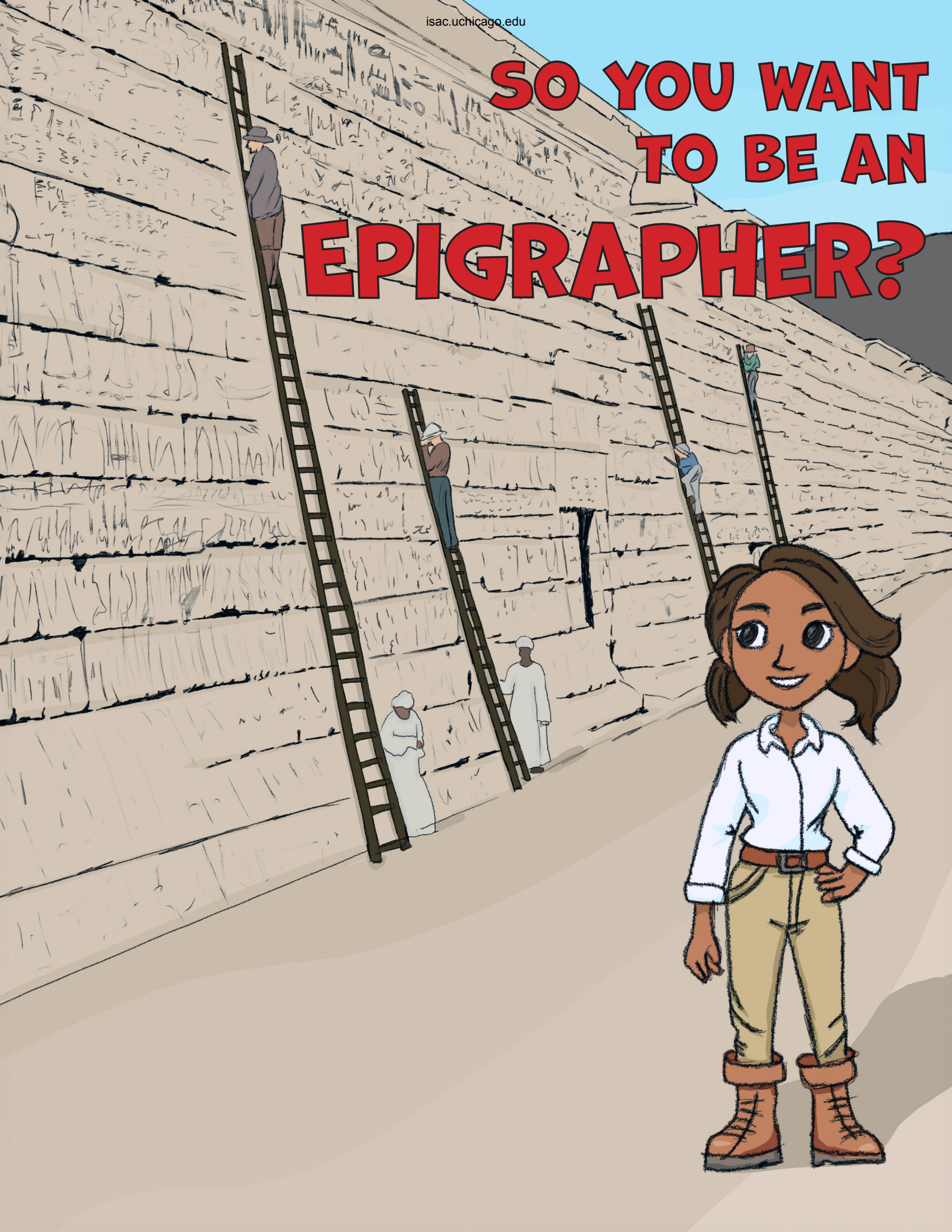


# SO YOU WANT TO BE AN EPIGRAPHER?



Created for the ISAC Museum special exhibition

*Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt*

September 17, 2024–March 23, 2025

[isac.uchicago.edu/chicagonile](http://isac.uchicago.edu/chicagonile)

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# SO YOU WANT TO BE AN EPIGRAPHER?



**ISAC**  
MUSEUM

## They're Epigraphers!

An epigrapher is someone who records and studies texts and scenes from the walls of ancient monuments. An epigrapher can work anywhere in the world, but I work with the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago.

Do you want to be an epigrapher too?  
Maybe I can help.

Wow!!!  
Who are they?



 A	 B	 K or C	 D	 I or E
 F or V	 G	 H	 J or W	 L
 M	 N	 P	 Q	 R
 S	 T	 U or W	 X	 Y
 TCH	 SH	 CH	 KH	 Z

Can you write your name in hieroglyphs using this key? Hint: It helps to sound your name out loud. Also make sure that all of your animals face the same direction!

