

Ancient Egyptian Cave Paintings and Hieroglyphics

Cave Paintings

Egyptian cave paintings often date back to the **Neolithic age** and some of the most famous can be found in the Glif Kebir plateau in south-west Egypt. They show mostly **pastoral scenes** and moments of daily domestic life. Most experts feel that they were painted for religious reasons.

Early cave paintings have four basic colours of paint: black, red, white and yellow. The artist would mix them with oils to create a paste that they would either rub on the rock or they would spray it on by blowing through a hollowed bone.

In the Wadi Sura part of the plateau, two of the most striking examples of cave paintings can be found. They are called the Cave of Swimmers and the Cave of Beasts. The Hungarian aviator and desert explorer László Almásy discovered the Cave of Swimmers in 1933. The cave has many images of swimming humans and **negative handprints**. The 7000 year old Cave of Beasts was found by Massimo and Jacopo Foggini in 2002. It has paintings of around 5000 Neolithic figures of animals, monsters and people as well as many negative handprints.

Humans have been talking to each other and expressing ideas and emotions through their art for thousands of years. Two types of this early art are Egyptian cave paintings and hieroglyphics.

Hieroglyphics



Writing about these strange symbols, the ancient Greeks created the name for them as the word 'hieroglyphikos' means 'sacred writings' in their language.



Hieroglyphs can be symbols, objects or pictures of living creatures. They represent mostly sounds and complete ideas such as fire, home, woman and heart, not letters. Hieroglyphics can be hard to read as they don't follow the rules of modern writing: there are no spaces or punctuation between words and they can be read left to right, right to left, vertically or horizontally.



Until 305 BC, hieroglyphics was still in use for burials, monuments and important court and religious documents. As the Greek general Ptolemy and his family took control of Egypt and continued to rule for hundreds of years, Greek soon became the main Egyptian language and people forgot about hieroglyphics.

Ancient Egyptian Cave Paintings and Hieroglyphics



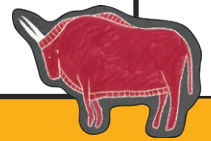
Did You Know...?

The earliest form of hieroglyphics dates back to 4000 BC.

Found by French soldiers in 1799, the Rosetta Stone had three different types of writing on it: hieroglyphics, **Demotic** and ancient Greek. Scholar Jean-François Champollion was able to use his knowledge of ancient Greek to translate the text.



Ancient Egyptian cave paintings and hieroglyphics are two well-known examples of how art can help us to better understand our past. Even today, they still enchant many people who continuously work to learn from these types of artistic expression.



Glossary

Demotic:	a language used by Egyptians between 7 th and 5 th century BC.
negative handprints:	Art that is created by placing a hand on the wall then spraying paint all around it. A clear outline of the hand can be seen once the hand is taken away.
Neolithic age:	A period of history between 10,000 BC and 3000 BC.
pastoral scenes:	Art that depicts the life of shepherds and farmers.

Questions

1. How old is the Cave of Beasts? Tick one.

- 4000
- 7000
- 8000
- 5000

2. Draw **four** lines and match each name to their description.

Ptolemy

Jean-François
Champollion

László Almásy

Massimo Foggini

Scholar who was
able to translate the
Rosetta stone.

The Hungarian aviator
and desert explorer
who found the Cave
of Swimmers.

The Greek general who
took control of Egypt.

One of two men who
found the Cave of Beasts.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Humans have been talking to each other and _____ ideas and _____ through their art for thousands of years.

4. Look at the first paragraph in the section **Egyptian Cave Paintings**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'home'.

5. Where is the Glif Kebir plateau located?

6. Look at the section **Egyptian Cave Paintings**.

Name a moment of daily life you think you might see in one of the ancient cave paintings.
Explain your answer.

