

Year 3

Our 'Adopted' Famous French Person:

Jean-François Champollion



Jean-François Champollion (December 23rd 1790 - March 4th 1832) was a French historian and Egyptologist. He is credited with unlocking the mysteries of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

A child prodigy, young Champollion was a master at languages, speaking nine languages in total. His interest in languages extended to Egyptian hieroglyphics, which scholars had been trying for many centuries to decode.

Champollion continued the work on Egyptian hieroglyphics begun by an Englishman named Thomas Young, using the Rosetta Stone as a key. The Rosetta Stone is an irregularly shaped slab of black granite. The French found it near the town of Rosetta (Rashid), Egypt, in 1799. It dates from about 196BC and bears an inscription written in three different forms: ancient Greek, hieroglyphics, and demotic (a cursive form of hieroglyphics). The presence of Greek on the Rosetta Stone gave Champollion the key he needed to unlock the secret of the Egyptian writing. He deciphered the Rosetta Stone and cracked the Egyptian hieroglyphic code.

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