

Support notes for tutors

ESOL tour:

Development of Writing and Scripts

This tour will look at the history of writing by exploring examples of different scripts from the known origins to the present day.

The main aims are:

- To gain awareness of the development of writing from its earliest form.
- To find links between the different forms and their uses today.
- To appreciate the difficulty of writing in a new alphabet or script.

The origins of writing are largely unclear. Writing systems were created independently all over the world. The earliest we know of were developed in the Middle East around 5,000 years ago. But other scripts were invented in India, Egypt, China and Central America. It has been suggested that some of these systems may have influenced others, but this has not been proved.

These forms of writing look completely different, follow different rules and are often read in completely different ways. But they all perform the same basic function. They are all a visual means of recording language.

Pre Visit Activities

It is recommended you introduce all or some of them before your visit to ensure students are prepared and can get the most benefit from the sessions. Below are three suggestions to introduce vocabulary, materials and scripts. (These can be adapted by tutors as required.)

Vocabulary – an extensive list of words and their meanings has been provided which can be used for a matching exercise. The key items are at the top and the list should be adapted for lower levels.

Materials - Why write? Why make notes? How easy is it to recall verbal information? What equipment is used for recording and sharing information? Is different writing equipment used for different purposes? How has it changed?

Scripts – The writing script sheet can be used for matching, or gap fill. The list of language has been left as one for each script to encourage students to note that some scripts are used for more than one language.

Post Visit Activities

If you have time to continue with this topic

- **Handwrite** a letter to a friend or a family member telling them about your visit to the Museum. Include a few interesting facts about some of the objects. Sign your name using a different script.
- **Pictograms:** signs, symbols, icons – use signs and symbols to examine other forms of written information. Using the British Museum map, or icons on a phone or keys on a keyboard, choose 3 pictogram/icons and explain them.
- **Technology** - Research the developments in writing equipment from quill to touchscreen and discuss its impact on writing

References and further information

- British Museum video – introductory video for children showing a writing tools, and a demonstration in the art of writing hieroglyphs: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/discover/videos/a_brief_history_of_writing.aspx
- British Museum - image and information on the Rosetta Stone: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/discover/a_closer_look-1/the_rosetta_stone.aspx
- British Museum - history of writing, decipherment, literacy:

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/themes/writing/introduction.aspx>

- British Museum access information in English and other languages, signs and icons:
<http://www.britishmuseum.org/visiting/access.aspx?lang=en>
- History of Arabic scripts:
<http://www.basistech.com/knowledge-center/arabic/arabic-script-languages.pdf>
- Mesopotamia and the development of cuneiform writing:
http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/writing/story/stone_set.html
- Ancient Mesopotamia writing- history with time line and further useful links:
<http://www.ancient.eu.com/writing/>
- Interesting website with discussions on ancient scripts: <http://www.ancientscripts.com/ws.html>

Vocabulary word list

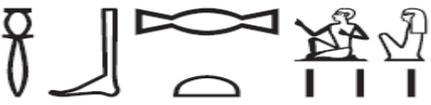
Types of writing					
note	letter	shopping list	signature	story	
	birthday card	diary	receipt	email	text
essay	report	article	poem		
Things for writing with					
pen	pencil	reed	stylus	quill	brush
Material for writing on					
paper	papyrus	clay	stone	parchment	wood

an alphabet	a group of letters used in language
a character	a symbol used in writing or printing
cuneiform	ancient Babylonian writing
calligraphy	the art of beautiful handwriting
demotic	writing of the local people
hieroglyph	a picture or symbol in Ancient Egyptian writing
hieroglyphics	writing in ancient Egypt
an icon	a small image eg 
a pictogram	a sign that looks like a picture of an object
a scribe	someone who knows how to write a script
a script	a system of characters used in writing
a stylus	something sharp used for writing
a symbol	for example £ & =)

a consonant	a letter of the alphabet or speech sound that is not a vowel
an ideogram	a sign used in the place of an idea or a sound
an inscription	letters or words written, printed, or engraved on a surface
papyrus	writing material used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Made of plants'
a reed	a stylus or pen made from part of a tall grass like plant. (Used for Arabic calligraphy)

Writing scripts

Which languages use these scripts? Can anyone in the class read the writing?

Script	Language / Symbol	Meaning in English
	Ancient Babylonian	'201'
	Ancient Egyptian	'family'
ترحب	Arabic	Welcome
歡迎光臨	Chinese	Welcome
<i>Welcome</i>	English	Welcome
ΚΑΛΩΣ ΗΡΘΑΤΕ	Greek	Welcome
קבלת פנים	Hebrew	Welcome
स्वागत	Hindi	Welcome
ようこそ	Japanese	Welcome
환영합니다	Korean	Welcome
آمدید خوش	Persian	Welcome
ДОБРО ПОЖАЛОВАТЬ	Russian	Welcome

