

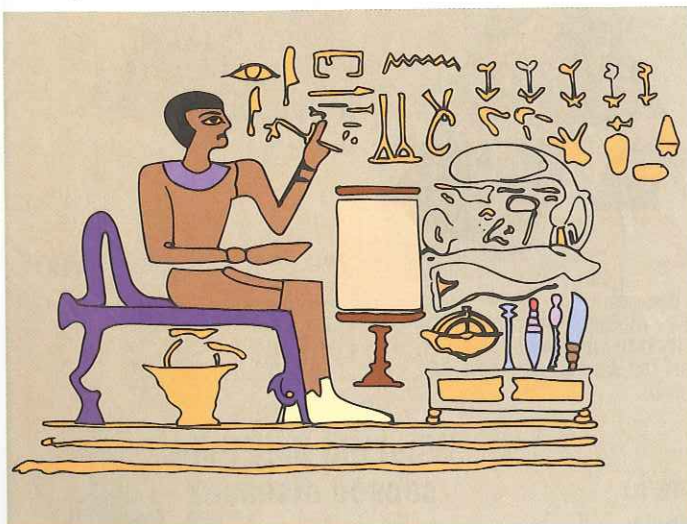
# 1.1 Egypt Doctors – the Egyptians' big idea!

The Egyptians' big idea was specialist doctors. Over the next four pages you are going to find out more about these doctors and the treatments they used. You will decide how to cure the PHAROAH of his illnesses.

## Who treated the sick in Ancient Egypt?

The Egyptians had specialist doctors who were also priests.

▼ **SOURCE 1** Tomb painting of Irj, priest PHYSICIAN to the pharaoh. He was a 'Palace doctor, Superintendent of the court physicians, Palace eye physician, Palace physician of the belly, One understanding internal fluids, Guardian of the anus'



▼ **SOURCE 2** Sekhmet, goddess of war. Egyptians believed that she caused and cured EPIDEMICS

### Find...

1 Look at Source 2. It contains numbered symbols. Match the symbols to these explanations.

- A lion's head. This shows Sekhmet's anger. She is bringing PLAGUE upon the people.
- An ankh ☥. This is a holy symbol of life. It shows that Sekhmet forgives people and brings life again!

## What did the Egyptians think caused diseases?

These doctors did not know about GERMS so they had to think of other reasons why people became ill. Sometimes they thought it was the fault of angry gods like Sekhmet. But they had other ideas too.

### Blocked channels

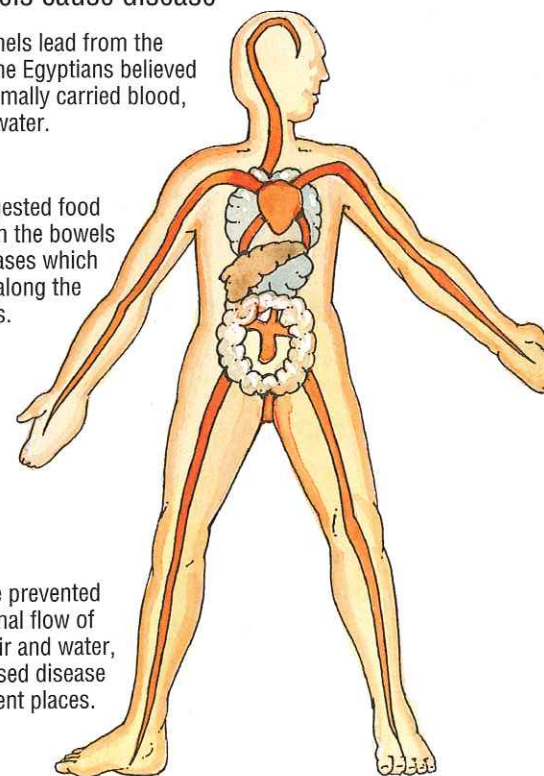
The Egyptians knew about the heart, liver, lungs and brain because they removed them when they EMBALMED people who had died. That was when they noticed that the blood flowed through channels (we call them veins and arteries) from the heart to every part of the body. They thought that these channels also carried life-giving air. They decided that people became ill when the channels in their bodies became blocked. For example, undigested food rotting in the bowels would cause blockages in the channels and this made people ill.

