Unit 1: Alphabet History

Content Area: **Gifted and Talented**
Course(s): **Gifted and Talented**
Time Period: **Week 1**
Length: **14 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Students will begin the year with an exploration of the first types of writing including cuneiform, hieroglyphics, and ancient Chinese writing. Students will investigate how writing moved from looking like pictures toward the alphabet that we know today with a look at the writing of the Phoenicians, ancient Greeks, and ancient Romans. Their exploration of the history of the alphabet will culminate in a look at how different cultures today have different letters in their alphabets and how some cultures write their books in a different format than we do in English.

Standards

SOC.K-4.6.1.4.C.16	Explain how creativity and innovation resulted in scientific achievement and inventions in many cultures during different historical periods.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.C.17	Determine the role of science and technology in the transition from an agricultural society to an industrial society, and then to the information age.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.C.18	Explain how the development of communications systems has led to increased collaboration and the spread of ideas throughout the United States and the world.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.D.13	Describe how culture is expressed through and influenced by the behavior of people.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.D.15	Explain how various cultural groups have dealt with the conflict between maintaining traditional beliefs and practices and adopting new beliefs and practices.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.D.17	Explain the role of historical symbols, monuments, and holidays and how they affect the American identity.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.D.18	Explain how an individual's beliefs, values, and traditions may reflect more than one culture.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.D.19	Explain how experiences and events may be interpreted differently by people with different cultural or individual perspectives.
SOC.K-4.6.1.4.D.20	Describe why it is important to understand the perspectives of other cultures in an interconnected world.

Essential Questions

- Why is written communication important to human history?
- How has written communication changed the way humans interact?
- How has written communication changed or stayed the same over time?

Students will know that ...

- Cultures all around the world use different writing systems and have different letters in their alphabets.
- Cuneiform was the first written language, and it used symbols and pictures to communicate its messages.
- Even within one country, people may use different languages and writing systems.
- Written communication served many functions throughout history including keeping a written record of human events, tracking trade and business, sending messages, etc.

Students will be able to...

- Compare and contrast writing systems around the world.
- Explain how humans use written communication.
- Hypothesize the meaning of symbols and pictures based on their knowledge of the culture and region of the world.
- Investigate the priorities and lifestyles of various cultures based on the structure of their writing systems.

Assessments

- Create your own picture language Summative: Visual Arts Project In groups of four or five, students create their own picture language with a translation chart and provide an explanation as to why they included the pictures that they did. Each group will translate a short, simple book such as One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish into its language.
- Pre-Assessment: Telephone Activity Diagnostic: Self Assessment Provide each student with a message written in pictures and have each student determine his/her own meaning for the sentence. Students share their meanings with each other and explain why they arrived at the meaning they did. Students explain why they arrived at different meanings for the same message.
- Using symbols today Formative: Visual Arts Project Using cameras, students explore Green Brook and take pictures of things that use symbols to convey meaning instead of words including street signs, advertisements, businesses, instructions, etc.
- Why do we write things down? Formative: Other written assessments Students individually brainstorm all of the reasons why they write things down and the types of things they write down. Students interview different people in the school or at home to add to their list. They categorize the items in their list and discover themes for reasons why people developed writing.

Activities

- Pre-Assessment telephone activity.
- Cuneiform: What do the symbols mean? Have students make reasoned guesses, then explain.
- Write name in hieroglyphics.
- "Using Symbols Today" picture activity.

- Examine familiar signs in different languages.
- "Why do we write things down?" activity.
- Compare and contrast different modern day languages to find differences in their alphabets.
- Create your own language.

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

- Kinesthetic activities in the classroom, school, or town to gather information about different signs or clues about different languages.
- Visual learners will be able to effectively compare and contrast symbols. Other learners may fine it more effective to verbally describe or provide a written description for the activity.
- Mixed-ability groups for final project.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

- Coordinate with language arts teachers to discern appropriate books for the summative translation activity.
- Coordinate with social studies teachers to help students locate the countries and ancient civilizations discussed in the unit.

Resources

- A History of Alphabets around the World with examples: http://alphabetandletter.com/
- Encyclopedia Britannica Article on the diffusion of the alphabet as well as explanations of languages: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/17212/alphabet/53643/Theories-explaining-diffusion

A History of Alphabets around the World with examples