Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Writing and Literature, Before Islam
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Lesson Plan 1:
Create Your Own Hieroglyphic Script

General Description of Lesson Plan: Small groups of students will be charged with creating their own hieroglyphic script to communicate with their peers. They will, then, assess the strengths and limitations of hieroglyphs as a communication tool.

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Subject Area(s): Social Studies

For Grade Level(s): 9

Time Needed: One class period

Outcomes/Objectives:
1. Students will gain insight into the challenges in creating a hieroglyphic script that communicates effectively.
2. They will assess the general effectiveness of hieroglyphic script and determine why it is not in common use today.

Materials: pen, paper

Suggested Procedure(s):
1. Review the history of hieroglyphic script and look at examples at http://www.ancientscripts.com/egyptian.html.
2. Assign students into groups of three or four each. Ask them to write a message, using only hieroglyphs that they have invented, to convey how to do a common, modern activity. Some examples would be how to fry an egg, sweep the floor, brush one's teeth, make a bed, text a message, and prepare a salad. Emphasize that groups cannot draw large pictures, but only use distinct symbols representing discreet ideas.
3. Next, have groups trade messages and try to decode each other's hieroglyphs.
4. Finally, as a full group, ask the students to compare and contrast the level of meaning conveyed by using hieroglyphs and the English alphabet. Have them identify the benefits and challenges of each system. Then, discuss why alphabet-based languages are commonly used today in many cultures.

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Evaluation Rubric:

Making A Game: Make a Hieroglyphic Message

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	3	2	1	0
Cooperative work	The group worked well together with all members contributing significant amounts of quality work.	The group generally worked well together with all members contributing some quality work.	The group worked fairly well together with all members contributing some work.	The group often did not work well together and the game appeared to be the work of only 1-2 students in the group.
Creativity	The group put a lot of thought into making the message communicate the steps of the task.	The group put some thought into making the message communicate the steps of the task.	The group tried to make the message communicate the steps of the task, but some of the things made it harder to understand the message.	Little thought was put into making the message communicate the steps of the task.
Attempt to decode	All students in the group participated in the task of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.	Students in the group participated in the task (75% of the time) of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.	Students in the group participated in the task (50% of the time) of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.	Students in the group did not participate in the task of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.
Compare/Contrast	All students in the group participated in the task of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.	Students in the group participated in the task (75% of the time) of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.	Students in the group participated in the task (50% of the time) of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.	Students in the group did not participate in the task of comparing and contrasting hieroglyphs with alphabetic-based communication.

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. What challenges did you face in creating a hieroglyphic script that allowed you to communicate effectively?

2. When reading the hieroglyph communications of others, what hurdles did you face in understanding the meaning of their text?

3.   Why do you think hieroglyphs are not commonly used today in communications?