

Create your own Rosetta Stone

What is the Rosetta Stone?

Many people think the Rosetta Stone is the most important ancient Egyptian object ever found. It is certainly the most visited object in the British Museum in London.

It was found in 1799 by some French soldiers on an expedition with Napoleon and is a large piece of rock just over 1m high. It had been used to build part of a fort wall near the town of Rashid (Rosetta).

The stone is engraved with lots of writing and is really important because it was the first object to help us to understand ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. This is because it is written in three languages and, quite a few people tried to work out what it said. In time, it became clear that all the languages were saying the same thing. The languages are:

- Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic, which uses pictures and symbols
- Ancient Egyptian demotic, which was writing used by educated people on important documents and for government work.
- Ancient Greek, because the Greeks ruled Egypt for over 200 years

The stone is called a *stèle* and is part of a larger one which was probably displayed in a temple. It was carved to honour the pharaoh Ptolemy V (fifth) to make sure everyone knew he was the rightful king.



The Rosetta Stone (British Museum)
and a small model Rosetta Stone, including a close-up, from RAMM's handling collection

How about writing your own stele in two languages?

- Write in English
- Use pictures. These could be drawn or cut out of magazines

Perhaps you could write about something you have really enjoyed doing:

- Best holiday?
- Something you have done with your family or friends?

You could draw the shape of the Rosetta Stone on your paper, or you could cut the shape out of cardboard to stick your writing to.

You will need to keep your sentences short so there is space for your pictures.

Here is an example:

