



History of Writing (A Great Lesson)Curriculum Guide

Materials: TimeLine Scroll
The Great Lesson Story (Writing/Language)
The History of Language Card Set

Presentation:

1. Begin with the Great Lesson Story of Writing/Language. Refer to your teacher's manual or you can use the suggested story below:

"The story I want to tell you today takes place after human beings had already come to live on the earth. There's no way to tell exactly how long ago the story happened, but it was a long time ago, indeed! No matter, though; this is a true story.

When men and women first lived on the earth they had need of many things: food, shelter, and clothing, to name some. This was a long time ago, though, and there were no food markets or clothing stores. There were no homes to live in. Even so, the earth was ready for humans. The gift of a larger brain and imagination served them well as they searched for what they needed. They told each other about what they found and where they found it. Maybe they used gestures, or a combination of gestures and sounds.

(model some gestures and sounds portraying food and direction)

Pictographs circa 15,000 B.C.

People had lived on Earth for about 4 million years. They had learned to control fire, make complex tools, and survive variable weather. Humans wanted to share what they had seen so they drew on the walls of caves. We can learn much about the animals that were important to these humans by studying these pictures. Maybe someday you will travel and visit some of these caves.

****Show pictures of important cave drawings.**

This system worked fine most of the time. Eventually, though, a challenge presented itself. If a person found something good to eat -- say, some fish in a pond -- and no one else was there, what could they do? Maybe they thought: "How can I tell about what I have found?" Maybe the first person didn't solve this problem, but somebody did! Someone, we don't know who or when, decided to make a picture. The picture told the story, rather than the sounds, or gestures that might have been expressed.

(show a pictograph)



People probably drew these kinds of pictures for a very long time. Pictures were made of what was important, and of what they wanted others to know. For example: a hunter might need to record that 10 animals were spotted near a certain rock. He may have drawn a picture of an animal, with 10 strokes underneath, on the rock to record that message.

(show the hunter's pictograph)



Ideograms circa 7,500 B.C.

Humans later used a combination of pictures to tell a story. They used pictures as symbols - pictures that represented a word. A picture of a mouth and a bowl meant eating. They used natural materials for 'paint' - like dried blood, berries, charcoal or rocks.

Time passed and ancient people continued to draw pictures. Some of their pictures were very beautiful. We know this because some of them, drawn a very long time ago, have been found on the walls of caves around the world.

(show the cave painting)

Sumer circa 3500 B.C

The people of Sumer had a great civilization. They did not have many trees in Sumer so they learned how to use clay as a tablet. They baked the tablet in the sun to dry. They used a wedge shaped tool called a stylus. We call their wedge shaped writing cuneiform. Cuneiform means wedge shaped.

Use a map of globe to show where the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers were. You can have a tablet of clay ready with a stick to show how they wrote or for now, just have a laminated picture of cuneiform writing. Make you you mention how people are influenced by the materials they have on hand. I also talk about the great king Hammurabi and show laminated copies of his laws. I ask if they'd like to hear a few of the laws to that time. I also tell about the epic poem of Gilgamesh.



Even more time passed. At a certain point in history, about 5,000 years ago, a group of people called the Egyptians lived in northern Africa along the banks of the Nile River. They made lots of pictures: some were carved in stone, some were painted on stone, and some were painted on paper. The stones came from the land around them, and the paper was made from the papyrus plant, a reed that grew near the river. They first painted pictures on this paper with a brush and then later used a pen to write their picture messages.

(show a picture of hieroglyphics)

Egypt circa 3200 B.C.

The Egyptians developed a style of writing called hieroglyphics, or writing of the gods. They carved their symbols into rock. It was very difficult to learn as it had so many symbols so they had scribes who went to school to learn how to write. Only boys were allowed to go to scribe school. The Egyptians developed a type of paper from a plant called papyrus. They used a reed sharpened into a point to write on their paper. They then rolled the paper into scrolls. These were their books. Sometimes the Egyptians wrote symbols that stood for concepts and sometimes they mixed in symbols that stood for sounds. We use symbols for sounds today. They wrote left to right, right to left and up and down.

