

The Rosetta Stone: Guided Highlight Questions



1. In paragraph 1, who discovered the Rosetta Stone?
2. In paragraph 1, when and where was the Rosetta Stone discovered?
3. In paragraph 2, how old is the Rosetta Stone?
4. In paragraph 3, why was the Rosetta Stone important?
5. In paragraph 3, highlight the three languages the are on the Rosetta Stone.
6. In paragraph 5, what did Thomas Young discover about demotic and hieroglyphic writing?
7. In paragraph 6, what was proven about hieroglyphics?
8. In paragraph 9, currently where is the Rosetta Stone?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Hour: _____

The Rosetta Stone

1

The Rosetta Stone, a black slab bearing an inscription that was the key to the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics and to the foundation of modern Egyptology. It was discovered in July 1799 by Napoleon's army in Rosetta (Rashid), Egypt.

2

The Rosetta Stone is dated to March 196 B.C. and it measures 3 ft. 9 in. long and 2 ft. 4.5 in. wide (114X72x28cm). It was an ancient "Code Book".

3

The importance of the Rosetta Stone was because it was written in the Egyptian hieroglyphics and also in Greek, which meant it could be read. A third language on the stone was written in Demotic, a language developed later in Egyptian history. It was discovered that all three contained the same message. The Greek could be translated immediately, so providing clues to the others.

4

It was written by the Ptolemies who were Greeks that had been ruling Egypt since the Empire of Alexander the Great, and while they built temples in the Egyptian style, their lifestyle and language remained exclusively Greek. Egypt had now become a multicultural society, a mixture of Greek and Egyptian, although in many parts of the country the two rarely met. The Egyptians had used hieroglyphic script for nearly 3,500 years, from 3100 B.C. until the end of the fourth century A. D.

5

The deciphering began with the work of the British physicist Thomas Young. He showed that both the demotic and hieroglyphic writing contained both alphabetic and symbolic elements which were closely related.

6

In 1822- French Egyptologist Jean Francois Champollion (1790-1832) – in 1822- with the aid of the Coptic language (language of the Christian descendants of the ancient Egyptians)- succeeded in realizing the phonetic value of the hieroglyphs. This proved the fact that hieroglyphs do not have only symbolic meaning, but that they also served as a "spoken language". The Stone remained in the college for many more years until an undergraduate student started to examine it, and came to the stunning realization that the stone contained the same passage written three times in three different languages.

7

Originally the stone was 'souveniered' by one of Napoleon's troops during one of their rampages across Europe. It was passed down through generations of the soldier's family as 'one of great granddads nick-nacks'.

8

Eventually, it was sold in a junk market, where it was spotted by an Oxford professor of Egyptology who was holidaying in France. He recognized some of the inscriptions on the stone tablet, but not all of them. He showed it to some of his colleagues upon his return, who could recognize some more of the inscriptions; however none could decipher it all.

9

It is presently in the British Museum, in London.