7. How do you think the people who found the cave paintings felt when they discovered them? Explain your answer.

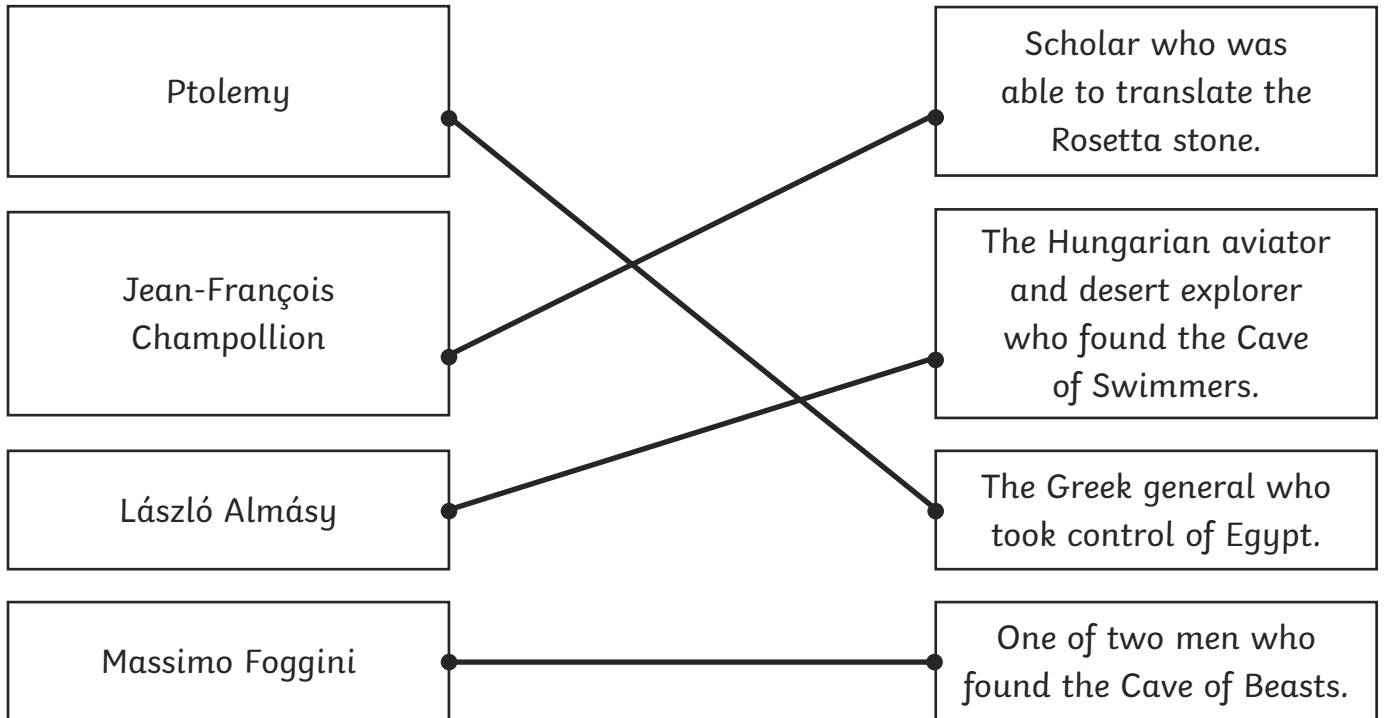
8. Why do you think many people are fascinated by ancient cave paintings?
Explain your answer.

Answers

1. How old is the Cave of Beasts? Tick one.

- 4000
- 7000**
- 8000
- 5000

2. Draw **four** lines and match each name to their description.



3. Fill in the missing words.

Humans have been talking to each other and **expressing** ideas and **emotions** through their art for thousands of years.

4. Look at the first paragraph in the section **Egyptian Cave Paintings**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'home'.

domestic

5. Where is the Glif Kebir plateau located?

The Glif Kebir is located in south-west Egypt.

6. Look at the section **Egyptian Cave Paintings**.

Name a moment of daily life you think you might see in one of the ancient cave paintings. Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think I might see children running and playing. The cave of swimming shows people swimming so another activity like running or playing is possible.

7. How do you think the people who found the cave paintings felt when they discovered them? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they may have felt a bit excited but also a bit confused. They would have felt excited because they probably knew they were discovering something and a bit confused because they weren't quite sure what they had found yet.

