

CROSSROADS

CROSSROADS Language Studio's Newsletter April, 2014



"Oedipus and the Sphinx", 1864 by French artist Gustav Moureau.

Riddle of the Sphinx

Mystery, riddles, enigma and many unanswered questions characterize this intriguing creature. The ancient Egyptians depicted it as having the body of a lion and the upper torso and head of a man; the early Greeks added wings, changed its sex and made other mutations, notably to its character.

Perhaps the most familiar story from antiquity featuring the Sphinx comes from the 5th century B.C. ancient Greek legend of Oedipus. In that story, the Sphinx has wings, is malicious, merciless and female. She stood guard outside the city of Thebes and would waylay all travelers going to or coming from that city. She demanded that they answer a riddle she put to them; and she would devour all those who could not give the right answer!

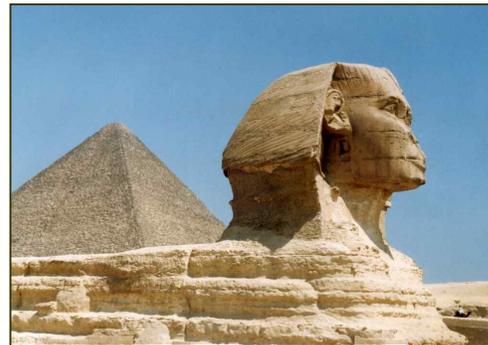
The riddle was, "what walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon and three at night?"

None could answer her and so they suffered a horrific fate. None, that is, until Oedipus came along. He answered her riddle correctly and by doing so, broke the curse she held over the city. His reward? He was made the king of Thebes where his story continued toward an inevitably tragic ending.

In the minds of most people however, the Sphinx is generally associated with architectural monuments, sculptures or religious temples. Such stone images go back long before the Greeks. The oldest Sphinx archeologists have unearthed dates to around 9,500 BC and probably comes from Gobeki Tepe in what is now modern Turkey.

Sphinxes crop up all over the ancient world and have continued to appear down through the ages in both western and eastern art, but the most famous is the colossus on the Giza Plateau near the outskirts of Cairo in Egypt.

The Great Sphinx is one of the largest and oldest statues in existence, yet so little is known about it. We don't even know its original name and there is nothing describing its original purpose or even how it was constructed.



There is intense debate among researchers and scientists as to when it was built.

The generally accepted view is that it was built around 2,500 BC for the pharaoh, Khafra, even though there is no clear evidence that this is true.

Based on what appears to be considerable water erosion to the Sphinx, and that there has been no significant rainfall in the area for well over 10,000 years, some researchers speculate that the Sphinx must have been constructed around 10,500 BC or even earlier!

When was it built? Who built it? Why? These are questions far more puzzling than Oedipus' riddle. Have you already worked out the answer to his riddle? For those who haven't, you can find it on P3.....

Net News

NET LESSONS: Too busy to come to CROSSROADS? Try our *lessons through the net!*

SITE OF THE MONTH:

Here is an interesting page about this most interesting monument:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/riddles-sphinx.html

Some Thoughts for the Month



Joshua Says: The opening party for our new location on the 5th marked the start of a new journey for our school. And if the atmosphere and attendance was any indication, we can look forward to some very positive times ahead. The party was one of the best we've had in a long time, and it gave me the feeling that we're really starting out on "the right foot". Thanks to all the many people who came; you made it an event to remember!

Junko Says: The other day I happened to see "Hanako and Ann" on NHK. Hanako was a real person who lived in the Meiji, Taisho and Showa eras and was the translator of "Ann of Green Gables". The episode I saw was about the mission school where Hanako learnt English. In that school, the students *had* to speak English as most of the teachers were native English speakers. Obviously she became a good speaker in a short time. If only this were possible for all students in Japan, they would all be good speakers of English like Hanako.



Kenneth Says: The school break has come and gone and now the new year has begun. Our daughter Sumire will start fifth grade at Yuugun Elementary school and son Luka will commence his second year at Rosario Youchien. With cherry and magnolia blossoms now subsiding, azaleas should be next. Wonder when the high country and summits will be free of snow

Adrienne Says: Last week, I was walking across the street from the Horibata, and as I gazed in that direction, I was stunned by what I saw: beauty! Soft pink clouds floated above the waterway, topped by the castle tower. Was Matsuyama once filled with parks, trees, flowers, and graceful architecture, I wondered. All too soon, I returned to the treeless concrete streets of modern Japan.



Cyril Dit: *Ce mois-ci, ce sont ma soeur (qui habite à New-York) et ma grand-mère (qui habite à Draguignan) qui sont venues nous rendre visite à Matsuyama. Nous les avons emmenées visiter des temples, des restaurants de sushis, des hotels, des parcs, des chateaux, des "hyaku en shoppu", encore des restaurants... cependant, la seule chose que nous retiendrons vraiment est: "mais est-ce qu'ils ont des fourchettes?"*

