The Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters of Ontario,

Is comprised of 22 Cryptic Rite Councils.

Other regular Jurisdictions include Western & Eastern Jurisdiction of Canada, England, Germany, Israel, Philippines, Scotland, & 49 in the USA.
They present the degrees of Royal Master & Select Master

- Provides access to the degrees of Super Excellent Master & Royal Ark Mariner

- Four of the most beautiful & fascinating in Freemasonry.
The first two, Royal Master & Select Master, are Cryptic in nature & content.

- They explain how the Lost Word of the Master Mason degree,
- Was rediscovered in Royal Arch degree,
- Was preserved in the first place.
- in the crypt or secret vault under Solomon's Temple.

They focus on the core material of Ancient Craft Masonry, without Christian or military emphasis,

Completes the explanation of our Fraternity's most powerful legend.
He who seeks more light in Masonry -

- Further enlightenment towards Truth -
- His enthusiasm will be welcomed & matched by Companions who wish to share with him something very special.
The Cryptic Rite
Symbolic Freemasonry, in the Lodge,

- Begins the powerful story of how the Word was lost, & another substituted.
Capitular Masonry, in the Chapter,

RedisCOVERs the word, through secrets found in a Crypt under an Arch.
The Cryptic Rite, in the Council,

- Tells how & why those secrets were preserved there.

The story - Freemasonry's great allegory - becomes clear & complete, & all the more powerful & effective.
Those who experience that sense of completion

- Help sustain the ongoing effort to share it with others,
- To help complete "the Circle of Perfection of Ancient Craft Masonry".
Councils of Royal & Select Masters are made up of Masons who:

- Recognize inherent values of the Rite,
- Join & remain active in Councils because of those values
- Not because they need the degrees to gain admission to other bodies.
Origins
Though the core material is earlier,

- Modern shape of the Royal Master & Select Master degrees probably originated in Ireland,
  - Passed to England & Scotland,
  - Thence to Sweden, &
  - Finally to Prussia & King Frederick's Lodge of Perfection of the Ancient Accepted Rite, today known as the Scottish Rite.
The degrees were brought to America in 1761 as Scottish Rite "side degrees",

- Including Super Excellent Master.
In 1807 they became popular in New York, Massachusetts & Rhode Island

Thanks to Jeremy L. Cross, an associate of Thomas Smith Webb, "father of Royal Arch Masonry in America".

It was Cross who described them as "the summit & perfection of Ancient Masonry, without which the history of the Royal Arch Degree cannot be complete."
Conferral was assigned to chapters of Royal Arch Masonry

Until 1870 when the Scottish Rite, & the General Grand Royal Arch Chapter, both divested themselves of the degrees.
In 1880 the first General Grand Council was formed.

Today, some compare the York Rite Select Master degree to the Scottish Rite Secret Master degree.

Both refer to guardians of secrets & signs of secrecy.
A Mason entering the Sanctum Sanctorum by mistake appears in both the Select Master & Intimate Secretary degrees.

- Both the York Rite Council of Royal & Select Masters & Scottish Rite Lodge of Perfection are supposed to have only 27 working members, others being surplus spectators.
The senior Officer in one is Thrice Illustrious Master, in the other Thrice Puissant Master.
Thrice Illustrious Masters are eligible to receive

- The Order of Thrice Illustrious Master, & wear the "Silver Trowel" jewel.
The Name
“Cryptic”
The focus of the Royal Master & Select Master degrees is

- A secret vault beneath the Temple of Solomon.
"Cryptic" means "hidden",

- From the Latin crypticus, meaning "subterranean" or "concealed".
- Vaults beneath many churches are called "crypts".
- The expression "Cryptic Masonry" means, therefore, "Masonry of the Secret Vault".
The Vault & the Mysteries
All biblical students & archeologists know of vaults beneath King Solomon's Temple, the focus of Freemasonry's cryptic mysteries.
Philostorgius, the Greek historian of 400 A.D., wrote the story.

 INITIATION INTO THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES OF PRE-CHRISTIAN TIMES INVOLVED UNDERGROUND CAVES, TUNNELS, OR VAULTS.
Modern Freemasonry, especially in the group of degrees known as The Royal Mysteries,

- May sustain some of the truths presented in the Ancient Mysteries.
Certainly, the vault in the Ancient Mysteries was symbolic of the grave, for initiation was symbolic of the passage of death, where alone Divine Truth is to be found.
Perhaps Freemasons adopted the same concept:

- We teach that death is
- "The gateway of life through which we all must pass, before entering into the beginning of a fuller & larger existence".
Today, these degrees are not complex in basic story presentation,

- But they are profound in potential impact on those who study further the words & their history.
Royal Master
The Royal Master, the first Council degree, is conferred in two parts.

