



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian Religion/Ceremony **History** Prayer Gathas
Comparative Religion Shahnameh

Age Group (circle one): PreK-k Grades 1-3 Grades 4-5 **Grades 6-8** **Grades 9-12**

Lesson #7

Subject of the Lesson: The Origins of Writing

Material for the teacher:

Lesson Objective: To learn the invention of writing and its significance in civilization.

Lesson Length: 1- 1.5 hour

In-class activity

Teacher starts the class with an activity, before giving out the “Pancake Recipe” Handouts:

- Teacher reads the “Pancake Recipe” to class from handout on page 4, then challenges students to write down answers to the following question from recipe:
 - o What are the ingredients for this recipe?
 - o How long is the cook time?
 - o How many cups of flour we need?
 - o Did we use salt for this recipe?
 - o How many calories are there in per servings?

Wait for their response and quick check the answers. Most likely there are many wrong answers, or do not remember.

Teacher follows giving out the “Pancake Recipe” handout to students.

Then asks the same and few more questions from the recipe. This time students will look up the answers from recipe handout.

Teacher challenges the students:

Which way is better to follow instruction, verbal or written?

Most likely the answer would be, the written instruction. Because it is visual and permanent.

Teacher shares:

- Writing allows us to communicate our message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience.
- Writing makes our thinking and learning visible and permanent. It allows us to see someone else’s ideas, like this pancake recipe!
- E.g., Books, letters, newspaper, etc.



Teacher asks students, when and how did writing begin? Then asks students to read the first paragraph from handout on page 5:

The Origins of Writing

After the foundation of the very first city states around 3400 B.C.E. the first civilization appeared. Mesopotamia was the first civilization including Sumer and Elamite. The first cities began to grow and consequently their administration became quite complex, which was proper setting for the emergence of writing.

...

Teacher explaining the following locations using the Glossary page and maps.

- Mesopotamia
- Sumer
- Elam

Teacher asks students to continue reading the next paragraph from handout:

...

Humans began to write using pictography, which is the art of registering something through images. Early pictorial signs were gradually substituted by a complex system of characters representing the sounds of Sumerian (the language of Sumer in Southern Mesopotamia) and other languages. Cuneiform writing was done on clay tablets, particularly to make accounting commercial and properly record that was essential for city administration. If they wanted to keep records for longer periods of time, they baked the clay tablets in ovens.

...

Teacher explaining the following using the Glossary page.

- Pictography

Teacher asks students to continue reading the next paragraph from handout:

...

The evolution of writing led to the creation of phonetic alphabets. Sounds were no longer depicted by illustration, instead they would be represented by signs. This made writing much easier and more accessible; therefore, simplifying communication.

The invention of writing was surely one of humanity's major breakthroughs. From this invention, humans could register their existence, the record of their deeds and discoveries, their culture, and their laws...

Teacher explaining the following using the Glossary page.

- Cuneiform writings



Teacher asks students to continue reading the next paragraph from handout:

...

The Cyrus Cylinder is one of many kingly proclamations on stone or clay known from ancient Mesopotamia. What makes it unique is not its form, but rather the policy it records: Cyrus's decision to allow deported peoples to return to their settlements and to restore their desecrated sanctuaries.

Teacher explaining the following using the Glossary page.

- Cyrus Cylinder

Pancake Recipe

(Prep:5 mins Cook:15 mins Total:20 mins Servings:8 Yield:8 servings)

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 1 ¼ cups milk
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted.



Directions:

➤ **Step 1**

In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar. Make a well in the center and pour in the milk, egg and melted butter: mix until smooth.

➤ **Step 2**

Heat a lightly oiled griddle or frying pan over medium-high heat. Pour or scoop the batter onto the griddle, using approximately 1/4 cup for each pancake. Brown on both sides and serve hot.

Nutrition Facts:

Per Serving:

158 calories; protein 4.5g; carbohydrates 21.7g; fat 5.9g; cholesterol 37.7mg; sodium 503.6mg.

