

# Lesson 7 Writing

The Kemites created one of the first writing systems in the world.



Before finding the "Rosetta Stone" no one knew how to read the MEDU NETER. It was carved in 196 BC. It is written in three languages, including MEDU NETER and Greek. Since people still speak Greek today, they could translate the words to discover the meaning of the MEDU NETER, although it took 30 years after its discovery in 1799.

People didn't always have a way to write their words. About 10,000 years ago the ancient KEMITES began to draw pictures to represent different objects, such as a house or a table. Later they began to use symbols to represent ideas, such as life or beauty. The language was called MEDU NETER, which means divine speech. This was one of the first languages ever produced.













The MEDU NETER was written on different material, including papyrus, stone, and wood. Papyrus is the first paper, and was made by using reed leaves which were weaved together, and dried.















In English there are 26 letters in the alphabet, but in the MEDU NETER there are over 2,000 symbols. Some symbols represent a single letter, while others may represent a word or an idea. There are also symbols for numbers - including fractions.

In the MEDU NETER there is no punctuation, such as a period or question mark. They generally didn't write vowels, unless it was necessary to read the words. It might sound confusing to read, but could you read the paragraph below without any punctuation and very few vowels?

CN YU RD THS PRGRPH IT HS NO PUNCTATN BT EVN WTHOT TH PUNCTATN YU CN PRBBLY STILL UNDRSTND IT.

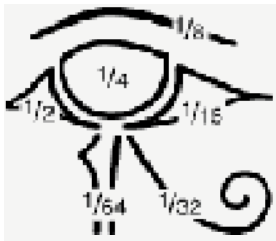
## MEDU NETER Alphabet

Medu Neter	Sign	Sound
	Vulture	ah (father)
	foot	b (boot)
	basket	c/k (basket)
	hand	d (dog)
	reed	i/e (filled)
	horned viper	f (feel)
	jar stand	g (go)
	reed shelter	h (hat)
	reed	i/e (filled)
	snake	dj (adjust)
	basket	c/k (basket)
	lion	l (love)

	owl	m (moon)
	water	n (noon)
	rope	oo (too)
	mat	p (pedestal)
	slope of hill	k (key)
	mouth	r (right)
	folded cloth	s (saw)
	bread loaf	t (tap)
	quail chick	oo (too)
	horned viper	f (feel)
	quail chick	w (wet)
	animal belly	ch (??)
	two reed leaves	y (mary)
	door bolt	z (scissors)

The "MEDU NETER Alphabet" table above attempts to show the MEDU NETER letter for each English letter. Some sounds are nearly identical. For example, "c" and "k" are nearly the same sound. The name "Kathy" is

also spelled as "Cathy". So in the translation, these have the same MEDU NETER symbol. The same is true for "f" and "v". They sound different to us, but their sound is very close. Try saying the two letters aloud, and you'll



## Writing Fractions

One symbol that looks like a fancy eye is called UDJAT. It had both religious and mathematical meanings. If a doctor in KEMET wanted to tell a patient to take  $1/4$  of some medicine that would write just the eyeball. Or if a baba was going to leave  $1/8$  of his land to a son, the scribe would write  $1/8$  using only the eyebrow.

How do you think they would write the fraction for  $3/8$ ? Since  $3/8$  is equal to  $1/4 + 1/8$  they would write the eyeball and the eyebrow.

hear their similarity. Some sounds, such as the symbol for "x" are not used in the English language. The MEDU NETER "x" is not pronounced "ch" as in cherry, but more as if you're clearing your throat.

The Kemites didn't simply write out each letter when writing. Their writing system was much more complex. They developed symbols which represented words or many letters.












The symbol of a guitar represented NEFER, meaning pretty or beautiful, because of the sound the instrument makes. If you've ever noticed a person in church who is praying or very thankful to God, they'll often raise their hands in the air. This must have also happened in KEMET, because the symbol for spirit, which is KA in the MEDU NETER, looks like someone raising their hands.

A very common name in KEMET was RA-MES, which means "born" (MES) from "God" (RA). This shows how most parents feel when their children are born. They feel that God has given them this child. It was common in Kemet to greet someone by saying HETEP, which is saying "peace".

Some symbols didn't represent any letters, but helped to explain what the word meant. For example, the symbol for a man, would be used at the end of a man's name. RA-MES would be written:



See the **DVD for MEDU NETER** written on stones.

Symbol	Sign & Meaning
 ANKH	top of a sandle (life)
 HETEP	ancestor table (peace)
 IR	(peace)
 KA	hands stretched to the sky (spirit)
 KHEPER	scarab beetle (to become)
 MEN	senet game board (stable)
 MES	tail (born)
 NEB	bowl (all)
 sitting man or woman (symbol for a person)	
 RA	sun (God or sun)
 NEFER	guitar (pretty)

## READING QUESTIONS

- Describe how the MEDU NETER began?
- What was MEDU NETER written on? How many symbols are there in the MEDU NETER?
- Do you think it would be difficult to read English with no punctuation, and only a few vowels? Explain your answer.
- In KEMET the word for bread began with a "T" so they used the symbol for bread to represent "T". What would you use for the letter "T". Think of something that begins with the letter "T", and draw a picture of your symbol.
- Using the symbols to the left, how would you write the phrase, "All life is beautiful"? Don't worry about "is", and think of a word in the table which could be used for beautiful.
- Write your name using the MEDU NETER alphabet. Be sure to end it with the correct symbol for man or woman.

## PROJECTS

- Write a letter to your parents in the MEDU NETER. Give them the alphabet table to decipher.