The first step to becoming a good epigrapher is to learn how to read the languages of the texts that you study! If you want to work in Egypt, that means that you're going to need to learn how to read ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Let's start by learning the alphabet together.

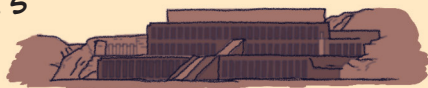
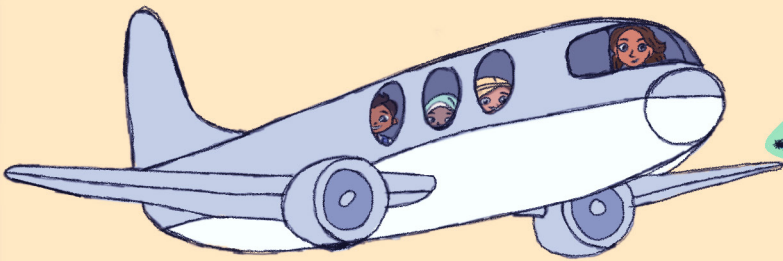


If you want to be an epigrapher, you're going to need to travel a lot! The Epigraphic Survey's epigraphers have worked all over Egypt, but now they work in modern day Luxor at a site called Medinet Habu. Follow me!

Since 1924, our artists and epigraphers have been hard at work copying down and saving all of the scenes around this big temple.

Medinet Habu was originally the site of the pharaoh Ramesses III's palace and memorial temple. He built big walls all the way around it and fancy gates to impress all of his royal visitors. Some wall scenes tell important religious stories, while others tell the tales of all the battles he fought while he was pharaoh.

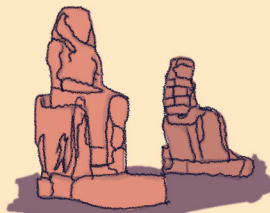
What stories would you leave behind for future visitors?



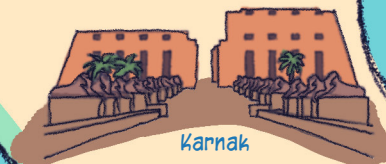
Deir el-Bahari



Medinet Habu



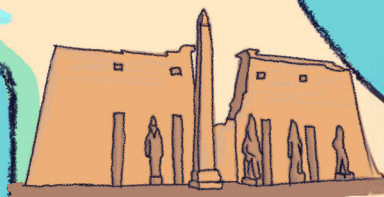
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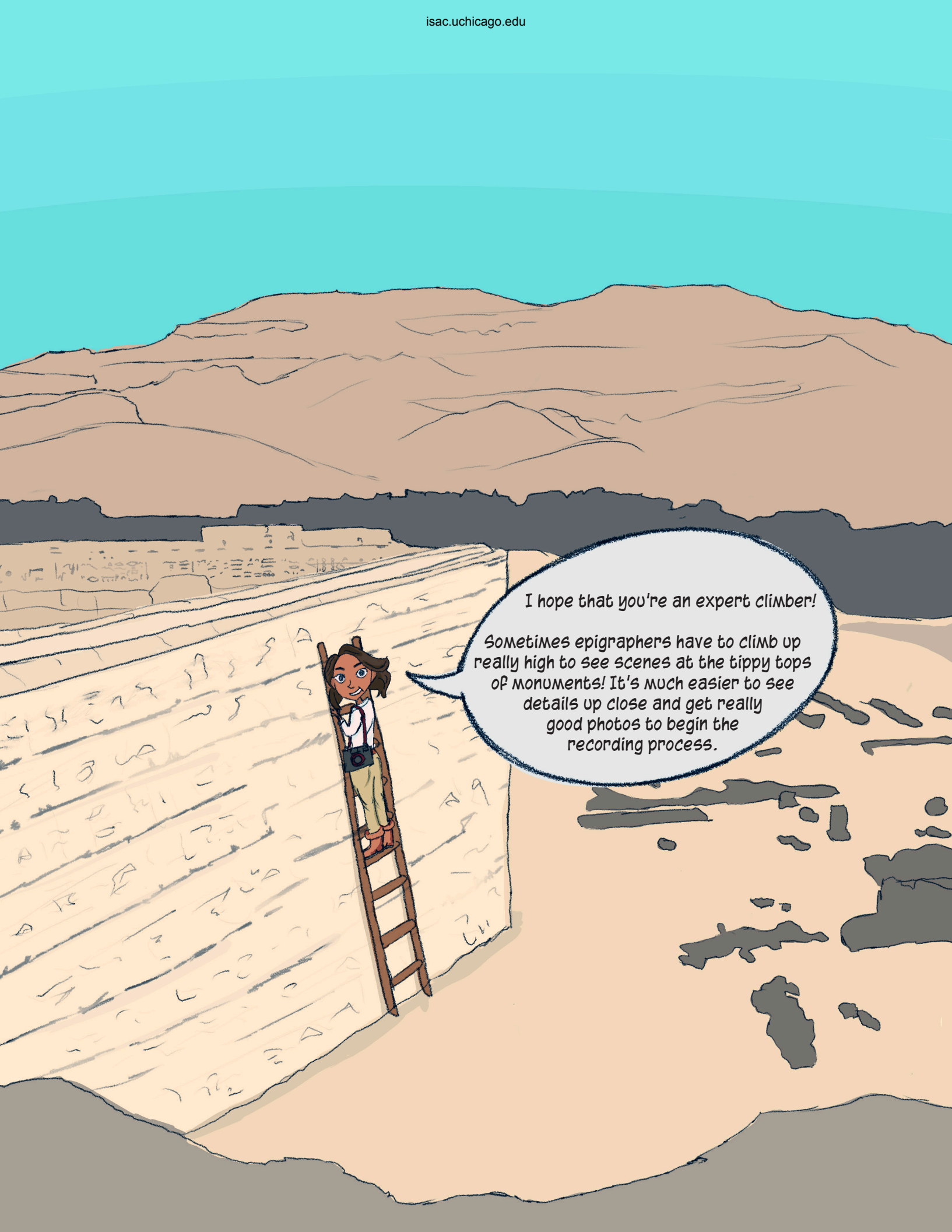