The Origins of Writing

After the foundation of the very first city states around 3000 BCE, the first civilization appeared. Mesopotamia was the first civilization including Sumer and Elamite. The first cities began to grow, and their administration became quite complex. People needed to keep records of things, and this is when writing became important.



Pictographic

Humans began to write using pictography, which is the art of recording something through images. Early pictorial signs were gradually substituted by a complex system of characters representing the sounds of Sumerian (the language of Sumer in Southern Mesopotamia) and other languages.

Cuneiform writing was done on clay tablets, to properly record essential information for city administration. If they wanted to keep records for longer periods of time, they would bake the clay tablets.



British Museum: 4,000-year-old tablet recording workers' wages

The evolution of writing led to the creation of phonetic alphabets. Words were now written with symbols that represented sounds. This made writing much easier and accessible, and simplified communication.

The invention of writing is one of humanity's greatest inventions. Writing allowed humans to register their existence, keep a record of their deeds, list their discoveries, and share their culture and their laws. This allowed historians to learn of ancient cultures and civilizations.



Cuneiform (The Cyrus Cylinder)

The Cyrus Cylinder is one of many kingly proclamations on stone or clay known from ancient Mesopotamia. It is written in cuneiform. What makes it unique is not its form, but rather the policy it records: Cyrus's decision to allow deported peoples to return to their settlements and to restore their damaged structures and religious buildings. A replica sits in the United Nations building in New York, USA.



This Old Persian cuneiform sign sequence was discovered because it kept repeating itself in inscriptions. Historians correctly guessed that it was the word for "King". Look below where another scholar has isolated the word "king."

Inscription Persépolitaine de Niebuhr n° 1



Niebuhr inscription 1, with the suggested words for "King" highlighted. This inscription now known to mean *"Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King of countries, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenian, who built this Palace."*

Much of what we have learnt of the Achaemenid Kings and their empire, comes to us from the Bas reliefs at Bisotun/Behistun.



Behistun Inscription

The Behistun Inscription is a multilingual inscription and large rock relief on a cliff at Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah Province of Iran. Three versions of the same text are written in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (a variety of Akkadian).

The Behistun Inscription is believed to be a quote from Darius the Great about his ancestry and lineage. According to the inscription, he attributed his victories in all battles during the period of upheaval to the "grace of Ahura Mazda", and a symbol of the Faravahar is also shown in the inscription.

Conclusion:

The invention of writing took place within several different civilizations around the world at about the same time. The Egyptians, Sumerians, Chinese and people in Mesoamerica invented their own writing systems independently of each other! They created their own symbols and pictures, and eventually alphabets.

Cuneiform originally represented the sounds and words in the Sumerian language. Over time, other cultures, and empires, including the Achaemenids, developed their own alphabets from it.

Glossary

Mesopotamia

is a historical region of Western Asia situated within the Tigris–Euphrates River system, in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent. It occupies the area of present-day Iraq, and parts of Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Kuwait.

The word Mesopotamia means "between rivers" in Greek.



Sumer

is the earliest known civilization in the historical region of southern Mesopotamia (now southern Iraq)

Elamite

was an ancient civilization centered in the far west and southwest of modern-day Iran, stretching from the lowlands of what is now Khuzestan and Ilam Province as well as a small part of southern Iraq.





Pictograph	a pictorial symbol for a word or phrase. Pictographs were used as the earliest known form of writing; examples having been discovered in Egypt and Mesopotamia from before 3000 BC.
Cuneiform	Relating to the wedge-shaped characters used in the ancient writing systems of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Ugarit. Surviving mainly on impressed clay tablets and rock facings. "A cuneiform inscription"
Cyrus Cylinder	The Cyrus Cylinder or Cyrus Charter is an ancient clay cylinder, on which is written a declaration in Akkadian cuneiform script in the name of Persia's Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great. It dates from the 6th century BC and was discovered in the ruins of Babylon in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) in 1879. It is currently in the possession of the British Museum, which sponsored the expedition that discovered the cylinder.

Sources: Google, Encyclopedia Iranica, Encyclopedia Britannica

Author: Adeleh Alba

Editor: Armaity Homavazir

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