

Having Fun With Hieroglyphs

An eight-part, click-through activity on how Egyptian scribes wrote, with printable worksheets and an answer key.



PLAY IT FREE ONLINE

duelinghistory.com/history/Hieroglyphs/

Runs in any web browser on Chromebooks, laptops, tablets or a projector. Nothing to install and no student accounts.

Grades

4–9 (World History, Ancient Civilizations)

Time

One 45–60 minute class, or split over two days

Grouping

Pairs or groups of three

What's inside the activity

1	The Stamp Kit Where the project started: Dr. Catharine H. Roehrig's hieroglyph stamp kit, and how groups used it to send messages.	3 min
2	Champollion Video clip on Jean-François Champollion and the Rosetta Stone, with Start, Stop and Resume controls.	5–8 min
3	Hieroglyphic Alphabet Drag 10 English words onto their hieroglyph spellings, then click How'd I Do? for a score.	8–10 min
4	Code Breaker Words Read 15 short words written in hieroglyphs and pick each one from a drop-down list.	10 min
5	Reading Names How scribes stacked glyphs to save space and look good; students decode five stacked names.	5 min
6	Make Your Own Cartouche Build your name inside a royal cartouche (28 spaces), then print or save it as a picture.	10 min
7	Make Your Own Hieroglyphic Compose a secret message (48 spaces) for a partner to decode; print or save it.	10 min
8	Cartoon Hieroglyphs The 'magic' in the writing: birds drawn without feet, cobras and vipers drawn cut in pieces.	3 min

Students can pick any part from the menu, or use **Next** to go in order. The Code Breaker chart opens from the activity whenever students need it, and page 3 of this guide is a printable copy of it.

Running it in class

Before class

- Open the link on the projector and check that the Champollion video plays. It needs sound.
- Print the Code Breaker chart (page 3) so there's one per group. Students decode faster with a paper chart beside the screen.
- Print the worksheets you plan to use (pages 4–6).

Suggested flow

1. **Hook (5 min).** Show Part 2, the Champollion clip. Ask: *How could anyone read a language nobody had spoken for 1,400 years?*
2. **Learn the code (10 min).** Hand out the Code Breaker chart. Go through the tips at right, then do Part 3 together on the board.
3. **Decode (15 min).** Groups work through Part 4 online or on Worksheet 2. Early finishers can try Part 5, Reading Names.
4. **Create (15 min).** Each student writes their name in a cartouche (Part 6 or Worksheet 3), then writes a short secret message for another group to crack (Part 7).
5. **Close (5 min).** Part 8, Cartoon Hieroglyphs. Ask: *What does drawing a bird without feet tell us about what Egyptians believed?*

Tips to share with students

- **Write the sounds, not the spelling.** Scribes wrote what they heard. Have students say the word out loud before they decode it.
- **Hard and soft C.** Use the hillside or the basket for hard c / k sounds (candy, camel). Use the folded cloth for soft c (city).
- **Reed leaves.** Two reed leaves make the long e sound (tree). One reed leaf is a short i (kiss).
- **The quail chick does three jobs:** o, u and w. Think of boot, food and twin.
- **Two signs for TH.** The cow's belly is th as in think and both. The round sign is th as in the and them.
- **Reading direction.** Glyphs can run across or down. When one glyph sits above another, read the top one first.

Going further

- **Message relay.** Groups of two or three trade secret messages. Each one has to be decoded before the group can send its reply.
- **Door signs.** Print the cartouches and hang them on lockers or the classroom door.
- **Exit ticket.** Write today's date or the word "Egypt" in hieroglyphs.

Credits. Based on the hieroglyph stamp kit by Dr. Catharine H. Roehrig. The kit was first converted to a Flash program with Stephen Hustedde of South Mountain Community College and has now been rebuilt for the web at DuelingHistory.com.

Hieroglyphic Code Breaker

Each sign stands for a sound. Some sounds have more than one sign, so pick the one that fits. Say the word out loud, then write the sounds you hear.

