

THE INVENTION OF WRITING

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Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. It is not known precisely when or where *Homo sapiens*, our modern species of the lineage of conscious, thinking people, emerged. It is believed that we evolved from a species that lived in the southern part of _____.

- A. Europe
- B. Middle East
- C. Africa
- D. Asia

2. Writing is the visual counterpart of speech. The limitations of speech are the fallibility of human memory and an immediacy of expression that cannot transcend time and place. The invention of writing brought people the luster of civilization and made it possible to preserve hard-won knowledge, experiences, and thoughts. The development of visible language had its earliest origins in _____.

- A. lettering
- B. music
- C. simple pictures
- D. symbolic designs

3. Throughout the world, from Africa to North America to the islands of New Zealand, prehistoric people left numerous _____, which are carved or scratched signs or simple figures on rocks.

- A. petroglyphs
- B. hieroglyphs
- C. pictographs
- D. ideographs

4. The animals painted on the Lascaux caves date back to 15,000 years BCE. These early pictures depicted scenes of survival and rituals relating to hunting. The animals painted in the caves are _____, elementary pictures or sketches that represent the things depicted.

- A. petroglyphs
- B. hieroglyphs
- C. pictographs
- D. ideographs

5. Abstract geometric signs, including dots, squares and other configurations are intermingled with the animals in many cave paintings and petroglyphs. The symbols may represent ideas or concepts known as _____.

- A. petroglyphs
- B. hieroglyphs
- C. pictographs
- D. ideographs

6. Early humans ceased nomadic wanderings and established a village society, ushering in an era of durable tools and weapons; followed by the invention of the wheel. Shortly before 3000 BCE, the _____ settled in Mesopotamia and developed a pictographic language to record inventories of grain and animals.

- A. Phoenicians
- B. Egyptians
- C. Europeans
- D. Sumerians

7. This writing system evolved into _____, a series of wedge-shaped strokes pressed into clay with a stylus. Pictures of objects became signs or ideographs representing abstract ideas and sounds of spoken words.

- A. cuneiform
- B. hieroglyphs
- C. pictographs
- D. lettering

8. Of the numerous inventions in Sumer that launched people onto the path of civilization, the _____ was perhaps the most significant. Mesopotamians organized libraries with thousands of tablets about religion, mathematics, history, law, medicine, and astronomy.

- A. creation of religion
- B. invention of writing
- C. rise of agriculture
- D. invention of the wheel

9. Two natural byproducts of the rise of village culture were the ownership of property and the specialization of trades or crafts. Both made visual identification necessary. Proprietary marks and _____ were first developed so that ownership could be established.

- A. cattle brands
- B. symbols
- C. printing
- D. contracts

10. In Mesopotamia, _____ provided a forgery-proof method for sealing documents and proving their authenticity. When they were rolled across a damp clay tablet, a raised impression of the depressed design became a “trademark” for the owner.

- A. finger prints
- B. adhesive made from papyrus
- C. cylinder seals
- D. Persian chalcedony stamps

11. The _____ may be the oldest extant artifact combining words and pictures on one surface.

- A. Rosetta stone
- B. Code of Hammurabi
- C. Blau monument
- D. Sarcophagus of Aspalta

12. The stele of Hammurabi depicts a carved stone relief of King Hammurabi who reigned from 1792–1750 BCE. Written in careful cuneiform, the text has:

- A. a code of laws and consequences for violating them
- B. a narrative about Hammurabi’s military conquests
- C. annual records of crop production and livestock trades
- D. a calendar of important Babylonian holy days

13. Unlike the Sumerians, whose pictographic writing evolved into abstract cuneiform, Egyptians retained their picture writing system, called _____ (Greek for “sacred carving” after the Egyptian for “the god’s words”).

- A. Greek
- B. petroglyphics
- C. pictoglyphics
- D. hieroglyphics

14. The development of _____, a paper-like substrate for manuscripts, was a major step forward in Egyptian visual communications.

- A. clay
- B. parchment
- C. papyrus
- D. vellum

15. Egyptians used the Demotic script, _____ based on hieroglyphics, for secular uses such as commercial and legal writing. The word “demotic” comes from the Greek word for “popular.”

- A. a language other than Egyptian
- B. a Greek alphabet
- C. pictorial images
- D. an abstract style of handwriting

16. For nearly fifteen centuries, people looked with fascination upon Egyptian hieroglyphs without understanding their meaning. The last people to use this language were 4th century Egyptian temple priests. In 1799, Napoleon’s troops unearthed a black slab near the Egyptian town of Rosetta inscribed in two languages and three scripts. All but one of the scripts listed below is on the Rosetta Stone. Which one does NOT belong?

- A. hieroglyphic
- B. Greek
- C. Demotic
- D. cuneiform

17. The major deciphering of the Rosetta Stone hieroglyphs was done by Jean-François Champollion in 1822. He discovered that the hieroglyphs often functioned as phonograms and not simply pictographs, allowing him to sound out written words. When the early Egyptian scribes were confronted with words too difficult to express in visual form, they devised a _____ using pictures for sounds to write the desired word.

- A. dictionary
- B. pictionary
- C. Greek alphabet
- D. rebus

18. The Egyptians were the first people to produce illustrated manuscripts in which words AND pictures were combined to communicate information. A preoccupation with death and a strong belief in the afterlife compelled the Egyptians to evolve a complex mythology about the journey into the afterlife. Scribes and artists were commissioned to prepare funerary papyri for the deceased later known as the _____.

- A. Book of the Dead
- B. Ancient Sea Scrolls
- C. Egyptian Bible
- D. King Tut Chronicles

19. Our use of visual symbols originated with the Egyptians. Which one of the following is not an iconic Egyptian design?

- A. the zodiac
- B. the peace sign
- C. the scales of justice
- D. animals which represent concepts, cities, and people