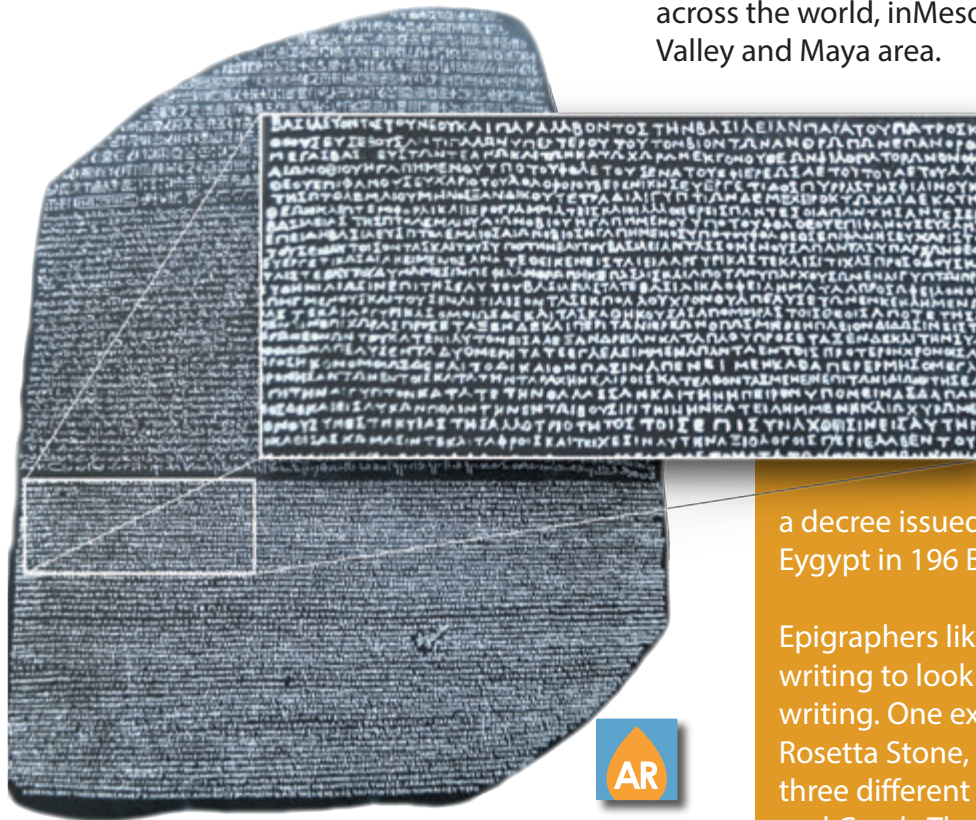# ARCHAEOLOGY
DECODING HISTORY

Writing

Can you imagine life without writing? Once upon a time there were no books, no internet, and no text of any kind! Writing is actually quite a new human invention, which was invented independently by at least five different civilisations across the world, inMesopotamia, Eygypt, China, the Indus Valley and Maya area.

Use the ActiveLens app to scroll through a translation of the Rosetta Stone.

The Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone is an amazing artefact that allowed epigraphers (someone who studies inscriptions as writing) to decode Eygyptian heiroglyphs. The text is a decree issued on behalf of King Ptolemy V in Eygypt in 196 BC.

Epigraphers like to have lots of examples of the writing to look at when they're translating Ancient writing. One example of Ancient writing is the Rosetta Stone, which is the same text repeated in three different languages – Hieroglyphics, Demotic, and Greek. The French archeologist Jean Francois Champollion translated the Rosetta Stone in 1822. As he already knew how the Greek alphabet worked, Champollion was able to work out what the Hieroglyphics meant. Hieroglyphics were very difficult to understand before Champollion translated them, as they are made of many symbols.

The writing is carved in granite and was discovered in 1799 by French soldiers near a small village called Rashid (rosetta) in Eygypt.

What does it say?

People who study Ancient writing are called Epigraphers. Before Epigraphers can begin translating Ancient writing, they need to find out what language and culture the script is from, what sort of writing system those people had, and whether they used an alphabet likes ours, or something different.

Cuneiform, one of the oldest forms of writing from Sumer, found in modern-day Iraq

What was writing used for?

Since it was invented, writing has been used for lots of purposes, including maths, literacy, retelling stories from the past, writing about religion, and creating calendars.

Can you imagine a world without writing?

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