient Egyptian children.

10. Would you have enjoyed living in ancient Egypt? Why or why not?