

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 1 • ①

The Invention of Writing

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Seed
Learning



Contents

What Do You Write?	4
Counting Came First	5
Why Did We Start Writing?	6
Picture Systems	8
The Problem	9
Sounds and Symbols	10
Cuneiform Writing	11
Other Systems	13
The Future	17
Comprehension Questions	18
Glossary	19
World History Timeline	21

What Do You Write?

Letters? Emails? Poems?
Blogs? We all write something.
Writing is an important part of
our everyday life.

Who invented writing? Why did
we start to write?



A typewriter



The way we write
today

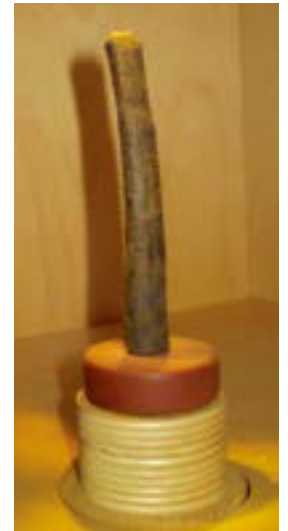


A feather pen and ink

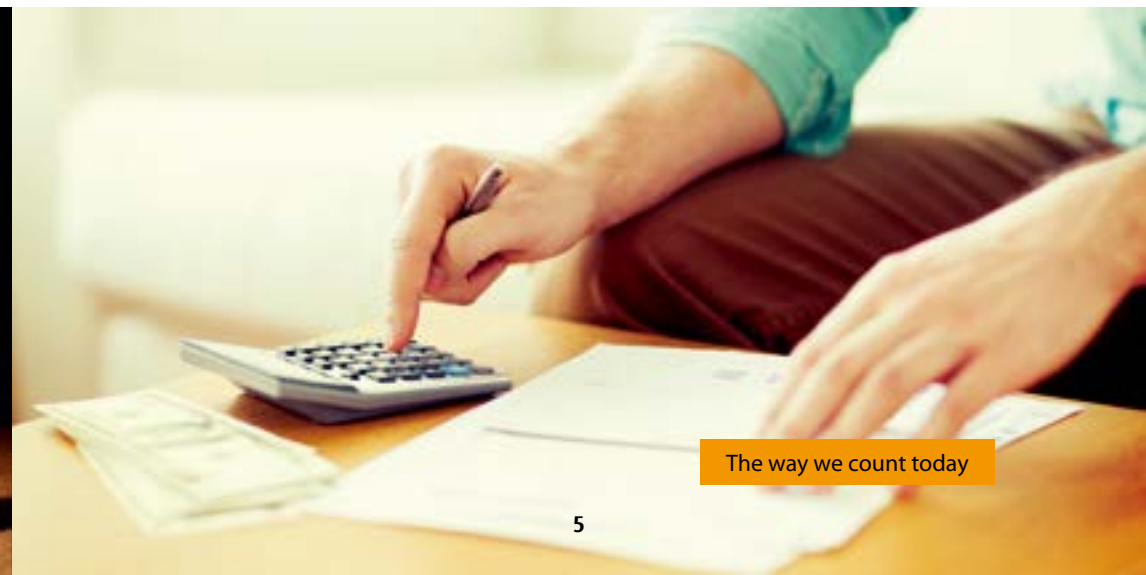
Counting Came First

At first, we wanted to record the
number of things we had, such as
animals or fruit trees. The Ishango
bone is 22,000 years old. It is covered
in marks to count numbers or units.

But how did marks for numbers
become marks for language?