Karnak



Chicago House





I hope that you're an expert climber!

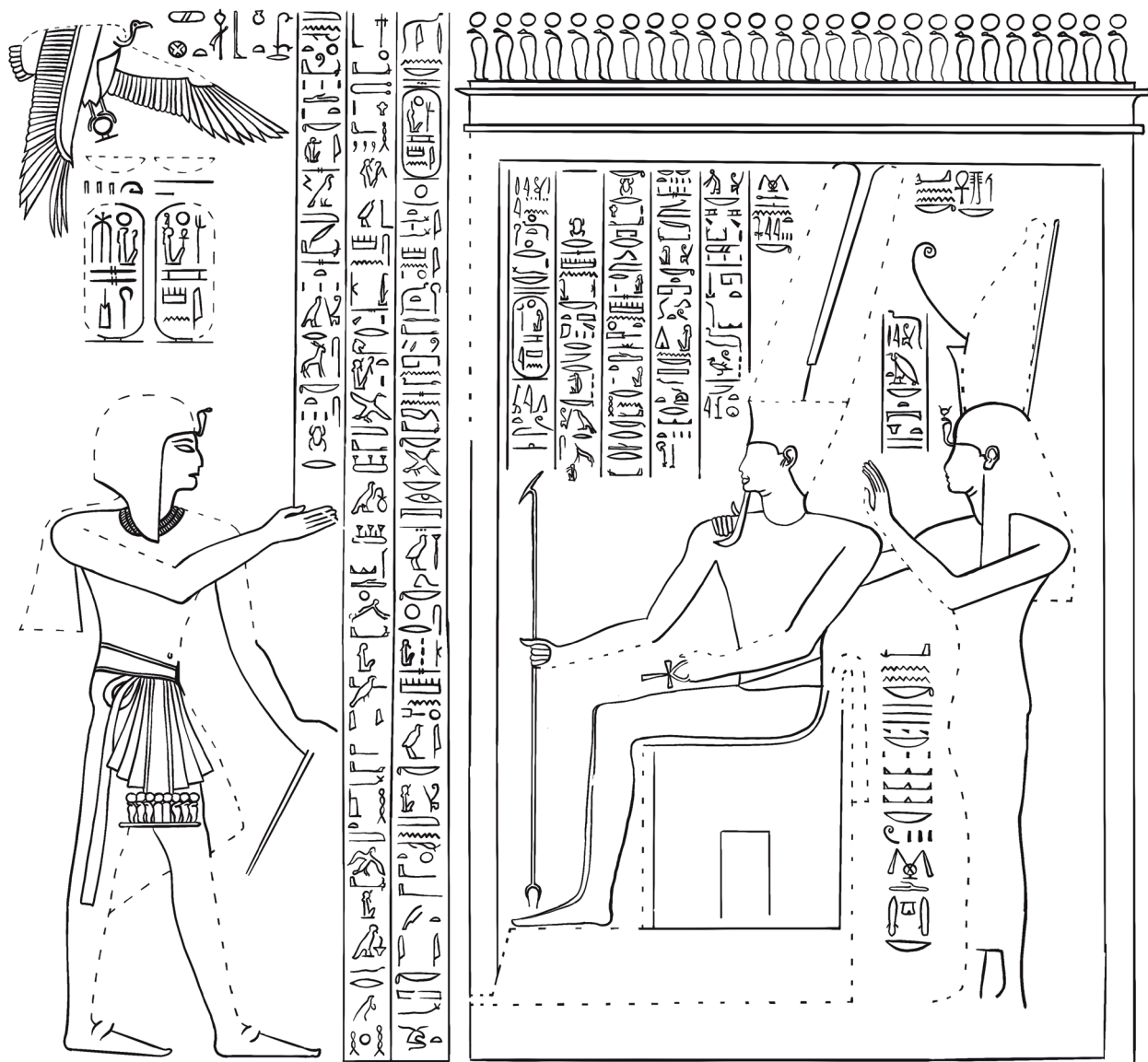
Sometimes epigraphers have to climb up really high to see scenes at the tippy tops of monuments! It's much easier to see details up close and get really good photos to begin the recording process.