▼ **SOURCE 3** Egyptian ideas about how blocked channels cause disease

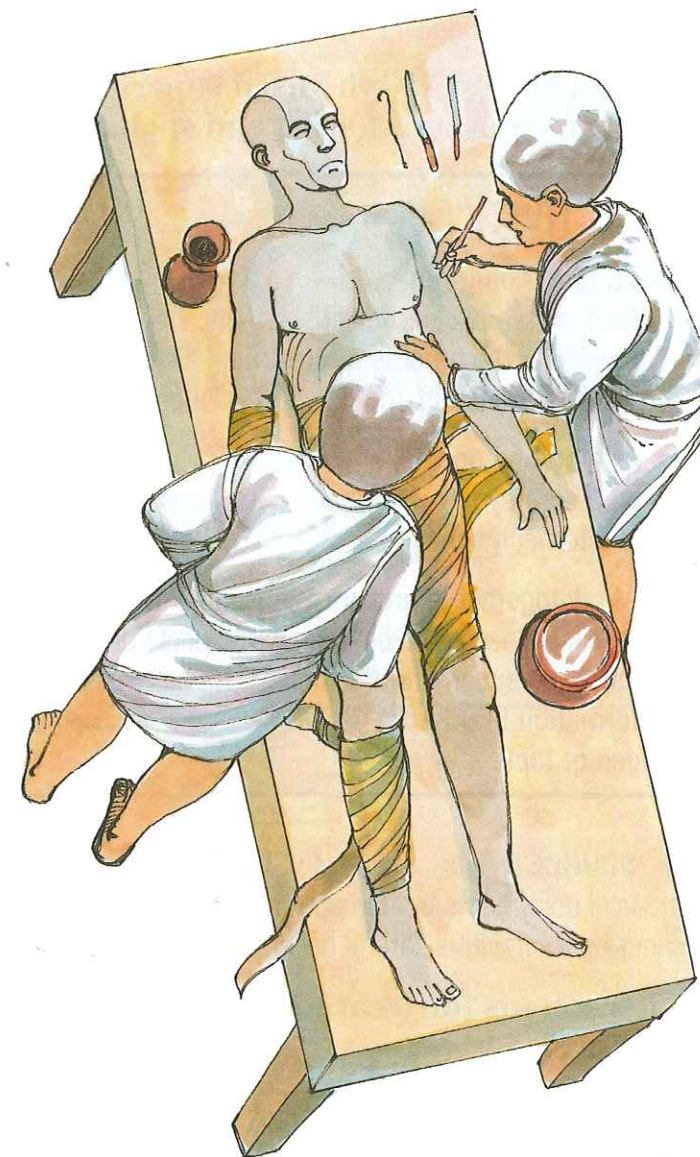
1 Channels lead from the heart. The Egyptians believed they normally carried blood, air and water.

2 Undigested food rotting in the bowels let off gases which seeped along the channels.

3 These prevented the normal flow of blood, air and water, and caused disease in different places.



▼ **SOURCE 4** As soon as someone died, his or her brain, liver and other organs were taken out. Then the body was embalmed or mummified. You can find out why they did this on page 13. Embalming helped the Egyptians to find out a lot about the body



### DISCUSS

- 2 How did the Egyptians learn about parts of the body?
- 3 The Egyptians explained illness in two ways. What were they?



## How did the Egyptians treat illnesses?

In Source 1 on page 8 you can see some of the tools used by Irj. You can tell he must have done some surgery. There were two kinds of doctor who used different remedies:

- priest physicians who used common sense and herbal remedies
- priest magicians who used supernatural remedies, such as prayers, charms and spells.

### ■ ACTIVITY

#### Treating the pharaoh

1 Work with a partner for this activity. One of you is a priest physician, the other is a priest magician. You have to treat the pharaoh. He is old and has several illnesses:

- a broken nose
- a sore eye
- stomach ache.

Work together to prepare a presentation, explaining how you will treat each illness. The pharaoh will expect you to use a combination of natural and supernatural remedies. He believes in both. Use the information in Sources 5–7 to help you. You can use drawings, text, video or tape.