****Have a scroll rolled so students understand. Try to find some samples of papyrus or other paper made from plants. Show maps of where Egypt was.**

As you might imagine, people were sometimes confused by picture messages. This was especially true when people started using the same pictures for different meanings, as the Egyptians did. For example, a picture of a leg could mean:

- 1. The object, meaning an actual leg*
- 2. An idea, meaning 'to run', because the leg was used for running.*
- 3. The tone of the words, as in 'quickly'*

2,000 B.C. Shang Dynasty

The Shang on the Yellow River is the earliest known civilization that used Chinese writing. They used about 3,000 symbols for words and actions. The Chinese language of today differs very little from this early writing. This is because the Chinese civilization was isolated from the rest of the world for many years.

Have a laminated picture of Chinese writing or a Chinese newspaper.

(show pictures of different types of hieroglyphics)



At about the same time in history, a people called the Phoenicians lived around the Mediterranean Sea, north of Africa. They sailed to lands around the Mediterranean and sold many things - ivory, spices, incense, silver, ornaments, glass - and one very, very special thing. Only the Phoenicians sold this one special thing. What was it? It was a rare purple dye, like we use to color cloth. Somehow they discovered that a particular shellfish contained in its shell a tiny particle of bright red coloring that they could use as a dye. These shellfish were gathered by the millions and crushed together to make the dye. Because it was hard to get -- only the Phoenicians had it -- the dye was very expensive. Only royalty and the very wealthy were able to dye their clothes with this beautiful color. The Phoenicians were the discoverers of this dye: how it was made was a closely guarded secret.

But as important as this Tyrian Purple Dye was to the Phoenicians, it is not why they are part of this story. Here is the reason why:

The Phoenicians traded with the Egyptians, who by now used pictures that represented sounds as well as objects. Being merchants, the Phoenicians needed a quick and accurate way of recording their business, so they 'borrowed' (quite cleverly) just the sound pictures of the Egyptians. This sort of picture could express many different things, like ideas and amounts of money. Best of all, these symbols made it easier to tell what was meant, since people who spoke to each other by this time agreed that certain sounds meant certain things. The Phoenicians found out what you found out when you learned to use the sandpaper letters -- this mark makes this sound.

(show pictures of the Phoenician alphabet)

𐤀 𐤁 𐤂 𐤃 𐤄 𐤅 𐤆 𐤇 𐤈 𐤉 𐤊 𐤋 𐤌 𐤍 𐤎 𐤏 𐤐 𐤑 𐤒 𐤓 𐤔 𐤕 𐤖 𐤗 𐤘 𐤙 𐤚 𐤛 𐤜 𐤝 𐤞 𐤟 𐤠 𐤡 𐤢 𐤣 𐤤 𐤥 𐤦 𐤧 𐤨 𐤩 𐤪 𐤫 𐤬 𐤭 𐤮 𐤯 𐤰 𐤱 𐤲 𐤳 𐤴 𐤵 𐤶 𐤷 𐤸 𐤹 𐤺 𐤻 𐤼 𐤽 𐤾 𐤿

Phoenicians 1,600 BC

The Phoenicians lived on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They were merchants who sailed around the Mediterranean Sea selling ivory, spices, incense, ornaments, glass. Their name comes from a purple dye they used to make clothes. It came from shellfish called the Murex Snail. They were famous for their purple dye. They needed an easy system of writing to keep track of all the goods they traded. They saw the Egyptian and Sumerian alphabets and borrowed their ideas. Their first alphabet had 80 symbols, but eventually they simplified it to only 22 letters with sounds. The Phoenicians did not have any vowels.

Try to find some good pictures of old sailing ships. Have a laminated copy of the Phoenician alphabet.

Even though it was the Phoenicians who were the first to use what we know as the alphabet, you might not recognize their letters. So, this is not quite the end of the story. You see, it was the Romans who first called these letters 'the alphabet'. The Roman letters are ones you might recognize. The sandpaper letters you learned are almost the same as the letters used by the Romans.