 A vulture	 A forearm	 B foot	 C basket	 C hillside	 C folded cloth
 CH hobble rope	 D hand	 E two reed leaves	 E vulture	 F horned viper	 G pot stand
 G cobra	 H shelter	 H rope	 I reed leaf	 J cobra	 K basket
 K hillside	 L open mouth	 M owl	 N water	 O quail chick	 O vulture
 P stool	 PH horned viper	 Q basket & chick	 R open mouth	 S folded cloth	 SH lake
 T bread loaf	 TH cow's belly	 TH unknown	 U quail chick	 U reed & chick	 V horned viper
 W quail chick	 X basket & cloth	 Y one reed leaf	 Y two reed leaves	 Z door bolt	

WORKSHEET 1**Hieroglyphic Alphabet**

Use the Code Breaker to match each hieroglyph spelling to a word from the box. Write the word on the line.

Word box: both · judge · neighbor · Sphinx · the · them · think · weather · with · Xerox

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

WORKSHEET 2**Code Breaker Words**

Can you figure out the English words from these hieroglyphs? Use the Code Breaker, then write each word from the box on the line.

Word box: at · boot · cat · chin · clue · food · gym · kiss · map · sugar · to · tree · twin · wax · zip

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



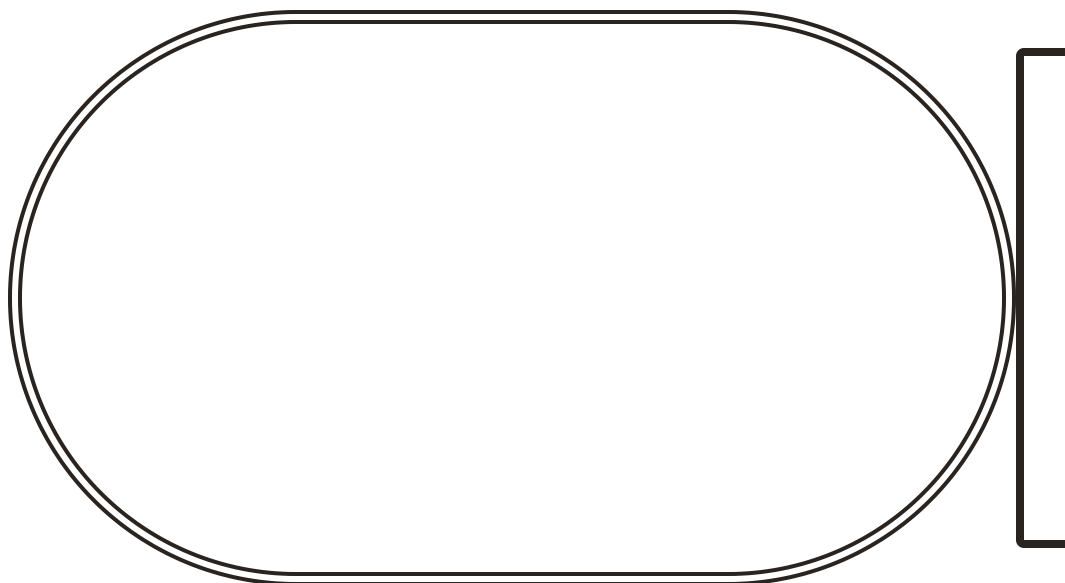
Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

WORKSHEET 3**Make Your Own Cartouche**

A cartouche is the oval rope that surrounded a pharaoh's name. Write your name in hieroglyphs inside it. Like the scribes, you may stack small glyphs on top of each other to save space and make it look good. When a glyph sits above another, it is read first.

Written in a row: F-R-A-N-K

My name in English: _____

BONUS**Secret Message**

Write a short message in hieroglyphs on the top line of each pair. Trade with another group, who will write the English underneath.

Answer Key

Worksheet 1 · Hieroglyphic Alphabet

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1. both |  |
| 2. Sphinx |  |
| 3. think |  |
| 4. with |  |
| 5. Xerox |  |
| 6. the |  |
| 7. neighbor |  |
| 8. judge |  |
| 9. weather |  |
| 10. them |  |

Worksheet 2 · Code Breaker Words

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1. zip |  |
| 2. gym |  |
| 3. boot |  |
| 4. at |  |
| 5. food |  |
| 6. clue |  |
| 7. kiss |  |
| 8. cat |  |
| 9. twin |  |
| 10. to |  |
| 11. map |  |
| 12. tree |  |
| 13. sugar |  |
| 14. chin |  |
| 15. wax |  |

Online Part 5 · Reading Names

The five stacked names are Joseph, Patsy, Nancy, Tony and Edward. Students mouse over each name to check their reading.

Worksheet 3 and Part 7

Answers will vary. Check that each sound has a sign from the chart and that stacked glyphs are read top to bottom.