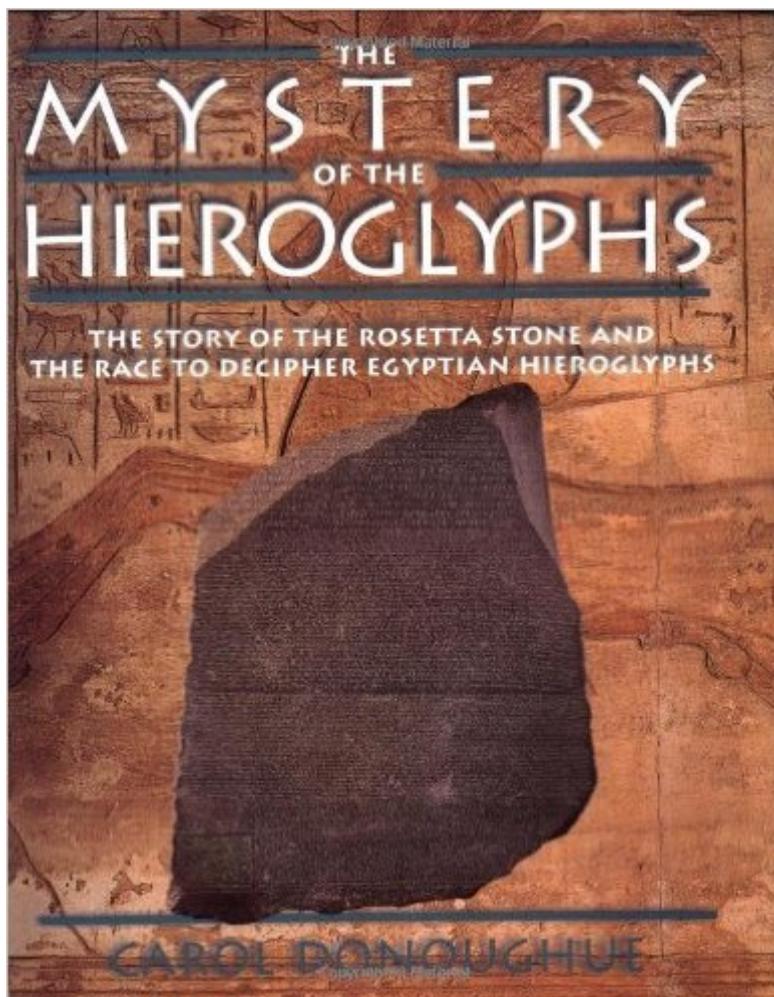


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The Mystery Of The Hieroglyphs: The Story Of The Rosetta Stone And The Race To Decipher Egyptian Hieroglyphs



Synopsis

For more than 15 centuries, no one could read the strange-looking Egyptian hieroglyphs. And then in 1799 a French soldier in Napoleon's army in Egypt stumbled across the Rosetta Stone, an ancient inscription recorded in Greek, hieroglyphs, and demotic script. Many of the brightest scholars of the time--Egyptologists, historians, and linguists--as well as detectives, professional code breakers, and plain amateurs, all set out to decipher the forgotten words. Carol Donoughue tells us the fascinating story of the hieroglyphs and the race to decipher them, explaining how this curious writing system began with simple drawings of everyday objects. She compares the hieroglyphic system to modern alphabets in an entertaining narrative complemented with numerous photographs and drawings, maps, historical timelines stretching from ancient Egypt to Napoleon, a glossary, and numerous sidebars. The book culminates in an edge-of-your-seat description of how the brilliant French archaeologist Champollion finally succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphs. A final section displays an alphabet of "hieroglyphs" and offers some fun activities for children based on hieroglyphic writing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book tells of the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and about attempts to break the code of the hieroglyphs and demotic script. We learn of the various men who tried to break the code and about the successful young man who finally did break the code. The book also tells about who currently

owns the Rosetta Stone and the journey and literal fighting that took place over its ownership. Through this story the reader is introduced to what hieroglyphs are and what demotic script is. Battles are very lightly touched upon, enough to explain why the Egyptians began writing in Greek as well. (The Rosetta stone tells the same story in Hieroglyphs, Demotic script, and Greek and was the key to breaking the hieroglyphic code.) The reader is kept in suspense about the meaning and the decoding of the hieroglyphs...as the discoveries are made the code is revealed to us in bits and pieces. For example we start off not knowing if the symbols stand for sounds of a spoken word or for literal translations to objects/animals, etc. In the end the hieroglyphs are spelled out and the reader is given several examples to try to interpret their meaning. Some of the basic writing rules are clearly discussed such as that the writing can go left to right or right to left, and we are to follow the face of the animal shapes to tell us which way to go. Writing can be vertical and the symbols can be backwards or forwards! There are no punctuation marks, sentences or paragraphs, it all runs together. There are photographs, illustrations, timelines, and maps throughout this book, which add to the experience. This is loaded with text, it is not as skimpy in text or detail as some books that publishers group into this same age category. Yet it is not as loaded or illustration-driven as the DK/Eyewitness books (as a comparison comment, not a complaint). I especially enjoyed the details about the life of Jean Francois Champollion, the man who broke the code of the hieroglyphs. Taught to read at a young age and homeschooled by his older brother for most of his life, he was devoted to reading and learning foreign languages from an early age. He disliked math and science and chose instead to study languages. His devotion to his passion lead to his decoding the Rosetta Stone and later to fundraising to pay for an expedition to Egypt. He was so passionate about the bringing history of Egypt to others that he persuaded the King of France to acquire many Egyptian artifacts and he became the curator of the Egyptian museum of the Louvre, which still is on display today. This is all told in an interesting way in this book. We can all learn something from Champollion, to follow our interests, teach our children what they are most interested in, and to excel in one area (of study) can lead to great things if the passion is allowed to flourish. This is a great contrast to our American public educational system today, which wants excellence in many areas of study (and covers each lightly) and doesn't allow time or energy to be spent one or two areas of specialized interest. My only complaint is that I found the questions posed to the children annoying ("what do you think this means..." and such). I don't think children need to be directed to think about something, it happens to each of us as we read. Perhaps we don't all wonder about the same thing at the same paragraph in a book but that is OK. Sometimes the questions asked the child to interpret something but then the true answer is never revealed which is annoying and I feel

leaves the reader feeling incompetent and possibly frustrated to have a curiosity sparked but left without the correct answer, wondering if they are correct or not. This is a great book to tell the story of unlocking the mystery of the Rosetta Stone and an easily understood introduction to hieroglyphics (and the two other languages) used by the Egyptians. This book really brings history to life.

Perfect fast read that is so well organized and illustrated that you learn far more than you probably intended. Although written on a very elementary level, the layout and sequence make it informative to everyone who picks it up.

This is a good one to own - There is plenty in this book apart from the Rosetta Stone, including an Egyptian time line (spans the bottom of six pages), an introduction to how language and alphabets develop, cartouches, and the differences between logograms and phonograms. Then the book swings into the Rosetta stone and how it was deciphered. Best of all is the section that puts it all together and helps your child learn to read hieroglyphs in a step-by-step way. Excellent glossary (actually, two) and full index. Great color photographs. You will want to keep this book in your family.

This is a great book! My 6 year old and I both learned so much from this book during our study of ancient Egypt. It was not boring!!!

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