Egyptian Writing

Egyptians invented one of the world’s first writing systems, using a series of images, symbols, and pictures called **hieroglyphics** (hy-ruh-GLIH-fiks). Each symbol represented one or more sounds in the Egyptian language.

At first hieroglyphics were carved in stone. Later they were written with brushes and ink on **papyrus** (puh-PY-ruhs). Because papyrus didn’t decay, many ancient Egyptian texts still survive, including government records, historical records, science texts, medical manuals, and literary works such as *The Book of the Dead*. The discovery of the **Rosetta Stone** in 1799 provided the key to reading Egyptian writing. The Rosetta Stone contained the same text inscribed in both hieroglyphics and Greek.

**Main Ideas**

1. The Egyptians developed a writing system using hieroglyphics.
2. The Egyptians created magnificent temples, tombs, and works of art.

**Key Terms and People**

- **hieroglyphics**: Egyptian writing system, one of the world’s first, which used symbols
- **papyrus**: long-lasting, paper-like substance made from reeds
- **Rosetta Stone**: a stone slab discovered in 1799 that was inscribed with hieroglyphics and their Greek meanings
- **sphinxes**: huge ancient Egyptian statues of imaginary creatures with the heads of people and bodies of lions
- **obelisk**: a tall, four-sided pillar that is pointed on top
- **King Tutankhamen**: a pharaoh whose tomb was untouched by raiders, leaving much information about Egyptian art and burial practices

**What language helped scholars to understand the meaning of hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone?**

_______________________

_______________________

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TEMPLES, TOMBS, AND ART

Egyptian architects are known not only for the pyramids but also for their magnificent temples. The temples were lavishly designed with numerous statues and beautifully painted walls and pillars. Sphinxes and obelisks were usually found near the entrances to the temples.

Ancient Egyptians were masterful artists and many of their greatest works are found in either the temples or the tombs of the pharaohs. Most Egyptians, however, never saw these paintings because only kings, priests, or other important people could enter these places.

Egyptian paintings depict a variety of subjects, from crowning kings to illustrating religious rituals and showing scenes from daily life. The paintings also have a particular style, with people drawn as if they were twisting as they walked, and in different sizes depending upon their stature in society. In contrast, animals appear more realistically. The Egyptians were also skilled stone and metal workers, creating beautiful statues and jewelry.

Much of what we know about Egyptian art and burial practices comes from the tomb of King Tutankhamen, one of the few Egyptian tombs that was left untouched by raiders looking for valuables. The tomb was discovered in 1922.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Analyzing Using the library or an online resource, find a key to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics into English. Write a message using hieroglyphics. Trade your message with another student to see if you can read each other’s messages. Be sure to provide a copy of your message and the translation to your teacher. Do you prefer to write in hieroglyphics or English? Write a paragraph explaining your preference.
DIRECTIONS  Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

1. _________________ is a long-lasting, paper-like material made from reeds.  
   (Sphinxes/Papyrus)

2. The Egyptian writing system is known as _______________________.  
   (obelisk/hieroglyphics)

3. The tomb of _________________ was filled with treasures, including jewelry, robes, a burial mask, and ivory statues.  (King Tutankhamen/Rosetta Stone)

4. The _____________________ had hieroglyphics inscribed on it and became the key to deciphering Egyptian writing.  (obelisk/Rosetta Stone)

5. ______________________ were imaginary creatures with the bodies of lions and the heads of other animals or humans.  (Sphinxes/Papyruses)

6. A(n) _________________ is a tall, four-sided pillar that is pointed on top.  (obelisk/sphinx)
True/False
1. F; Deltas are triangle-shaped areas of land made of soil that is deposited by a river.
2. F; Cataracts are steep rapids that made sailing portions of rivers such as the Nile very difficult.
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. T

SECTION 2
Summary
(First Page) that the pharaoh was both a king and a god
(Second Page) the lower class; the life force; to house dead rulers

Challenge Activity
Students should respond that it is different because Americans do not believe the President is a king or a god. Students should also note that presidents are elected and have more limited powers than pharaohs.

Descriptive Phrases
Answers will vary. Sample answers:
1. life after death
2. wealthy, powerful
3. using practical scientific knowledge
4. most famous pharaoh of the Old Kingdom
5. preserved dead bodies wrapped in cloth
6. wealthy, powerful
7. the third dynasty
8. triangle-shaped tombs

SECTION 3
Summary
(First Page) from Southwest Asia
(Second Page) south; architects; farmers and peasants

Challenge Activity
Answers will vary. Student essays should include reasonable statements about any advantages or disadvantages.

Vocabulary
1. Ramses the Great; a pharaoh of the New Kingdom
2. Middle Kingdom; a period of peace in Egypt
3. Queen Hatshepsut; a New Kingdom ruler who expanded trade
4. trade routes; routes used by traders
5. New Kingdom; the height of Egypt’s power and glory

SECTION 4
Summary
(First Page) Greek
(Second Page) sphinxes and obelisks; kings, priests, and other important people; because it is one of the few Egyptian tombs left untouched by tomb raiders

Challenge Activity
Student messages will vary but should be able to be translated.

Fill in the Blank
1. Papyrus
2. hieroglyphics
3. King Tutankhamen
4. Rosetta Stone
5. Sphinxes
6. obelisk

SECTION 5
Summary
(First Page) fertile soil, gold, copper, stone
(Second Page) about 450 years; the iron industry; Women were active in society, and some rose to positions of authority; Students should circle the name and kingdom: King Ezana and Aksum

Challenge Activity
Student essays will vary but should include an explanation for the defeat of Egypt.

Vocabulary Terms
1. b
2. a
3. c
4. b
5. a
6. a
7. b