The Chinese 900 B.C

The Chinese invented many things before the Europeans. The Europeans did not know as the two cultures rarely mixed with each other. The Chinese invented the first printing press. They first had individual letters carved in wood. Pages were written by putting individual letters together. Later they carved a whole page of words onto a wooden block. Many pages could then be printed, but the wood wore down rapidly and had to be replaced. The Chinese also invented true paper from wood pulp around 105 A.D.

The Greeks 800 B. C

The Greeks learned the alphabet from the Phoenicians. They did not speak the same language as the Phoenicians so they had to add some new letters. They changed to an alphabet with 24 letters. The word alphabet comes from the first two letters of their alphabet - alpha and beta.

The Greeks used vowels, left spaces between words, used some punctuation and were the first to only write left to right.

Have a laminated copy of the Greek alphabet.

| Greek | Roman | Modern |
|-------|-------|--------|
| Α | A | A |
| Β | B | B |
| Γ | G | C |
| Δ | Ɔ | D |
| Ε | ƚ | E |

Romans 100 B. C.

The Romans were a great civilization. They conquered a lot of the world. They simplified the Greek alphabet by changing the shape of many of their letters. They named their language Latin. The shape of our letters today is a lot like the Roman letters of 2, 000 years ago. The Romans kept their writing in books, instead of on scrolls. Monks copied the books by hand using beautiful script and pictures called illumination. They wrote with quill pens on paper made from animal skins called parchment. They wrote beside open windows using the sun for light.

Have a book that shows examples of illumination.

Alcuin 780 A.D.

Charlemagne was a king of another great civilization that conquered much of the world. He had a library full of all the books written at that time in the great city of Alexandria. Unfortunately most of the books were lost in a great fire. A monk named Alcuin developed many of the rules we use today for capital letters and punctuation.

Printing Press, Europe 1400 A.D.

Johann Gutenberg, a German, is thought to have invented the first paper in Europe. The Chinese had developed a process to make paper long ago, but refused to share their secrets. Gutenberg also invented a faster printing press. More books could now be made in a day than a monk could produce in several months. The Koreans were the first to use a type set made out of bronze. It lasted much longer than wood.

Try to find a picture of an old printing press.

Rosetta Stone 1799 A.D.

The Rosetta Stone is discovered by some of Napoleon's soldiers while they were fighting in Egypt. Napoleon was a famous French General. The Rosetta Stone had a passage written in two languages: Egyptian hieroglyphics and Greek. As many educated people could read the early Greek, they slowly figured out the meaning of the hieroglyphics. It took forty years, but the secrets of the ancient language were finally unlocked. Reading a civilization's writing lets us know a lot about how they lived and what they thought.

Computers 1900's

Today the written word can travel from one part of the world to another in seconds. Computers and satellites have made it possible to exchange news as it happens. Languages are translated from one to another by machines. Great quantities of information can be held by one magnetic disk. Whole encyclopedias are stored in about a six inch space. Someday communication with paper may be looked upon as we now look upon cave drawings.

We always end by talking about how language will change when they are my age. They talk about wrist watch telephones that allow you to see the speaker, talking computers, etc. This is also a good time to talk about how languages are disappearing and how languages are influencing others.

2. To use the card set with the story, roll out the TimeLine Scroll. Scale the timeline for use with the History of Writing/Language card set. We recommend the following scale:

7 large tick marks = 10,000 yrs.

As such, begin with first tick mark to the far left of the scroll and place the 30,000 year card. At the 7th large tick mark, place the 20,000 year card. You will have to estimate the placement of the other cards within those parameters.

After the TimeLine Scroll has been scaled, read the story to the students and when you come to the next innovation with writing - place the card down with the appropriate date card onto the timeline.

3. To supplement the Great Story Lessons, simply follow instructions from #2 excluding the story.

4. After completing, gather cards, roll up the scroll and return to the shelf.

NOTE TO TEACHER & STUDENTS**

When researching the History of Writing/Language, please note these dates are just estimates.