

PRINT, PAST AND PRESENT





Talk About It

Through the centuries humans have invented many ways to write. Which do you think is more important to the history of the world—the invention of the printing press or the computer? Why?



Find out more about printing at www.macmillanmh.com

Vocabulary

established	privileged
scribes	manuscripts
obstacles	guilds
penniless	alloy

Word Parts

Many English words have **Latin Roots**.

man = hand *script* = write

Manuscripts originally meant documents written by hand.

A Writing Story

by Simon Clarke

Before there was writing, people passed along much information through stories. How did they remember everything? Some groups developed memory aids. For example, the rhythm of drums helped people recall stories they told in rhyme. In Peru, the Inca used a *quipu* to help them. This was a series of knotted strings. The colors, placement, and size of the knots all had special meaning to the storyteller.

Pictures Paint a Story

Early people also used pictures or symbols called *pictograms* to recall events. Once the meaning of a symbol was **established**, or agreed on, other groups could understand it, too. This made it easier for people such as traders and craftsmen from different places to keep records.

The Egyptians had a system of pictograms known as *hieroglyphics*. The pictogram for Egyptian **scribes** shows the tools a writer used. It shows a palette for ink, a bag for dried colors, and a holder for pens and brushes.

The Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone

Although examples of hieroglyphics had lasted for thousands of years, no one could read them. Then, in 1799, an officer in Napoleon's army accidentally discovered a stone near the city of Rosetta in Egypt. On the stone was the same message in hieroglyphics and in Greek. By comparing the Greek to the Egyptian characters, a French scholar was finally able to overcome the **obstacles** to understanding hieroglyphics. From then on, historians were able to learn much more about ancient Egypt.

Progress in Printing

Today most people can read and write. Books and other printed

materials are everywhere. Even someone who is **penniless** can visit a library. But a few hundred years ago, books were quite rare. Only rich, **privileged** people had them. It took a long time to make a book. That's because **manuscripts** were hand copied by monks and workers in bookmaking **guilds**, or unions.

Things got better in the middle 1400s. At that time, a printer named Johannes Gutenberg made metal type from an **alloy**, a combination of metals, and produced the printing press. Since then, writing and publishing have become easier. How do you think Gutenberg, the ancient Egyptians, and the world's first storytellers would feel about using a computer?

Reread for Comprehension

Generate Questions

Description

Descriptive writing provides information that will help you define or classify things or ideas. As you read, ask yourself if this information includes facts, characteristics, and details about a subject, person, or idea. Signal words like *for example* and *such as* will alert you to an upcoming list of descriptive details.

Use a Description Web as you reread "A Writing Story."

