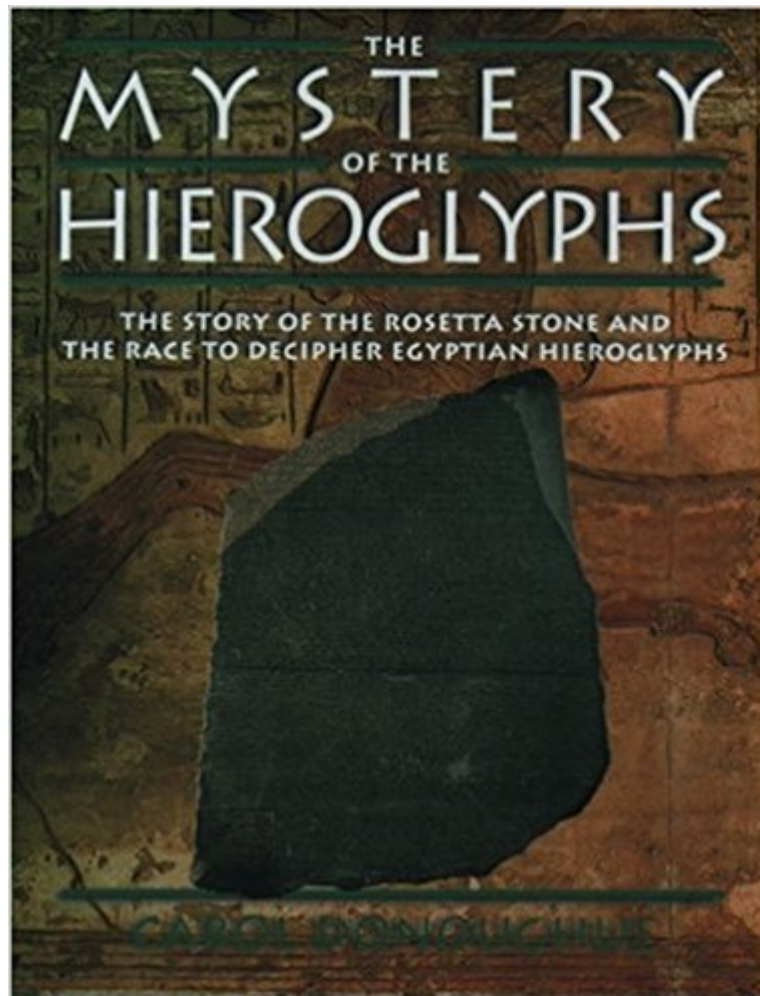




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# The Mystery Of The Hieroglyphs



## 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

Age Range: 8 and up

Lexile Measure: 1030L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 3-6-Through this involving history of the Rosetta Stone, readers share the excitement of being able to translate hieroglyphics. For hundreds of years, Europeans struggled to know what

Egyptian picture writing said, and whether the pictures stood for sounds, for objects, or for ideas. When the Rosetta Stone was discovered in 1799, it provided a translating key: the same text was written in hieroglyphics, Egyptian, and Greek script. Over the years, language experts Thomas Young and Jean Francois Champollion worked to "crack the code." Finally, in 1822, Champollion realized that the hieroglyphs stood for sounds, and the Rosetta Stone and many other ancient writings could be translated. What makes this book so involving is that readers must do their own learning, translating, and reading of hieroglyphics as they travel through this history. By the book's end, they should be able to decipher some glyphs and write their own messages in this ancient language. Graphic examples of concepts make them easy to grasp. For example, readers struggle to decipher words written backwards or upside down in English, to illustrate how difficult it is to read glyphs, which often appear this way. There are some fascinating tidbits of information along the way, here, too. For example, Egyptian scribes practiced writing on small stones, called ostraca, which were like scratch paper. Crisp color photos, reproductions, and sidebars enrich the text. An enticing volume.

Cathryn A. Camper, Minneapolis Public Library Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

PLB 0-19-521553-2 A picture-filled history of the decoding of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, including the discovery of the Rosetta Stone by the French, and its appropriation by the British, the steps leading to deciphering it, and some basic information on how to read hieroglyphs. Also covered are the importance of cartouches, facts on the way the Egyptians wrote, and snippets of cultural information. This fascinating story of historical and linguistic deduction is made clear and accessible to readers. Central chapters on the works of Thomas Young and Jean Francois Champollion on decoding the stone describe in detail the steps of the process that led to the final breakthrough. The text is intelligent and thorough, and the many full-color photographs and drawings both add interest and help clarify difficult points. (maps, diagrams, chronology, further reading, glossary, index)

(Nonfiction. 10-12) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

This short (48 pages) book simply and intelligently tells the story of the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphs for children. It is illustrated with beautiful artwork and is a worthy gift for an artistic, curious middle-school child.

This narrative, with the purposeful use of the word "mystery" in its title, depicts the story of the 1799 discovery of the Rosetta Stone and the race to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs. Once deciphered,

scholars could read the writing covering the statues, temples, and mummy cases that have been found among the ruins of ancient Egypt. As with all good mysteries, the details of unfolding events are revealed step-by-step: the discovery of the Rosetta Stone by the French, its appropriation by the British, and the steps leading to its deciphering. The chapters on decoding the stone highlight the work of Thomas Young and Jean François Champollion and serve as a profound example of scholarship building upon itself, ultimately leading to illumination and insight. The text is lively and thorough. Donoghue clarifies difficult points with many photographs, drawings, maps, a timeline, a glossary, and an index. Young readers will delight in a whole chapter devoted to basic information on how to read hieroglyphs, and in the interactive exercises throughout the book, which get them working as Young and Champollion might have. They will come to understand the important role of cartouches in unlocking the mystery of the Rosetta Stone, learn facts about how Egyptians wrote (in all directions, often wrapped around pictures), and gain insight into Egyptian culture. Students will certainly appreciate the discussion of how young boys became scribes, which was considered to be very important, and will most likely squirm as they read: "A boy's ears are on his back; he listens when he is beaten" (p. 11).

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