Name: _____

Date: _____

THE ROSETTA STONE

For centuries, the writing of the ancient Egyptians remained a great mystery until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. In 1799, French soldiers were building a fort near the Egyptian village of Rosetta. The soldiers unearthed a dark grey-pinkish stone about four feet tall and 2½ feet wide. The Rosetta Stone was inscribed in three languages. One language was Greek; the others were not yet understood Egyptian scripts. The Greek text described a law written in 196 BCE. Scholars presumed that the Greek writing might give clues to the meaning of the mysterious Egyptian symbols.

From Egypt to the British Museum

After the Rosetta Stone's discovery, the British seized Egypt in 1801 and transported the artifact to the British Museum. There, scholars carefully studied the scripts, but their work proceeded slowly because parts of the stone had crumbled.In time, the scholars concluded that in addition to Greek, the law was written in hieroglyphics and demotic scripts. Hieroglyphics was the sacred writing of ancient Egypt and was known only by the most learned priests. Demotic was a cursive script that the Egyptians used for less formal writing. Demotic writing shared some similarities with Greek.

Deciphering Hieroglyphics

Over time, scholars concluded that the law was written in three scripts: Greek, hieroglyphics, and demotic. Hieroglyphics was the sacred writing of ancient Egypt and was known only by the most learned priests. Demotic was a cursive script used by the Egyptians for informal writing.

In 1822, a French linguist named Jean Champollion matched several characters from the three texts. Gradually, he deciphered the system of hieroglyphic writing. Champollion determined that hieroglyphics had originally been pictographs but later represented sounds. With Champollion's key, the mysterious hieroglyphic text became readable, and in the years that followed, scholars explained many long-standing mysteries of ancient Egypt.

Modern Controversy

Since 2003, Egypt has formally requested that the British return the Rosetta Stone to its original home. The British Museum and other major museums, however, have argued that ancient artifacts such as the Rosetta Stone belong not to their home nation but to all of humanity

Jean Champollion

Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the Blanks

Much of the history of a__c__e__t Egypt remained a great m__s__e__y until French s__l__i__rs found a g__a__i__e stone near the Egyptian city of R__s__t__a. A law from 196BCE was i__s__r__b__d on the stone in h__e__o__l__p__i__s, demotic and G__e__k. Scholars carefully studied the writing and concluded that the same law was written in three scripts. Twenty-three years after the *d__s__o__e__y of the Rosetta Stone, French linguist Jean C__a__p__l__i__n developed an a__p__a__et of h__e__o__l__p__i__s. Later historians used Champollion's key to study other E__y__t__an artifacts. Within a few years, historians were able to use C__a__p__l__i__n's key to unlock many *m__s__e__i__s that had perplexed scholars for centuries.

Answer in complete sentences

1. Who or what was the Rosetta Stone named for?

*2. Explain how the Rosetta Stone made it possible for Champollion to decipher hieroglyphics.

3. Explain why the history of Egypt remained a mystery for centuries?

*4. In your opinion, does the Rosetta Stone belong in the British Museum or in Egypt? Explain your reasoning.

5. What reason does the author give for the end of the age of the pharaohs?

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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