8. Why do you think many people are fascinated by ancient cave paintings? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think people are fascinated because they are our shared ancestors and it is interesting to see how they lived and did similar things to us (such as swimming) thousands of years ago.

Ancient Egyptian Cave Paintings and Hieroglyphics

Egyptian Cave Paintings

Found in caves all over the world, cave paintings often date back to the **Neolithic Age**. A number of these caves can be found in the Glif Kebir plateau in south-west Egypt. The paintings are often **pastoral scenes**, images of warfare, hunting parties and moments of daily domestic life; many scholars believe that they were created for some religious purpose.

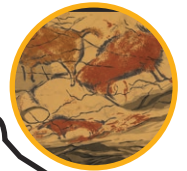
Egyptian prehistoric cave artists used four main colours of paint: black, red, white and yellow. They would mix them with oils to create a paste that they would either rub on the rock or they would spray it on by blowing through a hollowed bone.

Found in the Wadi Sura part of the plateau (which loosely translates as the 'Valley of Pictures' in Arabic), two of the most striking examples of cave paintings are the Cave of Swimmers and the Cave of Beasts.

During an expedition in 1933, the Cave of Swimmers was found by the Hungarian aviator and desert explorer László Almásy. It has numerous paintings of swimming humans along with unique **negative handprints**.

In 2002, the Cave of Beasts was found by Massimo and Jacopo Foggini. It displays around 5000 Neolithic figures of animals, monsters, people as well as many negative handprints. Located about 10km west of the Cave of Swimmers, it is more than 7000 years old.

For thousands of years, humans have been demonstrating their artistic talent through pictures and writing. Two easily recognisable types of early art are Egyptian cave paintings and Egyptian hieroglyphics.



Hieroglyphics



Dating back to 4000 BC, Egyptian hieroglyphics has intrigued most people who see it. Known to speak of these strange symbols in their own writings, the Ancient Greeks created the name for it; the word 'hieroglyphikos' means 'sacred writings' in Ancient Greek.



Often mistaken for an alphabet, hieroglyphs can be symbols, objects or pictures of living creatures. They represent mostly sounds (phonograms) and complete ideas such as fire, home, woman and heart (ideograms). There were several forms of ancient Egyptian writing but hieroglyphics was often only used for tombs, religious temples and sacred monuments. Hieroglyphics can be confusing as it doesn't follow the modern writing rules: there are no spaces or punctuation between words and they can be read forwards, backwards, vertically or horizontally.

Ancient Egyptian Cave Paintings and Hieroglyphics

As a form of artistic expression, the style of pictures and symbols often mirrored the styles of art that developed over Egyptian history.



Until the Greek general Ptolemy began to rule Egypt in 305 BC, hieroglyphics was still in use for burials, monuments and important court and religious documents. As his family continued to rule, Greek soon became the main language for most Egyptians and the use of hieroglyphics slowly faded away.

In 1799, the Rosetta Stone was found by French soldiers. Named after a town nearby, it had three different types of carved writing: hieroglyphics, **Demotic** and ancient Greek. Using his knowledge of ancient Greek, scholar Jean-François Champollion was able to understand that hieroglyphs represented mostly sounds and used this knowledge to translate the text.



Over time, many ancient peoples have expressed their culture and history through their paintings and writings. Given their continued popularity, cave paintings and hieroglyphics will continue to inspire us to learn more for years to come.



Glossary

Demotic:	A language used by Egyptians between the 7 th and 5 th century BC.
negative handprints:	Art that is created by placing a hand on the wall then spraying paint all around it. A clear outline of the hand can be seen once the hand is taken away.
Neolithic age:	A period of history between 10,000 BC and 3000 BC.
pastoral scenes:	Art that depicts the life of shepherds and farmers.

Questions

1. What kind of hieroglyphs represent complete ideas? Tick one.

- phonograms
- Neolithic figures
- negative handprints
- ideograms

2. Draw **four** lines and match each name to their description.

Wadi Sura

It displays around 5000 Neolithic figures of animals, monsters, people as well as many negative handprints.

The Cave of Swimmers

It has numerous paintings of swimming humans along with unique negative handprints.