- In the first, Hiram Abif talks to Adoniram about death.
- In the second, a day after Hiram Abif's death, King Solomon & Hiram King of Tyre cannot communicate the Master's Word without him - not as agreed.
The dramas illuminate both the Master Mason & Royal Arch degrees.

- This is the only degree in Masonry where you can meet - & converse face to face - with Hiram Abif, our central character.
It is an eloquent degree

- Beautifully symbolizes the labourer seeking his reward,
- Discusses victory over death.
Select Master
This degree again is set before Hiram Abif's death,

- Alludes to preparations to hide Secret Treasures.

It provides a much deeper explanation for the meanings of the inscriptions found on the Masters' jewels & the triangle on top of the Ark.
It also explains why King Solomon

- Selected 24 true, tried & trusty Craftsmen,
- Together with the 3 Grand Masters (making "27 & no more"),
- To complete an important part of the Temple.
The historical setting of this degree & its symbolism are

- Intimately connected with the Royal Arch degree.
It is the symbolic link that binds the Master's degree to the Royal Arch,

Without it the mystery of "The Recovery of That Which Was Lost" remains in darkness.
It is the historical & symbolic bridge

- Connects the Hebrew Nation with the sad days of its captivity
- From the completion of the first Temple to the building of the second Temple.
"Truth" seemed lost,

Yet it was not lost, but only hidden

- Until the generation should come which by its perfect & unselfish labors should restore "Truth", & bring to light the Ineffable Secret.
The Select Master degree is said by some to be:

- The most interesting degree in Masonry.
Perhaps because it rationally accounts for the concealment & preservation

- Essential secrets which were buried in darkness for a period of four hundred & seventy years,
- Brought to light at building of second Temple.
In 1817, Samuel Cole said:

- "It is strange, & it is also unfortunate, that very few have received the useful knowledge made known in the Select ... we may, however, pronounce it the key to the Arch."
Super Excellent Master
The Super Excellent Master degree was not originally a part of the Cryptic system,

- Is still not presented in all jurisdictions.
- Yet it is one of Masonry's best written rituals.
It deals with incidents in the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar

- Zedekiah, last King of Judah, was conquered & carried captive to Babylon.
- Enlarges upon the Royal Arch with the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonian King, & final destruction of first Temple.
It dramatizes the lesson of fidelity.

- It is not a degree of the Crypt;
- Does not deal with Ancient Craft Masonry.

"the best devised, most impressive & beautiful ritual in Masonry."
In a panorama of exciting events, biblical characters move across the stage, illustrating history.

The great Chaldean Monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, lives again.
The treacherous & faithless Zedekiah, the last of Judah's Kings, proves the results of infidelity.

The unswerving Ezekiel, & the melancholy but zealous Jeremiah, prophesy the promises of the Almighty.
The great lesson is about fidelity to a trust.

- It is a spectacular presentation, usually conferred by two or more Councils assisting one another, as it requires a large cast.
In

“The Grand Council of Ontario”,

- You must be “Greeted” as a Super Excellent Master
- Before you are considered a “Companion of Royal & Select Masters”.
Royal Ark Mariner
This degree is based upon the story of Noah & his ark.

- The presiding officer of a Royal Ark Mariner lodge, the Commander, represents Noah.
- Senior & Junior Warden = his sons Shem & Japheth.
The ritual emphasizes the cardinal virtues, using the triangle & the working tools with which Noah built the ark:
- axe, saw, & auger
- To point the moral lesson.
The principal emblems of the degree are:

- Triangle, rainbow, & a dove with an olive branch in its beak.
The earliest record of the degree being worked is Bath in 1790.

- In our Jurisdiction, Royal Ark Mariner lodges are "moored" to Councils
- Select Masters who receive the Royal Ark Mariner Degree may wear the "Rainbow" jewel.
Seek More Light Now!
Candidates are:

- "Honoured" as Royal Masters,
- "Chosen" as Select Masters &
- "Greeted" as Super Excellent Masters,
  - usually on separate occasions.
Appropriate dress for both occasions, 

- is a business suit.

- After becoming a Companion of the Cryptic Rite, a Mason is deemed worthy of the appellation,
  - "The select of the Craft".
As a Royal Arch Mason,

- You have the right to petition for Council membership.