

# LANGUAGE AWARENESS LESSONS

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The following ten lessons are example lessons suitable for the Language Awareness activity. They may be extended beyond these ten lessons if students are interested in more information. Use library resources for additional information about how the alphabet developed and the history of the English language.

It is recommended that "Reading and Spelling as Talents" be presented to students at the first class meeting.

## LESSON 1: READING AND SPELLING AS TALENTS

Many students who have experienced failure in reading and/or spelling perceive themselves as dumb. In other words, they equate lack of success in reading and/or spelling with low intelligence. Help students understand that the reason they have not been as successful in acquiring written language skills is not due to a lack of intelligence, but may be caused by the way they have been taught. Most schools use a reading method that requires students to remember whole words. People who do not have as much talent for remembering whole words, so they need a different way to learn how to read.

Discuss the idea that talent is something one is born with, and means that some things are easier for some to do than others. Persons having greater talent for something does not mean those persons are more intelligent than those having less talent in that area.

Briefly discuss the idea of talent as described above. Ask students what their talents are. Talent can involve art, sports, music, etc.

Pick one of the talents a student has mentioned, then draw a "Talent Scale" for it as shown in the example below.

## Talent Scale for Sports

100

50

0



Sign your initials at a place that describes the degree of talent in sports you have. Ask students to take turns signing their initials on the "Talent Scale for Sports" that describes the degree of talent they have.

After all have signed, explain that just because some may have more talent for sports than you does not mean that they are smarter than you; it just means they were born that way, and that it is easier for them to do. Those with less talent may have to practice more, and work harder, in order to be good at sports.

Follow the same procedure by drawing several more "Talent Scales" for different areas, then introduce the idea that reading and spelling are also different kinds of talents. Lead students to understand that just because they may not be able to read and spell as well as others, it doesn't mean those people are smarter, just that they may have more talent for remembering words.

Tell students that there are many ways of learning how to read. Some who have talent for remembering words can learn to read with a method that teaches whole words. Those who have less talent for remembering words need to be taught in a different way--one that doesn't depend on remembering whole words.

After the "Talent Scale" ideas, mention to students famous people known to them that also have less talent for reading and spelling, as:

Hans Christian Anderson (The Ugly Duckling and other children's stories.)

Albert Einstein

Thomas Edison

Nelson Rockefeller, former US vice-president

Nolan Ryan, famous baseball pitcher

Mickey Mantle, famous New York Yankees baseball player

Cher

Tom Cruise

Jay Leno

Loretta Young

Whoopi Goldberg

Steven Spielberg

John and Robert Kennedy

Stephen Cannell

George Patton

Walt Disney

This is a partial list. Add other famous dyslexic individuals as you learn about them.

Stress that your students have similar kinds of talents that these great people have; none of them have a high talent for reading or spelling either.

It may be necessary to repeat lessons such as this periodically, discussing famous dyslexics that made great accomplishments in spite of their lack of talent for reading and spelling.

## LESSON 2: ORAL LANGUAGE

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** small mirrors

**Oral Language means speaking with words. Today we are going to talk about how we say words.**

Put your fingertips on your vocal cords.

Demonstrate.

**Say your name. Do you feel your vocal cords vibrate? When your vocal chords vibrate, we say it is a voiced sound. Put your fingertips on your vocal chords, again. Whisper your name. Do you feel your vocal cords vibrate this time? When your vocal cords do not vibrate, it is an unvoiced sound.**

Distribute small mirrors. Tell the students that the mirror is another tool they will be using for their scientific study of the language. Show students how to hold the mirror in one hand and bring it close to the mouth so that the only thing they can see is their mouth.