The Cave of Beasts

The name comes from a loose translation in Arabic, meaning the 'Valley of Pictures'.

The Rosetta Stone

It has three different types of carved writing: hieroglyphics, demotic and ancient Greek.

3. Fill in the missing words.

As a form of artistic _____, the style of pictures and symbols often mirrored the styles of art that _____ over Egyptian history.

4. Look at the first paragraph in the section **Hieroglyphics**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'interested'.

5. What do scholars believe is the reason why cave paintings were created?

6. How do you think Jean-François Champollion felt when he was able to translate the hieroglyphics? Explain your answer.

7. Explain in your own words what you have learnt about ancient Egyptian cave paintings using 25 words or fewer.

8. Look at the section **Hieroglyphics**.

What other concept do you think might be an ideogram? Explain your answer.

9. Look at the section **Egyptian Cave Paintings**.

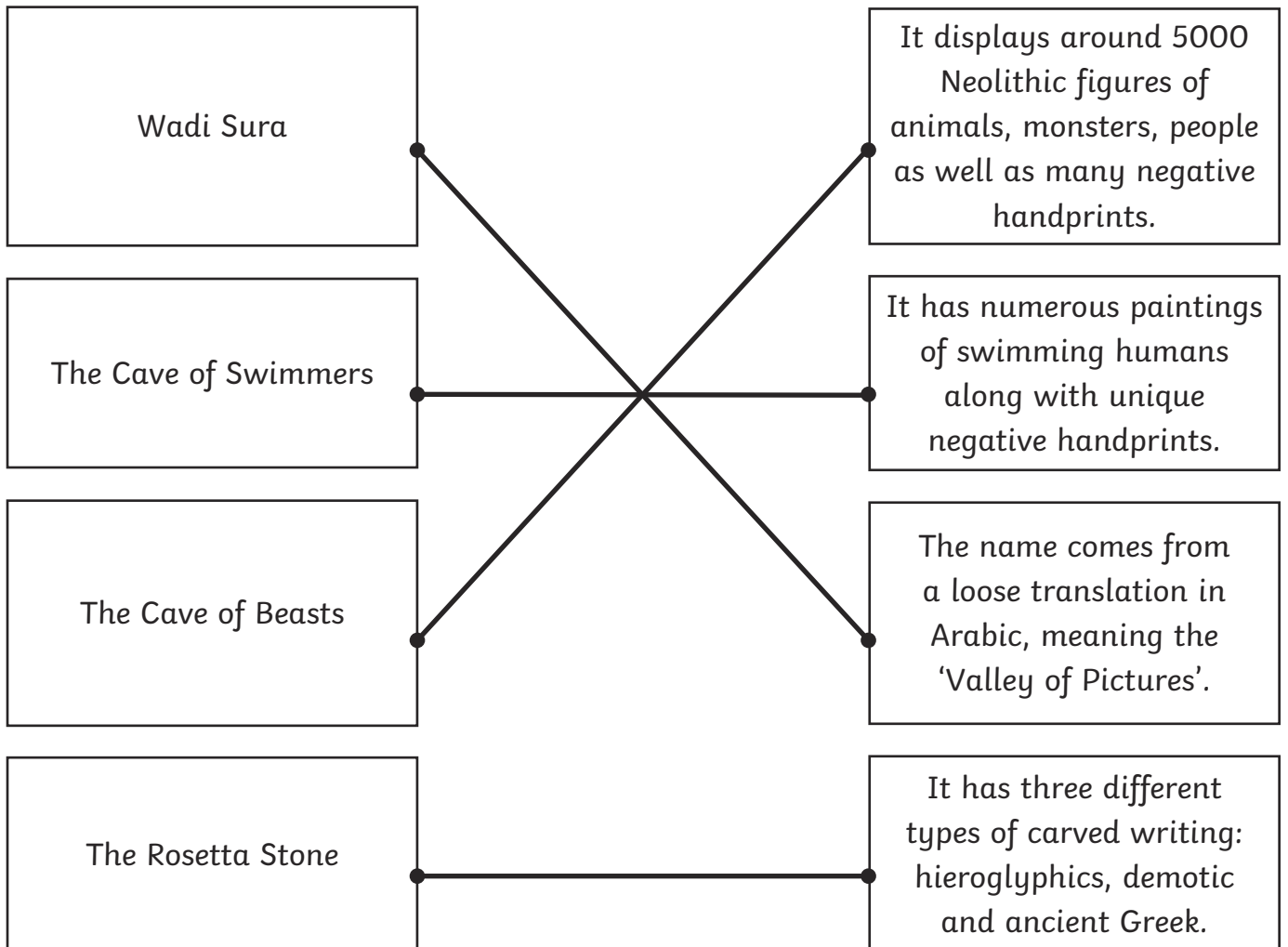
Can you think of another reason why people created cave paintings? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. What kind of hieroglyphs represent complete ideas? Tick one.

