Interpreting a Pyramid Chart

Learning the Skill

A pyramid chart, just like any other chart, helps us group items in an organized way. Using the shape of a pyramid, however, is particularly useful because it visually shows you the amount of people or objects in a particular category compared to other categories. The smallest group is placed in the smallest space at the top of the pyramid. The largest group is placed in the bottom row of the pyramid, which encompasses the largest space. Other groups are arranged from top to bottom according to how many items are in each group.

Often the placement of groups on the pyramid reflects their significance. For example, in a pyramid chart that shows levels of society, the smallest group at the top often is the richest and most powerful group. In a food pyramid, however, candy and cupcakes are usually shown at the top and fruits and vegetables are shown along the bottom of the pyramid. This is because you should eat a smaller amount of candy and cupcakes.

Use the following steps to interpret a pyramid chart:

- Read the title to find out the subject of the chart.
- Read the information given in each level of the chart.
- Analyze how the groups are related in size from one level to the next.

Practicing the Skill

Directions: The pyramid chart at right shows the social classes of ancient Egypt. Analyze the relationship among the classes, and then answer the questions that follow.
Chart, Graph, and Map Skills Activity
continued

1. **Identifying** What was the largest class of people in ancient Egypt?

2. **Identifying** Who made up the second-largest class of people?

3. **Identifying** Who was included in the smallest class of society?

4. **Identifying** Which group was the second-most-powerful class of society?

5. **Explaining** Why are unskilled workers in the lowest level of the pyramid chart?

✓ **Applying the Skill**

**Directions:** Use the following information about Kazakhstan’s ethnic groups to complete the pyramid chart below. Be sure to include a title for your pyramid.

- Kazakh 53.4%
- Ukrainian 3.7%
- Tatar 1.7%
- German 2.4%
- Uzbek 2.5%
- Other 6.3%
- Russian 30.0%

**Source:** CIA World Factbook (1999 Census).