**Watch your mouth in the mirror. Say *map*. Is your mouth moving? Is it opening? Are your lips closing?**

**Look in the mirror again, and say *too*. Is your mouth opening? Is anything closing? What is your tongue doing? Your teeth sometimes block the air from coming out.**

**To say words, your mouth opens, but your lips, tongue, and teeth sometimes blocks air from coming out.**

This talking was very different from the way in which even the most intelligent animals communicate by means of noises and actions. Animal noises and actions cannot be said to carry thoughts. They merely convey feelings - fear or warning when danger is near; gladness, as when a mother cow calls her calf.

Long, long ago, long before there were written records, people talked to each other. Words are verbal symbols. They are the smallest meaningful unit of spoken language. Spoken words are necessary for communication. People communicated with oral language for a long, long time before words were written down.

## **LESSON 3: NONVERBAL LANGUAGE**

Discuss ways you might communicate with others without using words.

Demonstrate various gestures, body language, and facial expressions by saying the same thing using different gestures, body language, facial expressions, and vocal intonation

**GESTURES:** Lead the students to come up with gestures such as: a wave of the hand, stop, be quiet, signaling a touchdown, etc.

**BODY LANGUAGE:** Fold arms, turn body, slump, shrug shoulders, shake head, nod the head, etc.

**SIGN LANGUAGE:** Native Americans used sign language to communicate with other tribes.

**SMOKE SIGNALS:** Ancient people used smoke signals to send messages.

**FACIAL EXPRESSIONS:** Discuss “reading” a person by the expressions on the face.

## LESSON 4: CONCEPT OF SYMBOLS

Pictures of symbols: flag, Thanksgiving turkey, Jack-O-Lantern, road signs, McDonald's golden arches, etc.

Alphabet strip

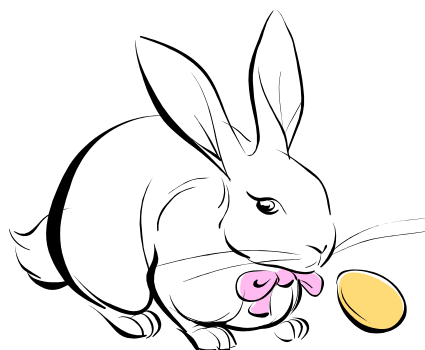
Teach students that a symbol stands for, or represents, something. Equate the concept of symbols to traffic lights, stop signs, logos, and familiar things in the students' realm of experience.

**OBJECTS AS SYMBOLS:** Flags, highways signs logos, trademarks, the letter x, etc. - are all symbols that stand for something else.

**WORDS AS SYMBOLS:** Spoken words are verbal symbols to stand for things and ideas. There are approximately 850,000 words in the English language and it is still growing; all of these words are made of about 44 different speech sounds that are blended together in different ways.

Put a word on the board such as *dog*. Talk about the idea that the word is not the dog itself. But the word *dog* is a symbol that stands for a dog.

**LETTERS AS SYMBOLS:** Show an alphabet letter strip. Tell students that alphabet letters are printed symbols that were invented to stand for the speech sounds in English words. Explain that you will be teaching them not to memorize words, but to learn the parts words are made of: letters and letter clusters. Show the first card of *Letter Deck* and *Picture Deck* and tell students that you will teach them the sounds that the letters stand for.



## LESSON 5: EARLY WRITING: CAVE DRAWINGS

Written language developed very slowly. Early man began to develop ways of writing down messages. They drew pictures. Some of these pictures were drawn on pieces of bark or bone and have been lost. Many were drawn on the walls of caves and can still be seen. There are hundreds of such pictures in caves (FROM *Remedial Training*, Gillingham and Stillman).

Pictures were drawn with a practical purpose, that of getting thoughts across to other people who were not present.



## LESSON 6: SUMERIAN PICTOGRAPHS

### **Materials: Illustrations #3 and #4**

The next stage of written language was developed by the Sumerians about 5,000 years ago. The Sumerians were believed to be the first great civilization. They were located in the area now known as the Persian Gulf. They were farmers who lived where there were no minerals or trees, so they made bricks for their houses out of baked clay.

