

Inspiration: Before there were books

In this activity sheet students will:

- learn about the earliest forms of writing like cuneiform
- use the Zoom & Pan interactive display to look at the State Library of Victoria's cuneiform tablet in detail
- explore and reflect on the design and use of cuneiform
- become familiar with terminology linked to cuneiform
- draw their own cuneiform design
- develop an awareness of how and why various technologies succeeded each other.

Answers to Question time 1

1. To create markings known as cuneiform.
2. Wedge-shaped.

Answers to Question time 2

1. For storage and ease of transport.
2. Prompt students to consider the process from beginning to end: including finding, picking, drying and cutting river reeds; as well as digging for clay, forming, writing on, and baking the tablet.
3. Students might consider weight, durability, usability and endurance of material over time.
4. Over 4000 years old.

Answers to Activity 2 - Ancient word finder

	S											O
		U		I	R	A	Q				V	
			M							E		
I	S	U	M	E	R	I	A	N	N		C	
	R				R	E	E	D			L	
		A	R	E	D	N	I	L	Y	C	A	
	W		N					B		T	Y	
M	E	S	O	P	O	T	A	M	I	A		
	D					K				B		
	G				E					L		
	E		Y	E	K	R	U	T		E		
I	N	V	E	N	T	I	O	N		T		

Answers to Activity 3 - Word scramble

clay, Sumerian, cuneiform, tablet.

Activity 4 – Write like a Sumerian

If you'd like your students to be able to write in Sumerian on school computers, go to the website below and download the free font. It also contains a 'Read Me' file that explains what the cuneiform means.

Here is a sample:



<http://www.peust.de/sumerian.html>

Additional class activities

Make your own cuneiform tablet from clay.

Students can make their own clay tablet and write what they think is the most valuable thing to pass on to future generations. Ask students: what will people want to know about us in 5000 years? They can write in English, or in their own language of symbols (which can then be translated back to others).

Further reading

To see a project on Sumer by students at Villanova College, visit:

<http://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/enviro/sumer/2002-b.htm>

Sources consulted

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The British Museum, *Writing in Mesopotamia*

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