

# Crack the Code: Unlocking Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs

## Materials Needed

- Paper (white or craft paper for an aged look)
- Pencils, pens, or fine-tip markers
- Colored pencils or markers (optional, for decoration)
- A printed copy of a simplified Hieroglyph Alphabet Chart (easily found online with a search for "hieroglyph alphabet for kids")
- Optional: A computer or tablet to watch a short video about the Rosetta Stone
- For Extension Activity: A piece of a brown paper bag, modeling clay and a toothpick/carving tool

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain what hieroglyphs are and who used them in Ancient Egypt.
- Describe why the Rosetta Stone was the key to understanding hieroglyphs.
- Translate your own name into hieroglyphs inside a royal cartouche.
- Create and decode a short, secret message using hieroglyphic symbols.

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## Lesson Plan

### Part 1: Introduction - The Mystery of the Stone (10 minutes)

#### Hook (Grab Their Attention)

Ask the learner: "Imagine you're an explorer who just discovered a hidden room inside a pyramid. The walls are covered in beautiful pictures—birds, eyes, wavy lines, and strange symbols. You know it's a message from a pharaoh who lived 3,000 years ago, but how could you possibly read it? For a long time, nobody could. Today, you are going to become a historian and a code-breaker, and you're going to crack the code of the pharaohs."

#### State the Mission

"Our mission today is to learn the basics of this picture-writing, called hieroglyphs. We'll discover the secret key that unlocked this lost language, and you'll even learn to write your own name and secret messages just like an ancient Egyptian scribe!"

### Part 2: The Body - Becoming a Scribe (30-40 minutes)

#### I DO: The Educator Explains and Models (10 minutes)

1. **What are Hieroglyphs?:** "The word 'hieroglyph' means 'sacred carving.' This was the formal writing system used for important things, like decorating tombs and temples. It has over 700 symbols! Some symbols are like our letters and stand for sounds, while others stand for whole

words or ideas."

2. **Who were the Scribes?:** "Since this was so complicated, very few people could read and write. The special people who trained for years to learn were called 'scribes.' They were incredibly important and respected."
3. **The Ultimate Key - The Rosetta Stone:** "For almost 1,500 years, the meaning of hieroglyphs was completely lost. No one could read them. Then, in 1799, a French soldier found a big, dark stone. On this stone, the same message was carved in THREE different scripts: Hieroglyphs (which no one could read), Demotic (another Egyptian script), and Ancient Greek (which scholars \*could\* read!). The Rosetta Stone became the ultimate dictionary. By comparing the known Greek words to the unknown hieroglyphs, a man named Jean-François Champollion finally 'cracked the code!'"
4. **Model the Skill:** Show the learner the simplified hieroglyph alphabet chart. "This chart matches our letters to hieroglyph sounds. Let's write the name 'RA', for the sun god." Point to the symbol for 'R' (a mouth) and the symbol for 'A' (an eagle). Draw them on a piece of paper. "See? We just wrote a name in hieroglyphs!"

### **WE DO: Guided Practice Together (10 minutes)**

1. **Introduce the Cartouche:** "When a scribe wrote the name of a pharaoh or queen, they drew an oval around it to show it was a special, royal name. This oval is called a 'cartouche'. Let's draw one together." Guide the learner in drawing a vertical oval shape with a straight line at the bottom.
2. **Practice a Word Together:** "Let's try to translate the word 'CAT' together using our chart. Can you find the symbol for 'C'? How about 'A'? And 'T'? Great! Let's draw them inside a practice cartouche." Work through the process together, providing feedback.

### **YOU DO: Independent Work - Your Royal Name (10-20 minutes)**

#### **Activity: Create Your Royal Cartouche**

**Instructions:** "Now it is your turn to become Egyptian royalty! Your task is to create a beautiful cartouche with your own name written in hieroglyphs."

1. Take a clean sheet of paper.
2. Draw a large, neat cartouche in the center.
3. Using the hieroglyph alphabet chart, carefully find the symbol for each letter of your name.
4. Draw the symbols, one below the other, inside your cartouche.
5. You can decorate the cartouche and the page around it with Egyptian-style patterns or colors.

#### **Success Criteria:**

- Your name is spelled correctly using the hieroglyph chart.
- The symbols are written inside a clearly drawn cartouche.
- Your work is neat and easy to read.

### **Part 3: Conclusion - Sharing the Secret (10 minutes)**

#### **Closure Activity: The Secret Message**

As a final challenge, have the learner write a short, two or three-word "secret message" on a small piece of paper using hieroglyphs (e.g., "SUN FUN" or "I SEE YOU"). Then, you (the educator) can use the chart to decode it. This reinforces the concept in a fun, practical way.

## Recap and Reflect

Ask the learner to show off their finished cartouche and share their secret message. Discuss the following questions:

- "In your own words, what was the Rosetta Stone and why was it so important?"
- "What was the hardest part about writing in hieroglyphs? What was the easiest?"
- "How did it feel to 'crack the code' and be able to read and write in a new way?"

**Reinforce the Takeaway:** "Today, you didn't just draw cool pictures. You experienced how archaeologists and historians solve puzzles from the past. Finding one clue, like the Rosetta Stone, can unlock our understanding of an entire civilization."

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## Assessment

- **Formative (During the lesson):** Listen to the learner's answers during the "We Do" section and Q&A. Are they able to locate symbols on the chart? Do they grasp the concept of the Rosetta Stone as a "key"?
- **Summative (End of lesson):** The completed Royal Cartouche serves as the main assessment. Check it against the success criteria for accuracy, neatness, and completion. The successful creation and decoding of the "secret message" also demonstrates understanding.

## Differentiation and Extension

- **For Learners Needing Support:** Provide a pre-printed worksheet with the cartouche outline already drawn. Help them find the first few letters of their name. Focus on a shorter version of their name if necessary.
- **For Advanced Learners (Extension):**
  - **Papyrus Paper:** Have the learner create their cartouche on a crumpled and flattened piece of a brown paper bag to simulate the look and feel of ancient papyrus.
  - **Clay Tablet:** Use modeling clay to create a flat "tablet." Use a toothpick or pencil to carve the hieroglyphs into the clay for a 3D effect.
  - **Research Challenge:** Challenge the learner to research Jean-François Champollion, or to find and draw a few hieroglyphs that represent whole words (like the ankh for "life" or the scarab beetle for "to become").