▼ **SOURCE 5** From the Edwin Smith Papyrus, a collection of Egyptian medical documents written about 1600BC. The Papyrus lists 48 cases of SURGERY, each with a careful description of DIAGNOSIS and treatment

#### Instructions for treating a broken nose

##### Diagnosis

*If you examine a man whose nose is part squashed in, part swollen and both his nostrils are bleeding then you should say, 'You have a broken nose and this is an ailment [health problem] which I can treat.'*

##### Treatment

*You should clean his nose with two plugs of linen and then insert two plugs soaked in grease into his nostrils. You should make him rest until the swelling has gone down, you should bandage his nose with stiff rolls of linen and treat him with lint every day until he recovers.*

▼ **SOURCE 6** Two treatments described in Egyptian medical documents written between 1900 and 1500BC

#### Treatment 1: For any disease

*This charm will protect you against evil spirits. It is made from evil-smelling herbs and garlic and from honey which is sweet for people but horrible for spirits, from a fishtail and a rag and a backbone of a perch.*

#### Treatment 2: For a diseased eye

To clear up the pus: *honey, balm from Mecca and gum ammoniac.*  
To treat its discharge: *frankincense, myrrh, yellow ochre.*  
To treat the growth: *red ochre, malachite, honey.*

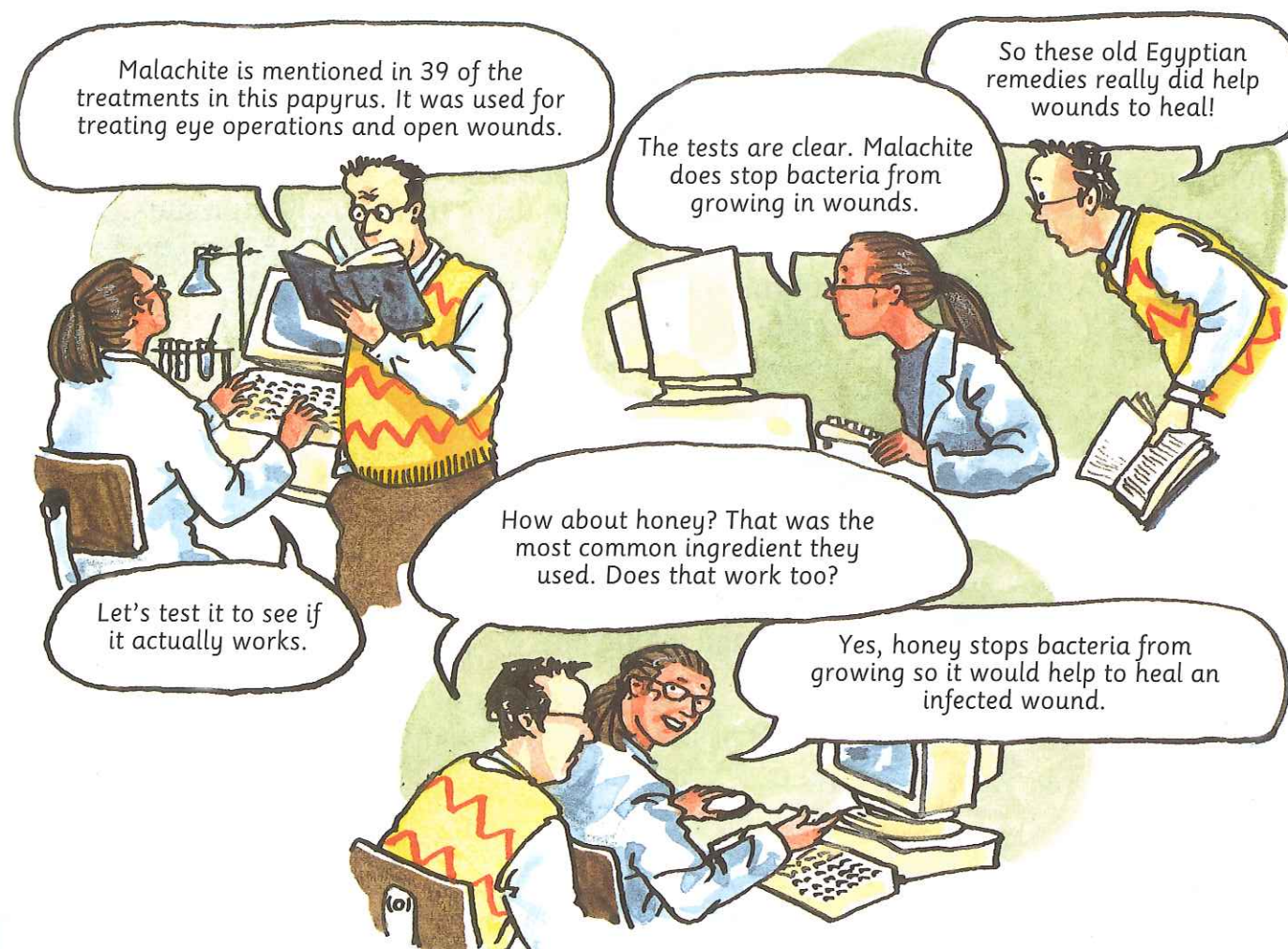
▼ **SOURCE 7** The Greek historian Herodotus, 450BC