- phonograms
- Neolithic figures
- negative handprints
- ideograms

2. Draw **four** lines and match each name to their description.



3. Fill in the missing words.

As a form of artistic **expression**, the style of pictures and symbols often mirrored the styles of art that **developed** over Egyptian history.

4. Look at the first paragraph in the section **Hieroglyphics**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'interested'.

intrigued

5. What do scholars believe is the reason why cave paintings were created?

Many scholars believe that they were created for some religious purpose.

6. How do you think Jean-François Champollion felt when he was able to translate the hieroglyphics? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think he probably was excited that he had finally been able to do it. I bet it took a lot of work so he was a bit tired too. I think he was probably proud of himself and knew how important his discovery was.

7. Explain in your own words what you have learnt about ancient Egyptian cave paintings using 25 words or fewer.

Ancient Egyptian cave paintings are mostly found in the Wadi Sura. They feature paintings of humans, animals, monsters and handprints in four basic colours.

8. Look at the section **Hieroglyphics**.

What other concept do you think might be an ideogram? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think water by itself would have been an ideogram. Given Egypt's climate and the importance of the Nile, I think it would definitely have been an important idea worthy of its own hieroglyphic.

9. Look at the section **Egyptian Cave Paintings**.

Can you think of another reason why people created cave paintings? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think people may have created cave paintings as a kind of decoration. If they lived in these caves, they could have been similar to the family photographs and art we decorate our homes with today.

Ancient Egyptian Cave Paintings and Hieroglyphics

Egyptian Cave Paintings

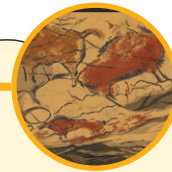
Dating back to the Neolithic age (a period of human history between 10,000 BC and 3000 BC), cave paintings have been found in secluded caves all around the globe. Some of the most famous of these caves can be found and seen in the Glif Kebir plateau in south-west Egypt. Displaying mostly pastoral scenes (art that depicts the life of shepherds and farmers), images of warfare, hunting parties and moments of daily domestic life, many scholars believe that they were created as some part of a religious ceremony or offering.

The ancient artists who painted these caves used four main colours of paint: black, red, white and yellow. Mixing them with oils and fats, they created a paste that they would either rub on the rock directly or they would spray it on by blowing it through a hollowed bone.

Most Egyptian cave paintings that have been found are located within the plateau in the Wadi Sura, which loosely translates as the 'Valley of Pictures' in Arabic. It is home to two of the most striking examples of cave paintings: the Cave of Swimmers and the Cave of Beasts.

Discovered by the Hungarian aviator and desert explorer László Almásy in 1933, the Cave of Swimmers has numerous Neolithic images of swimming humans along with distinct 'negative' handprints that were created by placing a hand on the wall then spraying paint on and all around it. Once the hand was removed, a clear outline of it could be seen on the stone.

For many millennia, humans have been expressing themselves and communicating through pictures and writing. Some of the most recognisable types of early art are Egyptian cave paintings and Egyptian hieroglyphics.



Found by Massimo and Jacopo Foggini in 2002, the Cave of Beasts features approximately 5000 Neolithic figures of animals, monsters, people as well as a plethora of 'negative' handprints. It is located about 10km west of the Cave of Swimmers and is more than 7000 years old.

