

Hieroglyphics

Before there was a written language, people used pictures to communicate. That's how ancient Egyptians recorded ideas. Their pictures were called **hieroglyphs**. Egyptians wrote about their history and ideas on temple walls and on a special type of paper called **papyrus**. The people who wrote in hieroglyphs were called **scribes**. These scribes had to study hard to learn all of the different symbols and signs.

The problem with pictures though is that not everybody agrees on what they mean. Look at these hieroglyphs:



If you only see some birds, a half moon, a feather and an oval then you don't know how to read hieroglyphics because these five symbols together mean "water". Until a Frenchman named Jean Francois Champollion found the key in 1799, no one could agree what each picture meant so no one could break the code. He found a stone that explained each symbol in Greek. He called it the Rosetta Stone. Now people could read the symbols correctly and learn all about ancient Egypt.

Now answer these questions:

1) What is a "scribe"? a) a Frenchman b) a symbol c) a person who wrote in hieroglyphs or d) a temple.

2) What is papyrus?

3) Why did the ancient Egyptians use hieroglyphs?

4) Why is it difficult to use pictures to communicate with?

5) Why was the Rosetta Stone so important?