#### For all diseases

*For three successive days every month, the Egyptians PURGE themselves [take potions which make them sick or have diarrhoea] ... for they think that all diseases come from the foods they eat.*

## Did these treatments work?

This cartoon is based on information in *The Medical Skills of Ancient Egypt* by J. Worth Estes, published in 1989



### ■ DISCUSS

- 2 Which two treatments are the scientists investigating?
- 3 Why did these treatments work?
- 4 The Egyptians did not know how these treatments worked (because they did not know about BACTERIA), so why did they carry on using them?
- 5 Look back at your treatment of the pharaoh in the activity on page 10. Is there anything that you would now like to change?

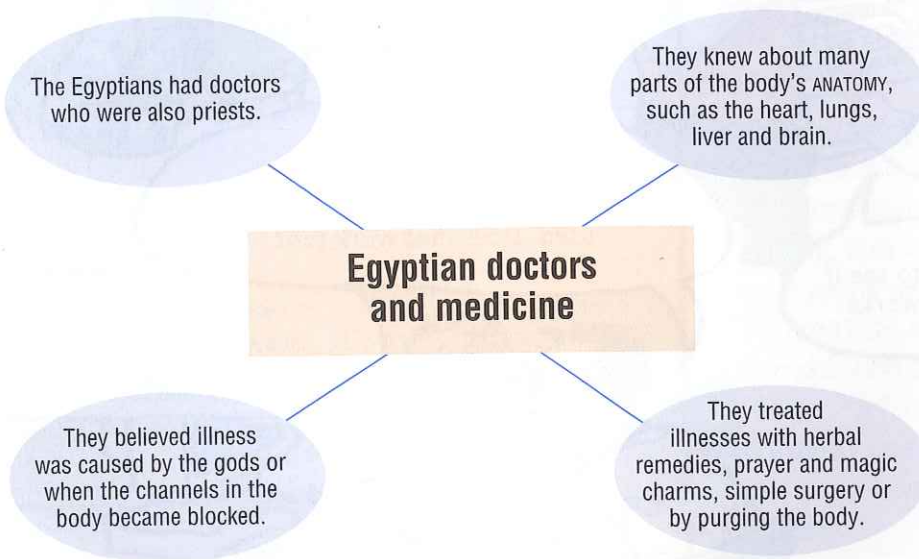


## 1.2 Egypt *How did the Egyptians' way of life help them to develop medical ideas?*

To understand Egyptian medicine it helps to know more about what Egypt was like. Over the next four pages you will look closely at Egyptian life and complete your own table explaining the changes in Egyptian medicine.

Egypt is a country in North Africa. Five thousand years ago Egypt had one of the greatest civilisations in the world.

Here is a summary of key points you have learned so far about Egyptian doctors and medicine.



### ■ ACTIVITY 1

Why did Egyptian medicine develop as it did? Copy this table and fill in the second column as you read about Egyptian life on pages 13–15.

The Egyptian way of life	How this helped to change medicine
1 Pharaohs were wealthy and powerful.	
2 The Egyptians developed writing.	
3 Their religion said that priests had to be clean at all times.	
4 The bodies of the dead were opened up for embalming for the after-life.	
5 The Egyptian farmers irrigated their fields using water channels.	
6 The Egyptians traded with other countries.	