Hieroglyphics



Fascinating most people who have seen it, Egyptian hieroglyphics date back to 4000 BC. They evolved and changed over time, becoming more complex through the years. Ancient Greeks were known to speak of these strange symbols in their own writings; they also created the name for it as the word 'hieroglyphikos' means 'sacred writings' in ancient Greek.

Ancient Egyptian Cave Paintings and Hieroglyphics

Not really a straightforward alphabet, hieroglyphs can be symbols, objects or pictures of living creatures that can represent mostly sounds (phonograms) and complete ideas such as fire, home, man, woman and heart (ideograms). It was one of several forms of ancient Egyptian writing and used mostly for tombs, religious temples and sacred monuments.



Unique and sometimes confusing, hieroglyphics doesn't follow the rules of modern writing: there are no spaces or punctuation between words and they can be read left to right, right to left, vertically or horizontally.



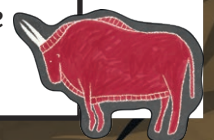
Only someone familiar with ancient Egyptian grammar would be able to tell where a word, clause, sentence or paragraph ends. Interestingly, the style of pictures and symbols followed and changed to often mirror the styles of art that developed throughout ancient Egyptian history.



Until the Ptolemaic emperors (descendants of Ptolemy, a general of Alexander the Great who took control of Egypt in 305 BC) ruled, hieroglyphics was still the preferred writing system for burials, monuments and important court and religious documents. With continued Greek rule over hundreds of years, their language soon became the language of choice for most Egyptians and hieroglyphics slowly faded into obscurity.

In 1799, the Rosetta Stone, named after the town near where it was unearthed, was found by French soldiers. It had three different types of ancient writing carved into it: hieroglyphics, Demotic (the language used by Egyptians between the 7th and 5th century BC) and ancient Greek. Able to read ancient Greek, scholar Jean-François Champollion discovered that hieroglyphs represented mostly sounds and was able to decipher the text.

Throughout history, many civilisations have given us glimpses of creativity and imagination that are specific to their culture and geographic region. Ancient Egyptian cave paintings and hieroglyphics are two well-loved examples of how art can help us to better understand our ancestors. Hopefully, they will continue to fascinate and educate many people for generations to come.



Questions

1. What three languages are carved on the Rosetta Stone? Tick one.

- Arabic, ancient Greek and Hungarian
- Hieroglyphics, Demotic and ancient Greek
- Arabic, Italian and Hieroglyphics
- Latin, ancient Greek and Demotic

2. Draw **four** lines and match each name to their description.

1799

2002

1933

305 BC

The Cave of Beasts was discovered in this year.

The Rosetta Stone was found in this year.

The year that General Ptolemy took control of Egypt.

The year that László Almásy found the Cave of Swimmers.

3. Fill in the missing words.

For many _____, humans have been expressing themselves and _____ through pictures and writing.

4. Look at the paragraph about the Rosetta Stone.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'solve or translate'.

5. What does 'hieroglyphikos' mean in ancient Greek?

6. How do you think the French soldiers felt when they unearthed the Rosetta Stone?
Explain your answer.

7. Explain in your own words what you have learnt about hieroglyphics using 25 words or fewer.

8. If you were to create a cave painting about life today, what sort of scenes would you paint? Explain your answer.

9. If you were to create your own set of hieroglyphics. What symbol would you use for the concept of intelligence? Explain your answer.