These monuments are super old! Over time, some scenes were damaged or became hard to see. Some lines can be really hard to spot with even the best photos, so we have to use our photos and our eyes to retrace what the artists carved. Can you help us?

After an artist pencils in a line just how they want it to be drawn, they have to go back over that line with ink to make it permanent. It can be really tricky to draw exactly on top of your pencil lines. It takes a lot of practice! Do you want to give it a go?

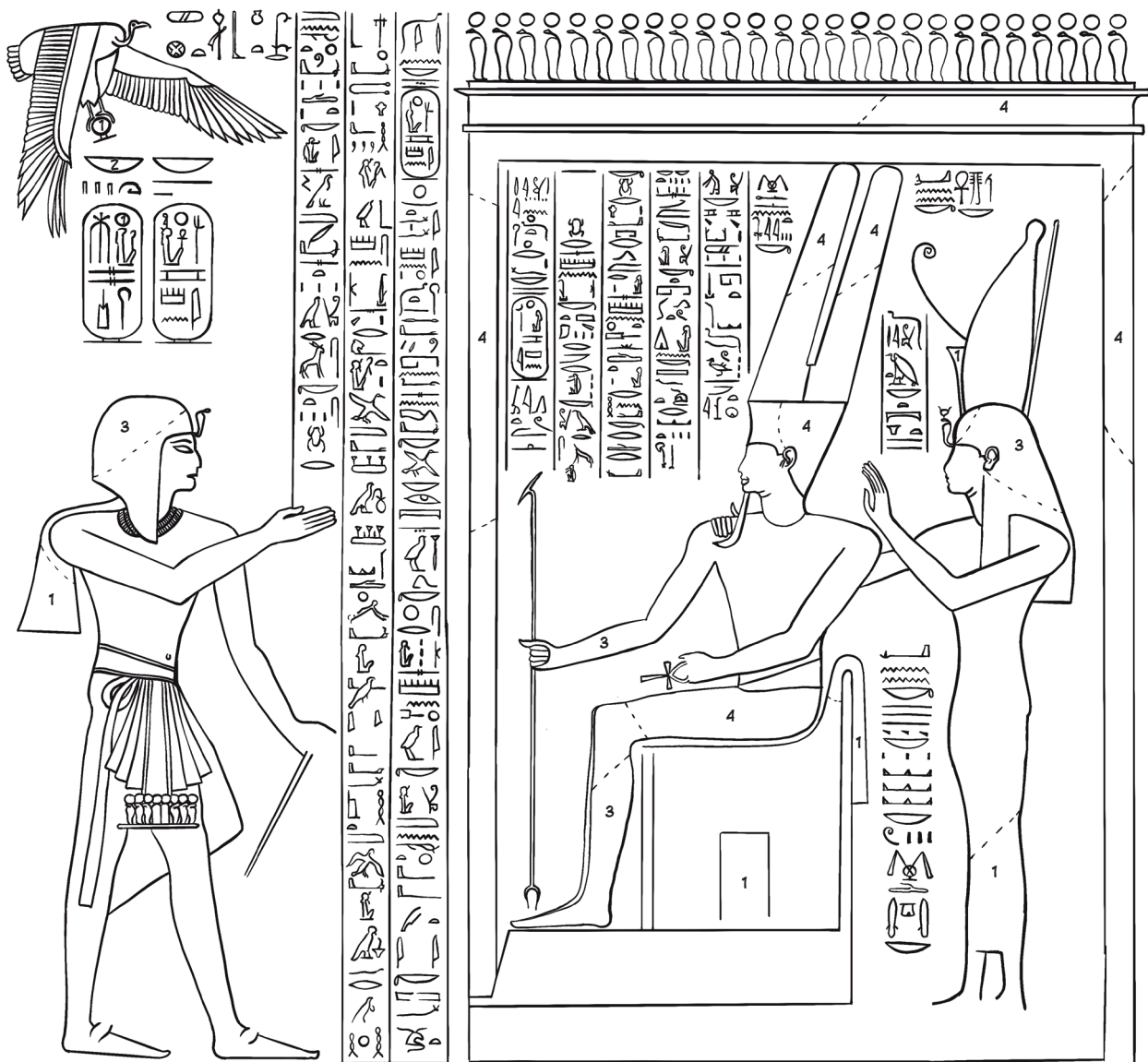
**Step 1: Take a pencil and trace over the dashed lines.**