### Pharaohs

Egypt was ruled by pharaohs. They were worshipped as kings and also as gods. Egyptians had many gods, but the pharaoh was always the most important god.

The pharaohs were also fabulously wealthy. They lived in wonderful palaces. When the pharaohs died they were buried in huge tombs and pyramids. The stories of their lives were painted on the walls of their tombs, or written on papyrus scrolls. Historians have found out a great deal about Egyptian medicine from tomb paintings such as Source 1 on page 8.

### Priests

Pharaohs were advised by priests. Priests could read and write. Their religion said that priests had to stay clean all the time. They washed themselves every day, shaved their bodies and drank from clean bronze cups. Sometimes the priests were also doctors. The pharaohs encouraged these priest doctors to develop their skills.

Because the pharaohs trusted the priest doctors and paid their wages, other wealthy Egyptians trusted them, too. They copied the priests' habits of cleanliness and tried many of their remedies and treatments.

The priests wrote down *all* of their remedies so that other people could copy and learn from them.

### Embalming

The Egyptians believed that people had a life after death and would need their bodies in the after-life. As soon as someone died, his or her body was cut open. The brain and other organs were taken out. Then the body was sewn up again and embalmed (mummified). They had to do this very quickly, before the body began to rot in the hot Egyptian climate. Embalming helped the Egyptians to find out a great deal about the body and its organs. As they tried to find the best methods of preserving a body, they learned more about spices, ointments and surgery.

### ■ ACTIVITY 2

Now fill in rows 1–4 of your table.