They did a lot of trading with each other, and they needed an easier way to keep records than drawing pictures. Instead of drawing a whole scene to represent a story, they drew a picture of a thing to stand for a word. Gradually these symbols stood for ideas rather than the thing itself.

**See Illustration #3:** bird, grain, ox, foot

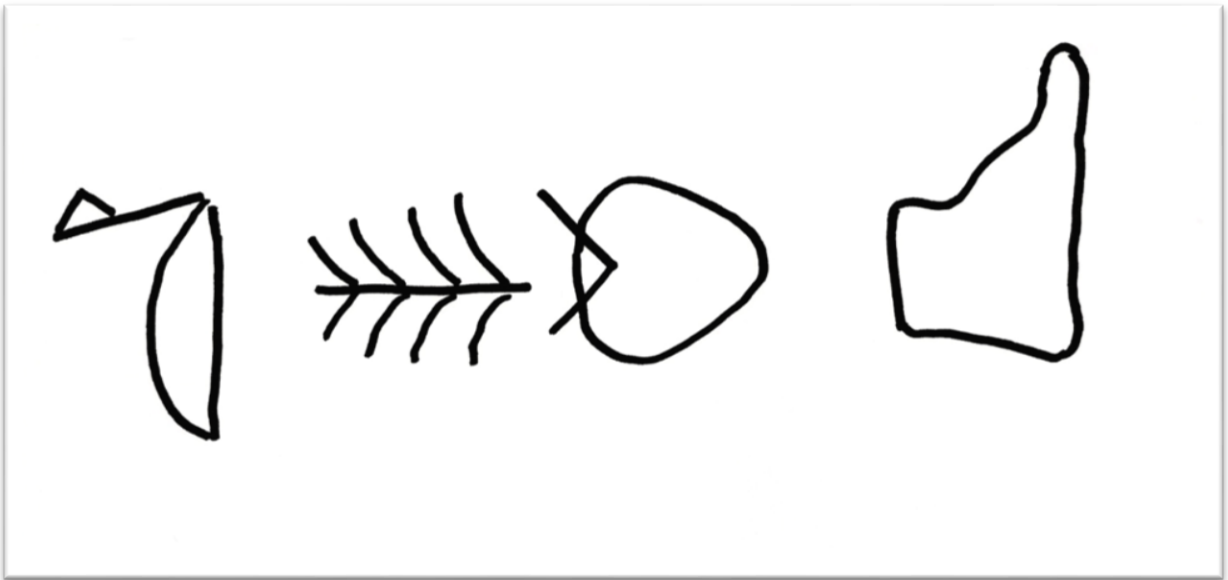
They had nothing to write on so they used tablets of wet clay. They allowed the clay to dry, then baked it for a permanent record. They started on the right side at the top and went down the page. Later, they decided to turn the clay tablet on its side to make the symbols, as it was easier to work with.

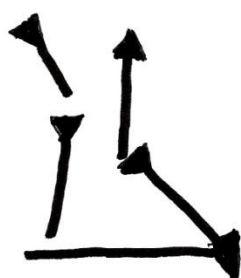
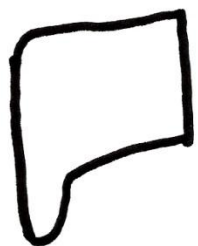
Turn the page to a 90-degree-angle to show writing from left to right.

We think they changed the direction because a right-handed person writing from top to bottom, starting from right to left on a clay tablet would be smudging the clay with their writing hand while writing as they went down the page.

The earliest symbols had both curved and straight lines, and they had to use different tools to make different kinds of strokes. This kind of writing took too long and the clay would dry if they didn't write quickly.







**See the Illustration above.** After awhile, they started making straight lines only, and used only one kind of tool. This enabled them to write faster, before the clay dried.

The picture began to have more meaning than just the word for the picture. For example, the symbol for foot could also mean to stand, to walk or to go.

