

GD315A Definitions

- *Pictograph*—elementary pictures or sketches to represent the things depicted.
- *Petryglyph*—carved or scratched signs or simple pictures on rock.
- *Ideagraph*—symbols to represent ideas or concepts.
- *Cuneiform*—wedge-shaped.
- *Rebus Writing*—pictures and/or pictographs representing words and syllables with the same or similar sound as the object depicted.
- *Hieroglyphics*—Egyptian, ‘the gods’ words translates to ‘hieroglyphics.’ The Greek meaning= ‘sacred carvings.’
- *Glyph*—picture.
- *Cartouche*—a bracketlike plaque containing the glyphs for an important name.
- *Sarcophagus*—pictorial decoration on a gravestone.
- *Hieratic Script*—a simplification of hieroglyphic inscription, apparently caused by ‘writing’ hieroglyphics with a pen instead of a brush.
- *Demotic Script*—an abstraction of hieroglyphic writing, more abstract than hieratic and used for secular purposes.
- *The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day*—commonly known as *Books of the Dead*—funerary texts, to accompany their ‘bearers’ into the afterlife.
- *Scarab Seals*—stones sculpted with the likeness of the scarab beetle on the top, with the underside carved with a hieroglyphic inscription (often a cartouche).

Information to Know

Around 35,000BC we have evidence of paintings in caves, seen in both Europe and Africa.

It is important to note that, as far as evidence has documented, these cave paintings appeared not to have been produced for artistic reasons but for communicating information in a visual manner (p4).

Geometric shapes, such as dots and squares have been found drawn with the images of animals in caves. We may surmise that these geometric shapes may have been a form of writing (*protowriting*, HGD). They may have simply been depictions of man-made objects. We don’t have enough conclusive evidence to determine the exact nature of these markings.

The cave depictions of animals are known as pictographs. Pages 4–6: pictographs evolved into:

- 1 art
- 2 writing

Art, throughout medieval times especially, was used as pictorial descriptions for the illiterate (i.e. paintings in Catholic Churches).

Originally, it is believed that all peoples were nomadic hunter-gatherers.

- Approx. 8,000BC evidence cites the development of agriculture
- “ 6,000BC Copper Age
- “ 3,000BC Bronze Age
- “ 4,000BC the development of a village culture, apparently in Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates), developed by the Sumerian people. The concept of the city emerged, and with it the social structure that has evidenced itself throughout history whenever a significantly large group of people inhabit a relatively small geographic area. *With this social structure came the development of a written system for maintaining information, initially pictographic.*

Approx. 2,800BC the writing style of pictographs changed from inscriptions in orderly columns to mark-making by literally turning the pictographs onto their sides and writing them in horizontal rows: left to right and top to bottom. It is presumed that it was easier and perhaps faster to record the pictographs in this way, but *it also served to make the pictographs less literal.*

Approx. 2,500BC presumably after new kinds of mark-making tools were developed, the drawn images took on a wedge-shape, which appears to have propelled the making of pictographs into abstract sign-writing which is now known as *cuneiform writing* (*cuneiform*, in Latin means *wedge-shaped*).

Through the development of Sumerian writing, written symbols thus moved from the pictorial representation of the pictograph to the development of *ideographs* (symbols which represent abstract ideas or concepts).

As writing continued to evolve, the system of depicting things with pictographs or ideas with ideographs led to a system whereby the *sounds of the objects were depicted*—and cuneiform developed into *rebus writing* (a system whereby pictographs were used to represent words/syllables with the sound of the object depicted). Cuneiform developed into a point where abstract signs represented syllables which were made by combining simpler sounds. IMPORTANT: in its most simplified form, cuneiform consisted of 560 signs! Only a select few were given the opportunity to master cuneiform writing!

538BC: the Persians overtook Mesopotamia and the Mesopotamian civilization began to perish. Further takeovers by the Greeks and Romans left the Mesopotamian culture in ruins by the time of the birth of Christ.

The Egyptian hieroglyphic system of picture writing went virtually unchanged from approx 3,100BC until 394AD. The longevity of the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system is in contrast to the Sumerian system, which developed from pictographs to cuneiform writing.

It wasn't until the early 1800s that a translation of hieroglyphics finally occurred, this being the deciphering of the *Rosetta Stone* (pp 11, 12) in 1822 by Jean François Champollion. Champollion found that some of the hieroglyphics were alphabetic, some syllabic and others determinative. He also became aware that *hieroglyphics could be read as pictographs, but they could also function phonetically*. He found the names 'Ptolemy' (king of Egypt) and 'Cleopatra.' The Rosetta stone is dated c. 197BC, found by Napoleon's army in Rosetta, Egypt in 1799.

After deciphering the hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone, Champollion deciphered a number of cartouches, and translated hieroglyphics to the extent that 19thC historians finally could interpret the ancient Egyptian culture.

Hieroglyphics were written either horizontally or vertically, and either left-to-right or right-to-left. Some examples (pp 12, 13: Sarcophagus of Aspalta) show all four possible layout combinations.

The *Egyptians are credited with developing papyrus* thus relieving writing of its cumbersome substrates of clay or stone. Papyrus served as a surface for manuscripts and scrolls.

Pp12–14: a finished 'sheet' of papyrus had an *upper surface of horizontal fibers—known as recto, and an underside surface of vertical fibers, verso*).

Approx 1,500BC, hieratic script was developed by priests, used for religious writings.

Approx 400BC, demotic script, even more abstract than hieratic, was developed presumably for commercial and legal writing.

It was the Egyptians who first developed illustrated manuscripts—the combination of words and pictures. A primary example is the Egyptian funerary papyri, *The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day* (*Books of the Dead*). Initially inscribed on Pyramids, then coffins, then on papyrus, from c.2,345BC with the Pyramid texts to c.1580BC with the papyrus manuscripts, indicating that as the Egyptian culture evolved, it became more democratic and secular in nature.