



Written Language:

Storing knowledge

Ancient scripts / Teachers notes

Focus

This activity encourages students to think about the significance of the development of written language and to look at some ancient scripts.

Objectives

Students will:

- learn about the importance of written language
- decode messages in a variety of ancient scripts
- develop symbols for letters or objects.

Outcomes

All students will:

- design some symbols for Dongba and Ogham script.

Most students will also:

- attempt all questions and decode messages in Dongba or Ogham.

Some students will also:

- write messages in Dongba and ogham scripts.

Equipment

- Worksheet: *Ancient scripts* (1 copy per student).
- Worksheet: *Decoding Dongba script* (1 copy per student).
- Worksheet: *Decoding Ogham script* (1 copy per student).

Running the activity

Ask the students to suggest the three most important human inventions. They can work in groups or pairs and most will come up with the wheel, fire etc. Review the suggestions and introduce the idea that written language has had as great an impact on human development as any other technology.

Hand out the Ancient scripts worksheet which students can work on individually or in pairs. The Decoding... worksheets require students to work in groups to create messages for each other. It would be possible to start the lesson with these and then move onto Ancient scripts. the creation of symbols for these ancient scripts also provides a fun, creative activity for students.

Answers to questions

- 1 To preserve information outside people's memories, to agree accurate accounts of events or ownership of property.
- 2
 - a Etruscan, Ogham, Dongba, Mandarin.
 - b Ogham, Dongba.
 - c Mandarin.
 - d Left to right.
- 3
 - a A large amount of information can be coded in a few symbols.
 - b New words can be constructed from a limited range of symbols.
- 4 N, Drink, Cup, G.

Decoding Dongba script.

- 1 A suitable interpretation for the few pictograms here might be; A man dances with a woman. Another man then tells another woman - perhaps the first man's wife? The first man then kills the informer with a sword.

- 2 Accept any sensible answers.

Decoding Ogham script.

- 1 Telephone number.
- 2 Accept any sensible answers.