**Step 2: Take a black pen and draw over your pencil lines so that they match the other lines on the page.**



In ancient times, these scenes would have had lots of color. Now the color is missing from this scene, but we're in luck! There seem to be some traces of paint left! Can you help us color in the correct colors?

Where you see a number, shade that part in with the matching color from the key.

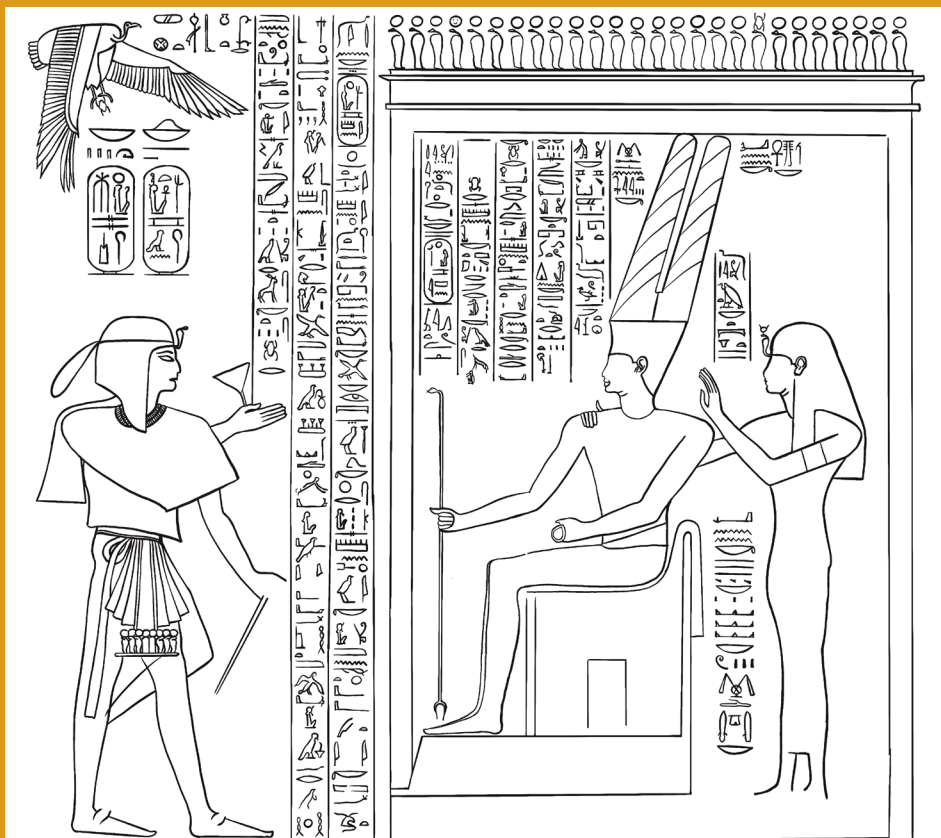




The last step when making  
a drawing or a scene is  
to check our work!  
That's where I come in!

Epigraphers take the  
artist's drawing back to  
the wall of the monument  
to make sure that we have  
not missed any details.

**Now it's your turn!**  
**Can you spot any**  
**differences between**  
**your drawing and the**  
**finished scene? Circle**  
**any differences that**  
**need to be corrected.**



Being an epigrapher  
is a lot of hard work,  
but it's worth it to save  
these ancient artists' scenes  
for future scholars like you!





THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

**INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF  
ANCIENT CULTURES MUSEUM**  
West Asia & North Africa

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