

On-the-Spot History Activity #5

Cuneiform Tablets

Learn:

Early Sumerian cultures used a special writing called cuneiform for their written language. They used a special stylus to create various symbols that had a head that looked like an arrow. Several of these arrow shapes together made a symbol. These symbols were used for sounds, which means it was an alphabet, or a symbol that indicates a sound. Cuneiform dates back 5,500 years to the area we know as Mesopotamia -- today the Middle East. It is considered by many the basis by which the Greek and Romans later created their alphabets.



See: The picture of a tablet with cuneiform writing on it.

Talk: Discuss how people use writing to communicate today -- books, e-mail, web articles, etc.

On-the-Spot Activity:

Supplies: Sculpey clay and a craft (popsicle) stick

Instructions:

Open the Sculpey clay and work with it until it can easily be flattened into a flat rectangle or square. Make sure the clay is 1/4 inch deep or more. Using the craft stick as a stylus, create a message of your own in cuneiform. It does not need to make sense, but it would be nice if your student thought up a message they'd like to communicate, even if the symbols themselves are not accurate. When your student is satisfied with their work, harden the clay as the package directs.

A	B	C (tch)	D	F
G	H	I	J	K
L	M	N	P	R
S	Sh	T	Th	U
V	Y	Z		Word Divider