## LESSON 7: HIEROGLYPHICS

**Materials: Illustrations #5, #6, #7, #8**

About the same time the Sumerians were developing a written language, the Egyptians were developing a written language called hieroglyphics. Priests painted pictures on walls or carved them in stone. Animals and birds were an important part of hieroglyphics. Each tribe had an animal as a kind of mascot. At first pictures stood for the thing.

**See Illustration #5**

Eagle meant an eagle.

**See Illustration #6.**

Later pictures stood for an idea. An eagle with a man's face no longer meant eagle, but meant soul.

**See Illustration #7.**

Later, animal pictures were used to represent letters. The eagle became a symbol for the sound of A.

**See Illustration #8.**

Eventually, hieroglyphics became more like an alphabetic system. The eagle no longer looked like an animal at all, but, more like a real letter.

Initially the Egyptians carved their symbols in stone and on walls. When the Egyptians learned to process the papyrus plant into a writable surface, the writings were arranged on scrolls, which made it easier to transport them from place to place.

## LESSON 8: THE ALPHABET GROWS

**Materials: Illustrations # 9, #10, #11**

**See Illustration #9**

The development of the alphabet gradually took place over thousands of years, beginning with the Phoenicians, a Canaanite people. Thousands of years ago the Phoenicians developed a written alphabet, or a set of symbols to represent spoken sounds in words. Many people believe this was the first alphabet. They used 23 consonant letters to stand for consonant sounds; they had no letters to stand for vowel sounds.

**See Illustration #10**

The early Greeks did a lot of trading with the Phoenician people. At that time, the Greeks had no writing system of their own, so they gradually adopted 19 letters of the Phoenician alphabet and added 5 letters for vowel sounds. They kept the Phoenician names for the letters, but used the letters to stand for spoken sounds in the Greek language. The Greek alphabet had 24 letters.

**See Illustration #11**

The Greeks sometimes wrote from left to right and right to left, top to bottom, or bottom to top.

**See Illustrations #12 and #13**

You can see how difficult that would be to read, when you don't know which direction they might decide to write. Later, they wrote from left to right, then right to left.

**See Illustration #14**

Finally, the Greeks decided to write everything from left to right. At first all letters were capital, with no punctuation, and no spaces between words.

You can see how difficult it is to read something like this, with no punctuation, capital letters, or spaces between words. Punctuation, capitalization, and spacing between words came later.

### **See Illustration #15**

Eventually the Romans took the alphabet and added serifs. The Romans used parchment to write on. Parchment was made from skins taken from young animals. There was not a lot of parchment available, so to save space, they wrote smaller and closer together. This was the beginning of cursive writing. The Romans added some letters and changed the shape of some of the other letters. Twenty- three of our twenty-six letters came from the Romans.

### **See Illustration #16**

The modern alphabet we use today is based on the Roman alphabet. The Roman alphabet did not have J, U, or W. These were added later to represent sounds found in English.

### **See Illustration # 17.**

The Phoenicians called the alphabet alef beth. The Greeks called theirs alpha beta. You can see where the name *alphabet* came from.

## **LESSON 9: HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

This brief history of the English language may be presented over a number of days, as time permits.

Give a brief overview of the history of the development of the English language. Use a map or globe to show the areas discussed. The following was taken from MTA Kit 5, Concept Teaching Instruction Card 107.

The English language developed from a number of different languages over a period of thousands of years. The early people living in what we know now as England gradually came to be known as Britons; by the year 500, most spoke the Celtic language. Beginning in the middle of the fifth century, England was invaded by tribes from northern Germany and southern Denmark. Three of these tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, eventually conquered most of England and parts of Scotland. The name “England” was derived from “Angle Land.” Many of the ancient Britons were driven into Wales and Cumberland, and the Welsh language spoken today is derived largely from the Celtic language of the ancient Britons.

