

# Hieroglyphics and the Rosetta Stone

The Ancient Egyptians were famous for using a writing system called hieroglyphics. Pictures and symbols called hieroglyphs were used instead of letters and words. Some hieroglyphs stood for words, objects, actions and sounds that we use today. There were more than seven hundred symbols overall.

Scribes were the most educated men in Egypt because they could read and write. They wrote on a kind of paper made from the reeds that grew along the banks of the Nile River. This paper was called papyrus. Sharpened reeds were dipped into red and black ink made from soot or charcoal and used to write the hieroglyphs on papyrus. Some types of ink were also made from crushed plants mixed with water.

Egyptian writing has been found on wall paintings, papyrus scrolls, and inside the pyramids. Many stone slabs and monuments in ancient Egypt were also carved with hieroglyphics. One famous type of Egyptian stone monument was called an obelisk. Obelisks were often built in pairs and came in many different sizes. Most obelisks were very heavy, tall, and have four sides that taper toward the top to a pyramid shape point. They were usually ordered by a pharaoh to remember someone important. They were carved from one large stone and decorated with pictures and hieroglyphs to remember the achievements of the person it was meant to honor.

When hieroglyphics were first found, no one could read the strange symbols. In 1799, a stone was found with a short story written in three languages - hieroglyphs, Demotic script, and Greek. Since historians could read Greek and demotic script, they could translate the hieroglyphs. This stone was called the Rosetta Stone, and it helped people finally understand the Ancient Egyptian writing system of hieroglyphics! The Rosetta Stone is currently on display in the British Museum in London, England.

