

Restoring the Sphinx

Cairo, February 2001

The Sphinx is one of Egypt's most famous landmarks and this giant stone guardian of Pharaoh Khafre's pyramid dates back to about 2,500 BC. But traffic and industrial pollution from nearby Cairo city - along with heat, wind, sand, rain, humidity and salt from a rising water table - are all seriously eroding it.

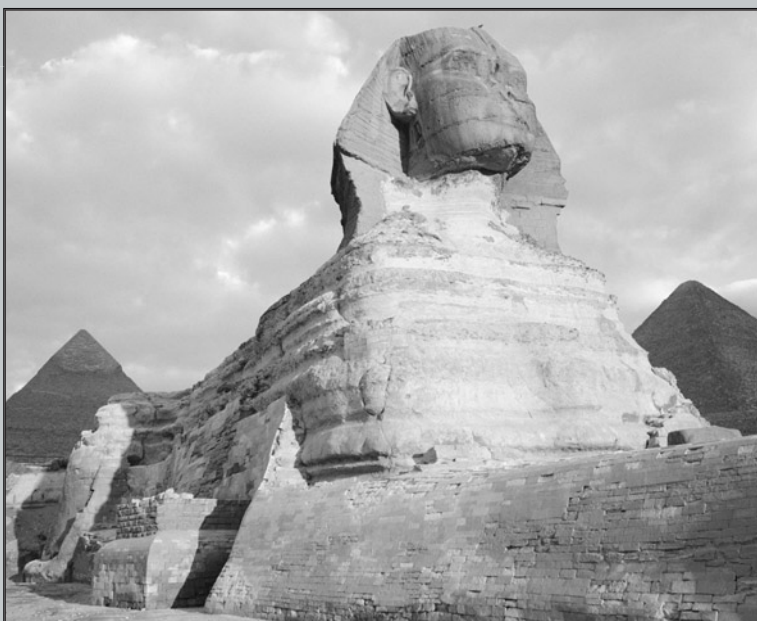
The Sphinx originally featured a beard and pieces of it were found between the lion's paws by an archaeologist in 1816. In 1982, more stones were lost from the north paw and in 1988, a large stone tumbled from the Sphinx's shoulder.

Since 1989, a major restoration project has been underway. Archaeologists, geologists, sculptors and scientists have removed large old stones and cement from earlier repairs and replaced them with new blocks and mortar mixed from lime and sand.

Recent studies by the Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics revealed the alarming news that the underground water table may have risen to just seven metres below the Sphinx's base.

In response to this threat, the bedrock beneath the landmark is now being examined by Cairo University's Faculty of Engineering. The results of their seismic survey will be keenly followed, as previous probes have indicated the possible existence of several unexplored tunnels and cavities. This includes what could be a large rectangular chamber some 25 feet directly below the monument's front paws. Naturally, there is a great deal of historical, political and legal intrigue surrounding this affair from around the world.

An American team from Florida State University is also on-site to preserve the pyramids and Sphinx by surveying the entire Giza Plateau to locate faults and chasms that might collapse. In addition, an electronic weather station nearby is now supplying wind, heat and humidity records for scientists to evaluate their impact on the stone monster.



Use the information above and any reference below to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Sphinx and where is it located?

.....

2. Why is the Sphinx under threat?

.....

3. On the statue's picture above, create labels to represent the events which occurred to it in 1816, 1982 and 1988.

4. What is being done to protect and restore the Sphinx?

.....

5. Why would there be a great deal of historical, political and legal intrigue surrounding the Sphinx?

.....

References: Jacaranda SOSE 1 2E, pp38-39 • Jacaranda SOSE: Ancient History, p76 • Retroactive 1 2E, pp48-51 • SOSE for Queensland 1, p54 • www.dreamscape.com/morgana/pasiphae.htm