"PEOPLE OF THE BLACK EARTH"

QUESTION: WHY DO WE KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT ANCIENT EGYPT?

Jean-Francois Champollion

ANSWER: ROSETTA STONE & CHAMPOLLION

The discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799 near the town of Rosetta, Egypt led to the translation of the Egyptian writing system known today as hieroglyphics which in Greek means “sacred inscriptions or carvings.” Many “Egyptian” words such as hieroglyphics, Nile, sarcophagus, pharaoh and even the word “Egypt” are actually Greek. We can thank Herodotus, “The Father of History,” for this confusion. Get out of this attachment and then scroll down and read “It’s All Greek To Me,” to find out why, but understand the real name for Egypt was Kemet meaning the “Black Earth” and the people were Kemetian meaning “The People of the Black Earth.” As we conclude our unit on Ancient Egypt our timeline revealed that Rome’s Augustus (Octavian) Caesar conquered Egypt in 30 BC and made Egypt a Roman province. When the Roman Empire fell in 476 AD, the knowledge of the Egyptian hieroglyphics died with Rome. For nearly 1,500 years no one understood the meaning of the nearly 800 symbols in what was one of the first writing systems in ancient history. As you know, the Kemetians did not invent writing, the Sumerians (Sag-gi-ja) of modern day Iraq did around 3500 BC and their writing system was known as cuneiform which means in Latin “triangular.” The real name for the Kemetian writing was known as “mdu njeter” meaning the “words of the gods.” The French linguist Jean-Francois Champollion in 1822 successfully translated the mdu njeter on the Rosetta Stone using the Demotic and Greek also written on the stone as his guide. All three writing systems explains a decree or an official announcement issued by the pharaoh Ptolomy V sometime in 196 BC. The decree is actually very unimportant, but the fact that the three writing systems were “saying the same thing” made it possible for Champollion to determine the meaning of the Egyptian hieroglyphics. Thousands of years of culture, mysteries, secrets, successes, failures, history as well as the everyday lives and culture of these incredible ancient people were now open to analysis. This is why today we have such a rich knowledge of Ancient Egypt. Prehistory had its limitations due to the complete lack of written sources. Our study of Egypt was different because of the fact we have written sources both primary and secondary to enrich our knowledge. Egypt is a fascinating study for me. I hope you liked it too. Let’s GO learn MORE!
1. The earliest form of Egyptian writing called ___________________ used ___________________ to stand for ___________________, ___________________ and ___________________. P. 196

2. What does hieroglyphics mean in English and why is it a Greek word? Use the backside of the sheet.

3. What is the real name for the Egyptian writing system? What does this name mean in English? Use the backside of the sheet for help.

4. Who invented writing and when did this invention take place?

5. What was the name of the Sumerian writing system? What does this name mean in English?

6. “Like cuneiform, the system was not easy to decipher.” P. 196
What do you and your partners think the word “decipher” means?

7. What happened in 1799 near the Egyptian village of Rosetta? P. 196

8. What is cuneiform? Use the backside of this sheet

9. How many years did scholars try in vain to decode the hieroglyphics? P. 196

10. Who was finally able to translate or decode or decipher hieroglyphics? P. 196 & 197

11. What two names were the keys that allowed him to understand hieroglyphics? P. 196

12. What kinds of written sources did the Egyptians leave us? P. 197

13. The hieroglyphic ___________________ was ____________ It was ____________ made up of over ________ different _________ that a person had to ____________ ________________ in order to ____________ it. P. 197

14. What was the name of a person who could write during ancient times called? Read the caption of the photo on page 197. What passage were students made to memorize and copy?
__________________________
__________________________

15. How long was the school day for students learning to write in Ancient Egypt? P. 197

16. What was the father’s advice to his son who was learning to write? P. 197

17. Does this advice sound familiar? Talk among yourselves.

18. How many people in the ancient world including Egypt could write? P. 197