



Written Language:

Storing knowledge

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The history of paper

Ancient Egyptians invented the first substance like the paper we know today called Papyrus. Papyrus scrolls were made by taking slices of the inner part of the papyrus plant stem, flattening then pounding them into a hard, thin sheet. The word 'paper' comes from the word 'papyrus'.

In 105 A.D. a Chinese man, Ts'ai Lun mixed hemp, mulberry bark and rags with water, mashed it into a pulp, pressed out the liquid and hung it to dry in the sun. Paper was born and this humble mixture would set off one of mankind's greatest communication revolutions. In 610, the art of paper making reached Japan. In fact, you can still find some of the world's most beautiful paper coming out of Japan. By 751, Chinese prisoners of war were in the area that is now Afghanistan. The Chinese prisoners began making paper and spread the methods to Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco. Paper making did not reach Europe until 1200. Today, most paper is machine made. However there are still many people in regions throughout the world who keep up the tradition of making paper by hand.

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Try making your own paper with a range of different fibres. You don't have to stick with scrap paper. One company in Snowdonia makes paper from sheep droppings! Add whole flower heads to the pulp mixture after it has been through the blender. You can add scraps of yarn, tin foil, even seeds. It all comes down to what you want. Experiment with different textures and colours - after all Ts'ai Lun did!

Have fun with it, express your creativity!