### ▼ SOURCE 1 An embalmed body



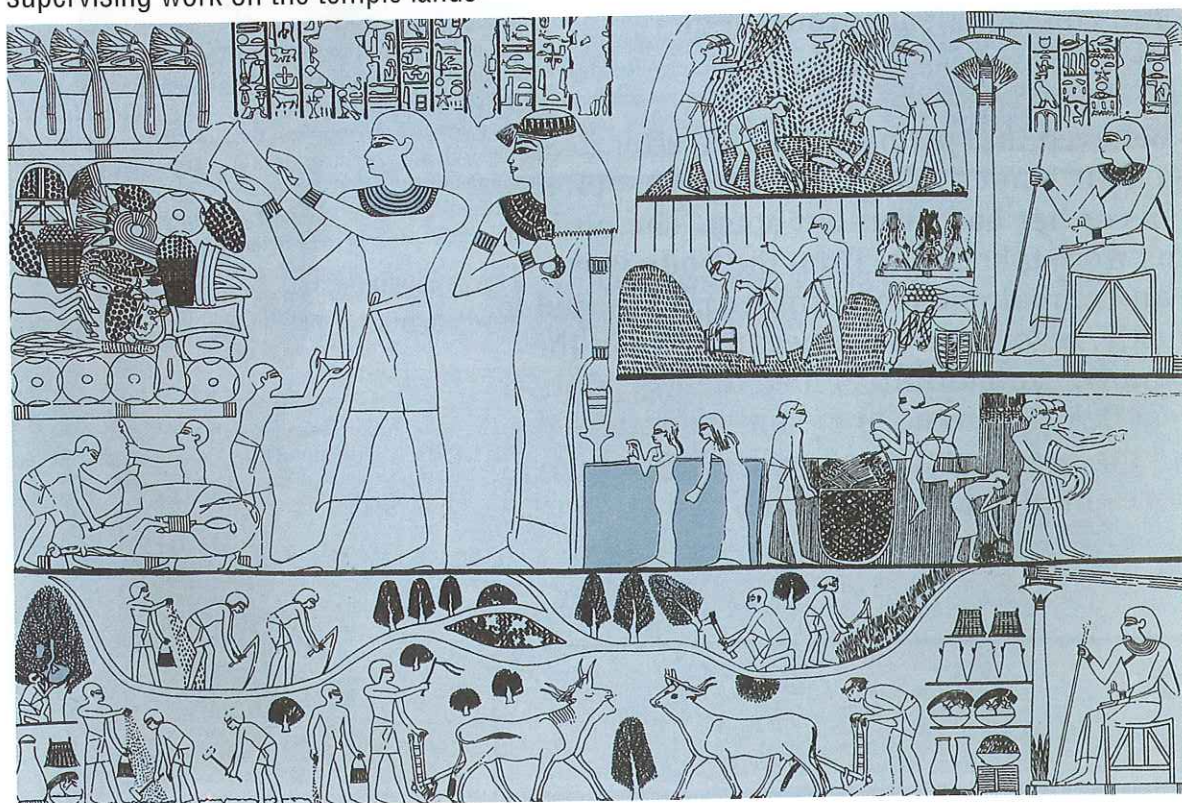


## The River Nile and farming

The longest river in Africa, the River Nile, flowed through Egypt. Egyptian farmers depended on the River Nile. They were very successful farmers. They dug channels from the Nile to carry water to their fields. Even during the hot summer months they could still water their crops. However, the channels sometimes got blocked. Then the crops died because they had no water.

The Egyptians noticed what happened to their crops and they thought that the body must work like this. The human heart was like the Nile and the rest of the body like the crops. Therefore the body must have channels carrying blood from the heart to the rest of the body. If the channels became blocked then people became sick.

▼ **SOURCE 2** A wall painting from the tomb of Nakht, a priest and royal official. It shows him supervising work on the temple lands



### Find...

1 Find ... in Source 2:

- people sowing seeds and ploughing the land
- people harvesting crops into huge baskets
- people threshing corn
- people gathering seeds into small containers
- Nakht pouring seeds on to a table loaded with fruit, vegetables, birds, legs of beef
- butchers cutting up a dead cow.