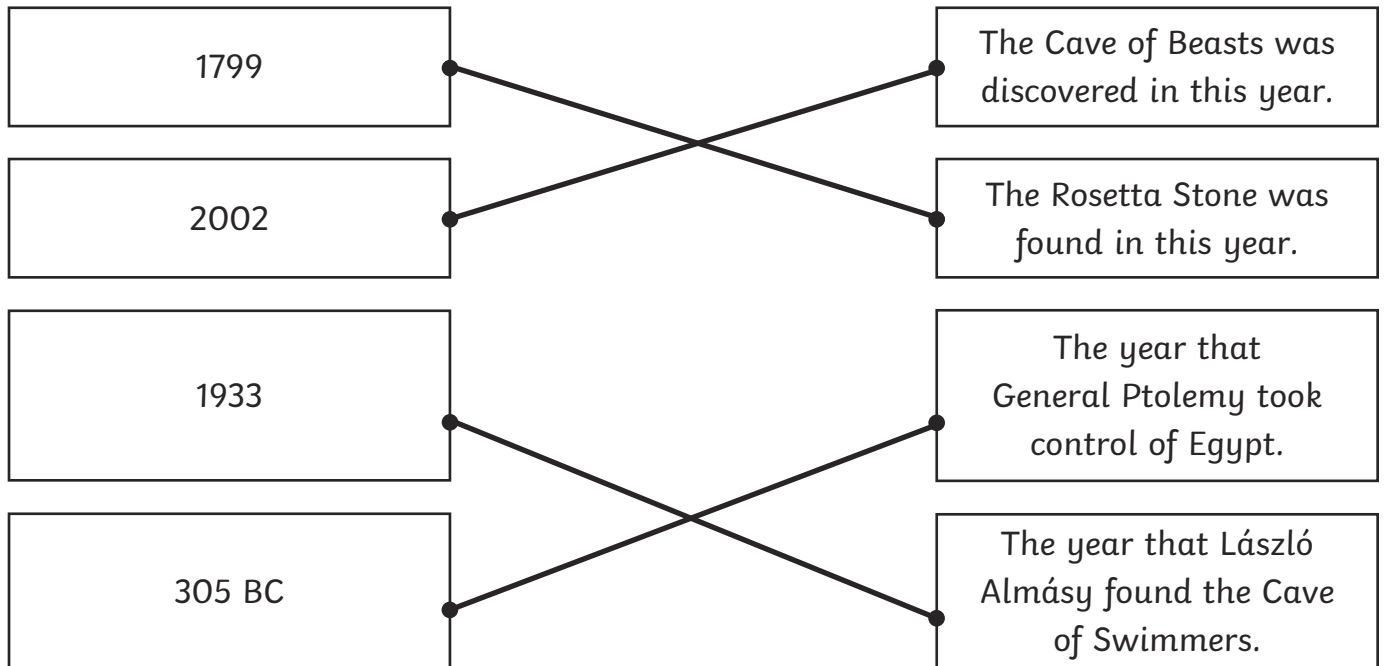
10. What do you think the artists who painted the cave paintings were feeling when they created their art? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. What three languages are carved on the Rosetta Stone? Tick one.

- Arabic, ancient Greek and Hungarian
- Hieroglyphics, Demotic and ancient Greek**
- Arabic, Italian and Hieroglyphics
- Latin, ancient Greek and Demotic

2. Draw **four** lines and match each name to their description.



3. Fill in the missing words.

For many **millennia**, humans have been expressing themselves and **communicating** through pictures and writing.

4. Look at the paragraph about the Rosetta Stone.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'solve or translate'.

decipher

5. What does 'hieroglyphikos' mean in ancient Greek?

Hieroglyphikos means 'sacred writings' in ancient Greek.

6. How do you think the French soldiers felt when they unearthed the Rosetta Stone?
Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they may have been excited because they had found something really old and interesting. I think they may have been confused because they possibly couldn't read it.

7. Explain in your own words what you have learnt about hieroglyphics using 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Hieroglyphics were symbols that could represent a sound or an idea and used for burials and religious ceremonies. They were translated using the Rosetta Stone.

8. If you were to create a cave painting about life today, what sort of scenes would you paint? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think I would create a scene about a modern professional sport such as football because it is something most countries in the world play and would recognise.

9. If you were to create your own set of hieroglyphics. What symbol would you use for the concept of intelligence? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would use a drawing of the human brain with a light bulb over it because it would be easily recognised - we all know that intelligence is in the brain and a light bulb is often used for ideas on its own.

10. What do you think the artists who painted the cave paintings were feeling when they created their art? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: If it was for religious purposes, I think they were feeling solemn and peaceful. They might have been anxious if they created their paintings as an offer for their gods.