

## Ancient Egypt

### Mr Peabody and Sherman use a cipher wheel to enter the pyramids!

**Summary:** To decipher and create codes using a cipher wheel

**Time needed:** 50 minutes

**Age:** 7-11

**Learning outcomes:**

- **All** will be able to use a cipher wheel to decipher codes
- **Most** will be able to decipher and create codes
- **Some** will be able to create more complex codes

**What you will need:**

- Cipher wheel cut out template
- PowerPoint presentation
- Scissors
- Split pins

**Activity outline:**

**Starter:**

Discuss the history of cipher wheels.

The cipher wheel was invented in 1470 by Leon Alberti, an architect and author (he designed and built some amazing churches and buildings in Renaissance Italy). It consisted of two concentric wheels placed one on top of the other. There were two alphabets, one around each wheel. This meant that the alphabets could be moved relative to each other, making an easy to use key. Ciphers have been used for hundreds of years.

The Ancient Egyptians wrote things down using hieroglyphics. These are pictures that represent sounds, ideas or actions. Sometimes a hieroglyphic represented a letter, sometimes it represented a whole word. There are over 700 hieroglyphics.

Hieroglyphics could be read from left to right, or right to left. This depended on the direction that the images faced in, e.g. if an animal faced left, you would read from left to right, as we read English.

**Main:**

Mr Peabody and Sherman have used their time machine to visit Ancient Egypt. They need to decipher a code to unlock the entrance to a pyramid. Pupils need to help the characters decipher the code by making cipher wheels using the templates provided.

There are six questions on the worksheet, the answers are written in hieroglyphics. Children should use the cipher wheels they have created to crack these codes. If there are children who would find this tricky or might not get through all six, the worksheet can be adapted so that they have one or two codes to decipher. They could also work in pairs on this task, either in ability pairs or in mixed ability pairs.

**Extension Task:**

Once children have broken the code, they could create their own codes for their partner to decipher.

