

The Rosetta Stone - Teacher Guide and Answer Key

How our world became this way

Make your case | The Rosetta Stone | Teacher guide

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Instructional purpose

This lesson uses the Rosetta Stone to teach historical reasoning, not just Egyptology vocabulary. The core move is to keep the finished achievement connected to its scaffolding: original purpose, language and script, copying, comparison, partial contribution, testing, custody, and evidence limits.

Essential questions

1. How did the Stone become useful for decipherment?
2. What makes an explanation historically responsible?
3. How can we discuss power and custody without claiming evidence we do not have?

Suggested sequence

Opening - 5 minutes

Write on the board: **"One stone unlocked a lost language."** Ask students what the sentence suggests. Collect the single-genius assumptions without correcting them immediately.

Read and annotate - 15-20 minutes

Students read the website article. Ask them to mark:

- one original-purpose detail;
- one method detail;
- one attribution complication;
- one uncertainty or evidence limit.

Core activity - 15 minutes

Students complete the object-route/information-route exercise and the method chain. Emphasize that copies distribute access but do not automatically produce correct interpretation.

Discussion/debate - 15-25 minutes

Use one debate seed. Require a claim, evidence, counterpoint, and qualification. Do not reward the most confident answer if the evidence is weaker; reward precision.

Transfer - 10-20 minutes

Grades 6-8 use the "find the scaffolding" paragraph. Grades 9-12 use one of the transfer maps or the short response prompt.

Grades 6-8 answer guidance

Check 1

Three scripts; two languages. Hieroglyphic and Demotic represent Egyptian; Greek represents Ancient Greek. Confusing the categories could make students think the Stone contains three identical translations or that every writing system is a separate language.

Check 2

It was part of a priestly decree issued in 196 BCE during Ptolemy V's reign. Accept religious, political, administrative, royal, temple, festival, or priestly functions when connected to the decree's documented content.

Check 3

There is no single perfect linear order. A defensible response places copies/casts and earlier comparative work as foundations; Coptic and royal-name comparison as enabling evidence; Young's phonetic work before Champollion's 1822 announcement; and Champollion's broader account and testing beyond the Stone as later development. Award explanation quality over a rigid sequence.

Check 4

E, O, E, O. The transfer mechanism is documented by the British Museum account; universal agreement and universal Rashid opinion are not established. The bounded Rashid project is evidence of a specific documented engagement, not a census.

Object/information route

Accept: French military construction/discovery near Rashid -> 1801 surrender terms -> England/British Museum; Stone -> copies and casts -> scholarly comparison/study. The distinction is object custody versus circulation of information.

Exit ticket

Strong answers mention more than one enabling element: copies, comparison, Coptic, royal names, phonetic signs, determinatives, or testing beyond the Stone. "The Stone gave clues but people built and tested the method" is a sufficient core answer.

Grades 9-12 answer guidance

Strong responses should:

- distinguish evidence from interpretation and source position;
- explain why Young's own priority claim is evidence about his account, not a neutral final verdict;
- identify the British Museum's custody account as institutional and bounded;
- preserve the absence of comprehensive Egyptian legal/public-opinion evidence;
- explain why method validation requires more than one attractive bilingual comparison;

- use qualified language such as "the evidence establishes," "the source frames," and "the current record does not resolve."

For the 500-700 word response, a high-quality answer will connect the decree's original purpose to the later decipherment use, explain at least three methodological links, distinguish contribution from sole credit, and separate military transfer from ethical legitimacy. It should not claim that all contributions were equal or that one modern Egyptian position is established.

Vocabulary assessment

Students demonstrate mastery when they use terms precisely, especially:

- **script versus language;**
- **phonetic sign versus determinative;**
- **custody mechanism versus ethical legitimacy;**
- **attributed claim versus independently established fact;**
- **cumulative method versus lone discovery.**

Debate assessment rubric

Claim	repeats a slogan	answers the prompt	makes a precise, bounded argument
Evidence	names a fact without source	uses relevant evidence	uses evidence and explains its limits
Counterpoint	absent or dismissive	acknowledges a complication	incorporates the complication into the reasoning
Historical care	overstates or generalizes	mostly qualified	distinguishes mechanism, interpretation, and uncertainty

Accessibility and differentiation

- Preteach the difference between language and script with the table in the article.
- Permit oral responses, typed responses, or labeled diagrams for the 6-8 packet.
- Provide sentence frames to students who need writing support.
- Allow advanced 6-8 students to complete the 9-12 source-position exercise.
- Allow 9-12 students who need additional scaffolding to complete the 6-8 method chain before writing.
- Read the source note aloud or provide it in print; no essential instruction depends on an image.
- Keep the distinction between "not established" and "false": an evidence gap is not automatically proof of the opposite.

Factual boundaries for instruction

Do not teach as established:

- an exact discovery month or fully settled discovery scene;

- a complete or neutral Young/Champollion priority ranking;
- broad Egyptian public opinion based on the bounded sources;
- ethical legitimacy as settled by the 1801 surrender terms;
- undocumented motives, dialogue, sensory details, or invented classroom "historical voices."

Source alignment

The materials draw from the frozen Episode 001 Research Package and Evidence Bundle. S1 supports the object, material, scripts/languages, discovery qualification, and custody account; S2 supports circulation and decipherment method; S3-S4 and S8-S9 support contribution-specific and source-position discussion; S6-S7 support decree context; S10-S11 support bounded continuing Egyptian/Rashid engagement. Exact locators remain in the upstream package and are not replaced by this guide.

Product review questions before publication

1. Can a student understand the core answer without seeing a diagram or image?
2. Are vocabulary definitions accurate and used consistently?
3. Does every debate prompt allow evidence-based disagreement rather than demand a predetermined moral?
4. Does every answer key distinguish "not established" from "disproved"?
5. Does the extension task test transfer rather than reward a generic "everything is connected" claim?
6. Are the article and packets engaging enough to sustain voluntary reading while remaining clearly distinct products?

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