



# Picture writing

Hieroglyphics is the early writing system invented by the Ancient Egyptians more than 5,000 years ago. The *Shipwrecked Sailor* by Tamara Bower is based on a real papyrus scroll of hieroglyphics that tells a tale of a voyage on the Red Sea to an enchanted land. Parts of the story are translated into hieroglyphics – pictures of people, animals, and everyday objects.

Have your child create an Egyptian scroll and write something in hieroglyphics (we provide the alphabet). It can be a proclamation, directions to find a hidden treasure, a sleepover invitation, or anything you like.



What you'll need:

- Paper, adhesive tape for the scroll
- Pencil or colored pencils for writing the hieroglyphs

First, your child will create his scroll. Measure the scroll using the Ancient Egyptian unit called a cubit. That's the length of your child's forearm. So, a 3-cubit scroll might be three sheets of 8-1/2 x 11 paper taped together (overlap the paper a bit before taping).

Use the hieroglyphic alphabet provided on the next page. The Ancient Egyptians didn't use vowels (A, E, I, O, U) as we do today, so the symbols here represent the closest sounds.

**Left to right ... or?** Hieroglyphics can be written from top to bottom, or right to left, or left to right. Confusing? Here's the secret: If the animal or person is facing left, you read from left to right (as we do in English). But if the animal or person is facing right, you read from right to left.

Once your scroll is done, roll it up and tie it with a piece of twine (would the Egyptians have had fancy ribbon?) and present it!

### More learning online

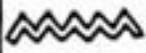
- Ancient Egypt Hieroglyphs  
<http://www.childrensuniversitmanchester.ac.uk/interactives/history/egypt/hieroglyphs/>
- Hieroglyphics e-card (National Geographic):  
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/egypt/translator.html>

### More to think about

What if you invented your own pictorial alphabet? What would it look like? Create your own set of symbols to represent the letters A to Z and practice writing using your invented alphabet. How would someone be able to read your writing?

We learned how to read hieroglyphics from the Rosetta Stone – a stone that had the same words inscribed in three languages: hieroglyphics, Greek, and another Egyptian language called Demotic. *Seeker of Knowledge: The Man Who Deciphered Egyptian Hieroglyphics* by James Rumford tells the story of Jean-Francois Champollion, who – from the time he was a young boy – dreamed of becoming the first person to read hieroglyphics.

# Egyptian Hieroglyphics

	A	vulture		M	owl
	B	leg		N	water
	D	hand		P	stool
	F	viper		Q	hill
	G	stand		R	mouth
	H	rope		S	cloth
	I	reed		T	loaf
	J	serpent		W	chick
	K	basket		Y	reeds
	L	lion		Z	bolt