

Section 1

Chapter 1

<A head> First Alphabets

It began quite simply. The first writing ~~was simple~~ consisted of tokens: a flower left outside someone's hut symbolizing a tender message, a pile of rocks along a trail ~~telling~~ warning of danger. Slowly, however, these tokens and signs evolved into marks, ~~which~~. ~~The marks that began writing~~ had to be a simple and well shaped, ~~and~~. ~~They had to be able to be~~ recognizable able for the same meaning over and over. From its earliest beginnings, writing was an art.

<B-A head> Symbol Alphabets

The first writing was made up of graphic images that represented ~~simple~~ aspects of daily life. These were ~~normally usually very simple~~ shapes that ~~represented~~ communicated a ~~rather~~ simple vocabulary: ~~M~~ man, woman, fire, food, tree, ~~etc~~. Over time, people realized that they needed more symbols to express more words. So a number of "tree" symbols were combined to make a "forest"; ~~or~~ the symbols s for a man, woman, ~~and~~ a child were consolidated into a single "family" symbol. This symbol language, however, was still rudimentary.

The difficulty of writing with symbols is plain: ~~it~~ takes too many symbols to express complicated and sophisticated language concepts. As human culture and society became increasingly complex, propelled by the mechanisms of agriculture, religion, ~~and~~ politics, graphic forms of expression were developed to respond to their demands. Earlier symbol writing had referred to specific things or ideas, making ~~them it~~ inadequate for the expression of ~~ng~~ abstractions, the keeping of records, ~~or~~ the creation of documents. To overcome this shortcoming, new writing

systems required a reduction in form, as well as an expansion of meaning. The art of graphic communication was becoming more complicated.

<AB head> Phonograms

The Egyptians were probably the first to break with the tradition of simple symbol writing. FirstIn the beginning, they used pictures to represent words and syllables with the same or similar sound (*rebus* writing). Then, over thousands of years, they ~~began to developed the~~ use of just “*phonograms*” (sound pictures) to represent syllables. These were strung together to create a word. Eventually ~~the Egyptians’ their~~ writing evolved into the hieratic and demotic scripts, setting the stage for the creation of more sophisticated alphabets throughout the nation-states encircling the Mediterranean.

<AB head> Phonetic Writing

The next evolutionary step was brought about by the Phoenicians. These businessmen and traders were the forerunners of modern entrepreneurs. ~~They were businessmen, traders.~~ They put cash down in Egypt, traded in Crete, and sold in Athens—all at a profit. Chiefly concerned with record keeping, ~~t~~The Phoenicians clearly ~~had a need~~ ed for an alphabet, but not ~~for~~ the decorative alphabet of the Egyptians. ~~The Phoenicians were concerned with record keeping, and little else.~~ As a result, the characters that the Phoenicians developed writing ~~werewas~~ free of frills, easy to read, and quick to write. Phoenician writing was also purely alphabetic—one character equaling one sound.

<B-A head> The Roman Alphabet Emerges

Through the process of doing business in Greece, the Phoenicians also passed on their alphabet. Once again, the Western alphabet began to change. The Greeks added vowels, new characters, and attractive curves. The beauty and subtlety of our present alphabet began to take shape.

The Latin-Roman alphabet was derived from Greek letterforms by way of the Etruscans, a people indigenous to the Italian peninsula. The Romans adopted the Greek alphabet from the Etruscans

and adjusted ~~the Greek alphabet-it~~ in the same confident way in which they adopted and adjusted to the Greek gods. They developed their own style and characters based on the Greek foundation. The ~~end~~-result iswas the sophisticated and graceful shapes of our current alphabet.

<B-A head> Roman Capitals

The *Roman capital* letters grew out of signage. They were the formal letterforms that were carved into monuments and, buildings, and used for important manuscripts. Even though these letters were carved in stone, they reflect the same principles as handwritten letters. Our present typefaces are curved, with ~~have thick and thin graduations to variations in~~ stroke thickness, because handwriting with flat pens shaped ancient letters ~~this~~-that way.

The Roman capitals have had, and still have, the greatest influence on the design and use of capital letters. They have remained the classic standard of proportion and dignity for almost 2,000 years.