The earliest record of
counting, the Ishango
bone



The way we count today

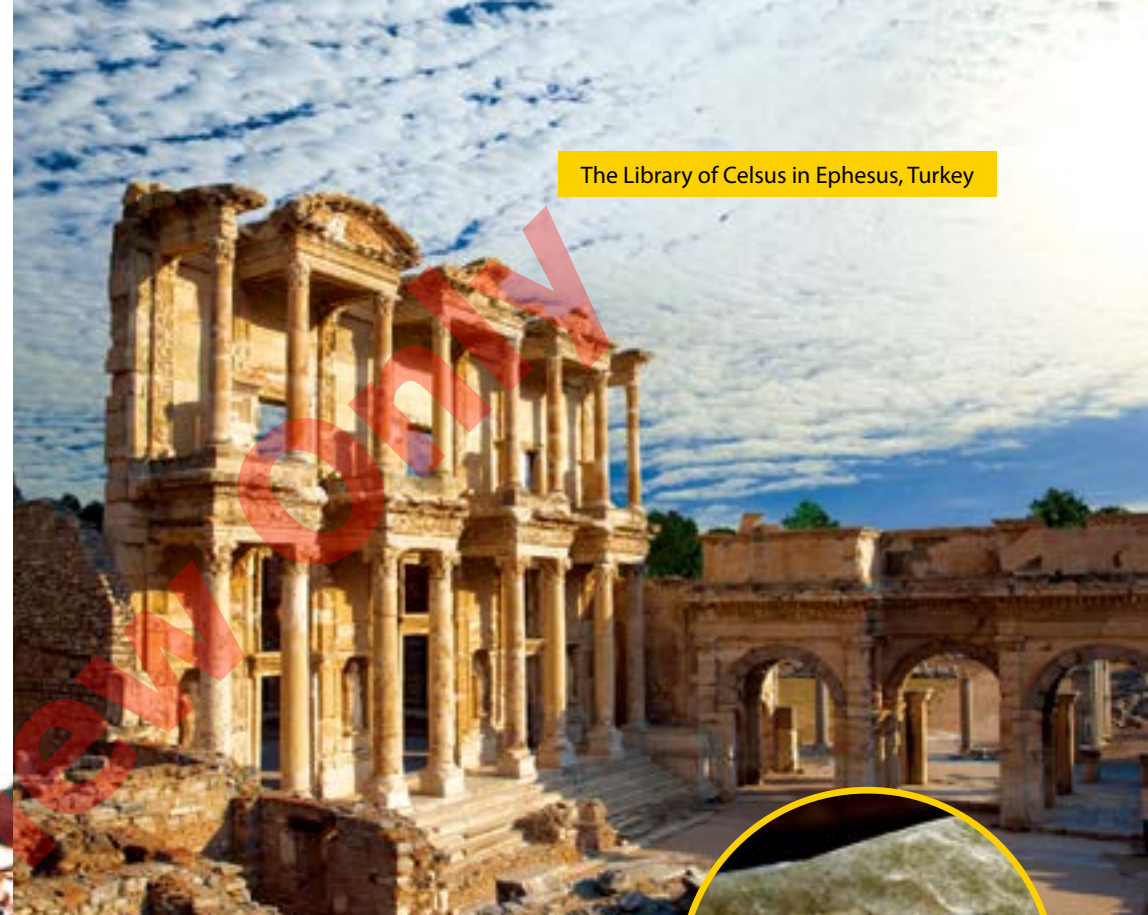
Why Did We Start Writing?

Long ago, people started to move around and trade between villages. They needed ways to store information. People wanted to write their ideas and learn from others. They wanted to know who owed them money.



A shopkeeper writing down his sales

Writing and sharing ideas



The Library of Celsus in Ephesus, Turkey



Part of the Dead Sea scrolls, Qumran, Israel

The development of writing was a big step in our change from a farming society to one that allowed us to live in groups, towns, and cities.

With writing, we could say anything and write it down for others to read hundreds or thousands of years later. We could write our history.

Picture Systems

The earliest writing systems were pictures of things and events, which represented ideas. The Egyptian writing system – hieroglyphics – is one such example. The Egyptians wrote in pictures, not words. Some pictures represented words and others represented sounds.



Pictures that tell a story



Egyptian hieroglyphics

The Problem

The problem was that there were too many pictures. Only a few people could remember the thousands of pictures. We needed a better way to connect our spoken language to writing.



A woman speaking



Too many pictures to remember

Comprehension Questions

1. Which of these examples of writing was NOT mentioned?
 - (a) Blogs
 - (b) Letters
 - (c) Books
 - (d) Emails
2. We first needed to write down...
 - (a) animals.
 - (b) numbers.
 - (c) pictures.
 - (d) words.
3. The Ishango bone is covered in ... representing...
 - (a) letters ... numbers.
 - (b) letters ... words.
 - (c) marks ... numbers.
 - (d) marks ... words.
4. Which is NOT an advantage of writing?
 - (a) We can say anything.
 - (b) We can understand anyone.
 - (c) We can record numbers.
 - (d) We can record information.
5. The Egyptians wrote in hieroglyphics which are...
 - (a) numbers.
 - (b) words.
 - (c) pictures.
 - (d) clay tablets.
6. A problem with hieroglyphics was that...
 - (a) no one could read them.
 - (b) no one could find them.
 - (c) they were not spoken.
 - (d) few people could remember all the pictures.
7. How many consonants are there in Arabic?
 - (a) 3
 - (b) 25
 - (c) 10
 - (d) 32
8. The Chinese writing system first used...
 - (a) letters.
 - (b) pictures.
 - (c) characters.
 - (d) numbers.
9. The Korean writing system uses a mixture of ... and ...
 - (a) mouth positions ... sounds.
 - (b) mouth positions ... letters.
 - (c) letters ... sounds.
 - (d) letters ... characters.
10. Which of these languages does NOT use the Roman alphabet?
 - (a) Spanish
 - (b) German
 - (c) Thai
 - (d) French

Glossary

- **character** a symbol drawn as a picture in languages such as Chinese and Japanese
- **connect** to join or put together
- **cuneiform** an early writing system
- **event** an occasion or happening
- **future** the time after now
- **represent** to be a sign or symbol of something
- **sharp** having a thin edge that is able to cut things
- **tablet** a flat piece of stone, clay, or wood with words written on it
- **tonal language** a language in which changes in sound, the way you say the word, change the meaning of a word
- **slightly** only a little
- **trading** buying and selling things
- **unit** a piece or part of something
- **writing system** a way of writing a language