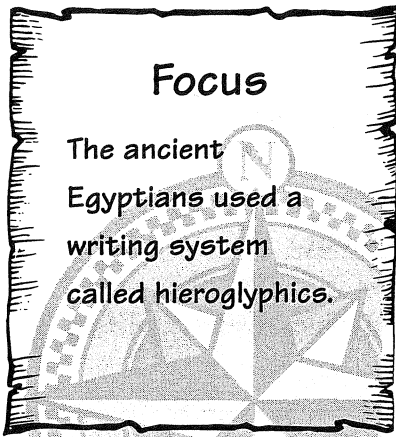


Hieroglyphs

Brief # 5



Much of what we know about the ancient Egyptians comes from the written records that they left behind. The ancient Egyptians used a system of writing known as hieroglyphics. **Hieroglyphics are pictures that represent ideas, things, or sounds.** Many ancient cultures used similar types of writing. Hieroglyphics were carved into buildings and on clay tablets.



The Rosetta Stone

For a long time archeologists had seen ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics on buildings and artifacts but they had no idea what they said. The hieroglyphics were a foreign language that people hadn't used for thousands of years. But all of that changed in 1799.

In that year, a French scholar named Jean Francois Champollion found a large stone tablet buried along the banks of the Nile River. The tablet was inscribed in 196 B.C. It contains a single passage translated into three different languages: hieroglyphics, demotic, and Greek. Champollion was able to figure out what the hieroglyphics said because he knew the other two languages. **This ancient Egyptian tablet that helped modern scholars decipher hieroglyphics is called the Rosetta Stone.**



Reading Hieroglyphics

The ancient Egyptians used different kinds of hieroglyphics. One type was called an ideogram. **An ideogram is a picture that stands for an entire word.** For example, a picture of a foot could stand for the word *foot*.

Another type of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics is called a phonogram. **A phonogram is a picture that stands for the sound of a letter.** For example, the foot ideogram also stood for the sound that our letter *B* makes. The phonograms only pictured consonant sounds. No vowel sounds had pictures to go along with them.

Hieroglyphics were often found engraved on large monuments and tombs.

Vocabulary

1. hieroglyphics
2. Rosetta Stone
3. ideogram
4. phonogram
5. hieratic
6. demotic

Hieroglyphs

Brief # 5 (cont.)



Hieratic and Demotic

The ancient Egyptians also had other ways of writing. One of these was called hieratic. **Hieratic was a kind of cursive writing that was faster than hieroglyphs to produce.** The Egyptians used it in their everyday lives to keep records or write letters. The ancient Egyptians wrote on papyrus.

The ancient Egyptians used another type of writing called demotic. This also was a cursive style of writing. It was a form of Greek. This was one of the written languages found on the Rosetta Stone. By about the fourth century, hieroglyphics, hieratic writing, and demotic writing were no longer used.