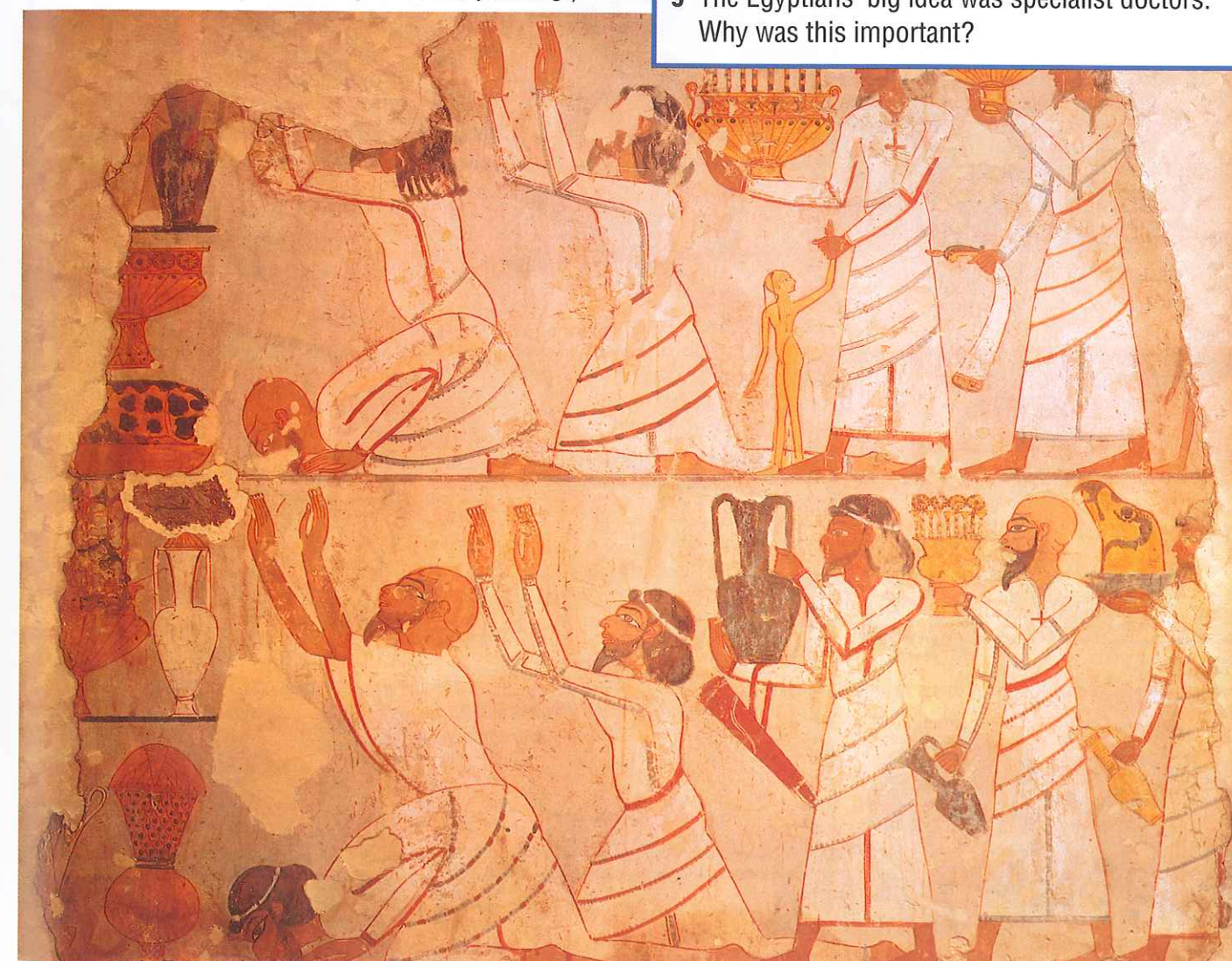
### DISCUSS

- 2 Who do you think the food piled up on the table in Source 2 was for?
- 3 How does this source show that farming and the Nile were very important to the Egyptians?
- 4 In your opinion, was the Egyptian explanation for the causes of disease sensible? Give at least two reasons to support your opinion.
- 5 Now fill in row 5 of your table.

## Trade with other countries

Because the Egyptians had such a good lifestyle and no worries about food, they were able to develop new skills. People made tools, instruments, jewellery and furniture. They learned to sail and build ships to travel along the Nile. This led to trade with India, China and other countries. The Egyptians exchanged their goods for herbs, plants and ointments that were known to have healing properties. Priest doctors used them to cure people.

▼ **SOURCE 3** Traders from Syria paying their respects to the pharaoh, c. 1400bc. (The pharaoh can not be seen on this preserved part of the painting.)



### Find...

6 Find ... in Source 3:

- small jars holding precious oils
- large jars holding wine
- evidence that the pharaoh was powerful.

### ACTIVITY

- 7 Fill in row 6 of your table.
- 8 On page 2 you saw six reasons why medicine has changed. Which reason was most important in changing medicine in ancient Egypt? Give two reasons for your choice.
- 9 The Egyptians' big idea was specialist doctors. Why was this important?



## 1.3 Greece

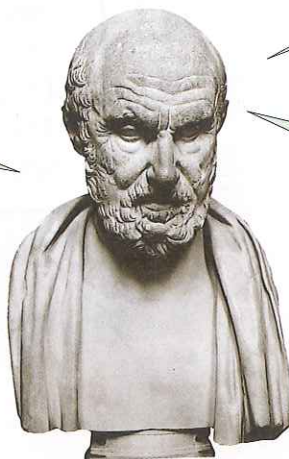
### The theory of the four humours – the Greeks' big idea!

The Egyptians and the Greeks knew each other well. They traded with each other across the Mediterranean Sea and the Greeks borrowed many medical ideas from the Egyptians. However, the Greeks also had lots of new ideas. The most important was the idea or theory of the four humours. This theory affected how doctors treated sick people all over Europe for the next 2000 years! In this section you will write a speech explaining this very important idea.

#### What was Hippocrates' big idea?

1 My name is Hippocrates. My BIG IDEA explains why people become ill. It's because their humours, the liquids in their body, are out of balance.

2 There are four humours in the body. I have watched people carefully when they are ill. One of the four humours often comes out of the body, as you see below.



3 I think that people stay healthy when they have just the right amount of each humour in their bodies. But if the humours become unbalanced and people have too much or too little of one of them, that's when they become ill.

4 My discovery is important because it shows that some illnesses have natural causes. I disagree with people who say that all illnesses are caused by the gods. If so, how can we do anything to help the patients? Only the gods can make them better! But if an illness has a natural cause we can find a way to make the patient better – that is why my discovery is so important.

#### Blood

People sometimes cough up blood or have nosebleeds.



#### Phlegm

People often sneeze or cough up slimy, revolting phlegm.



#### Yellow bile

People often vomit up their half-digested food after a meal.



#### Black bile

People sometimes vomit even when they have not eaten. This vomit is a dark, evil-smelling liquid.