It was mainly the German-type language spoken by the Angles and Saxons that developed into Old English. Then, during the seventh and eighth centuries, the Anglo-Saxon peoples were introduced to Christianity, and Latin became an important influence on English through the new religion. During the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, the Vikings, who came from the Scandinavian Peninsula, invaded England, and some Scandinavian words and sounds also came into the English language.

The Norman Conquest of England in 1066 brought with it the Norman form of the Old French language, which was derived from Latin. Norman French was the language of the ruling class, and Middle English was spoken by the conquered Anglo-Saxons, who were now a peasant class subject to Norman rule. That is why we now have two words to represent the same thing. The Norman word for the Anglo-Saxon word pig was swine. Gradually, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, English again became the universal language of England, but by then it had incorporated many words from the Latin and French languages. The Greek influence came into English through scientific, medical, and musical terms. Modern English, with approximately 850,000 words and still growing, is now one of the most widely used languages in the world.

## # 10: CONCEPT OF MULTISENSORY TEACHING

NOTE: You may want to teach this lesson after students have completed the phoneme awareness activities, just prior to introducing the first grapheme.

**We have talked about talent. We know that everyone has different talents and that talent has nothing to do with intelligence. It just means someone has a natural ability to do something well; it is easier for you to do, and they are born that way. Some people don't have a lot of talent for learning to read and spell, and it has nothing to do with intelligence. Some famous people who, like you, didn't have a lot of talent for reading and spelling are: Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Tom Cruise, and Jay Leno.**

**There are different ways of learning how to read and spell. If you are not talented in reading and spelling, you can learn better if you use more than one sense. Using more than one sense at the same time is called multisensory teaching. *Multi* means many.**

Draw a triangle on the board. At one corner draw eyes, at another corner draw ears, and at the third corner, draw an arm with a muscle.

As you draw on the board, tell the students the following:

**Some learn best by learning through three senses: visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), and kinesthetic (muscle movement) pathways to learn about letters and the sounds they stand for.**

Draw arrows from one pathway to another, following the perimeter of the triangle.

**Each letter and letter cluster taught will involve all three pathways. You will look at a letter, say its sound, and write the letter.**

Equate visual (seeing) to reading.

**You will look at the letters in words and make the sounds they stand for.**

Equate auditory (hearing) to spelling.

**You will listen to a sound and name the letter that spells it.**

Equate kinesthetic (muscle movement) with handwriting.

**You will use your muscles to write the letter shape.**

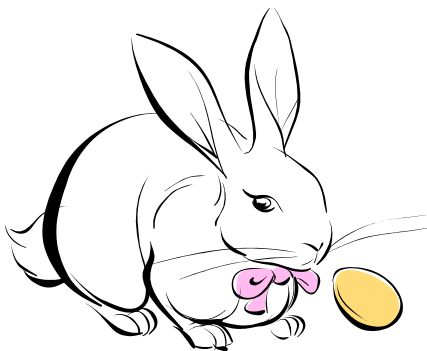
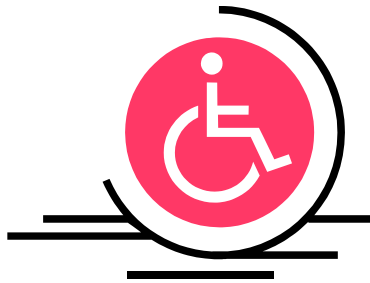
**In this class we will use the *Multisensory Teaching Approach*, called *MTA*. *MTA* is a scientific approach to studying the English language, and you will be learning scientific terms as we study the language. My responsibility as your teacher is to teach you everything you need, in a way that you can learn it. I will provide enough review so you won't forget what you have learned. I will see that you get enough practice with each thing I teach so you can master it. I will plan lessons so that you will be at least 90% successful in the activities.**

**Your responsibility as learners are: come to class on time, be a willing partner in the learning experience; encourage others in the class, etc.**



## **ILLUSTRATIONS FOR LANGUAGE AWARENESS MINI-LESSONS**

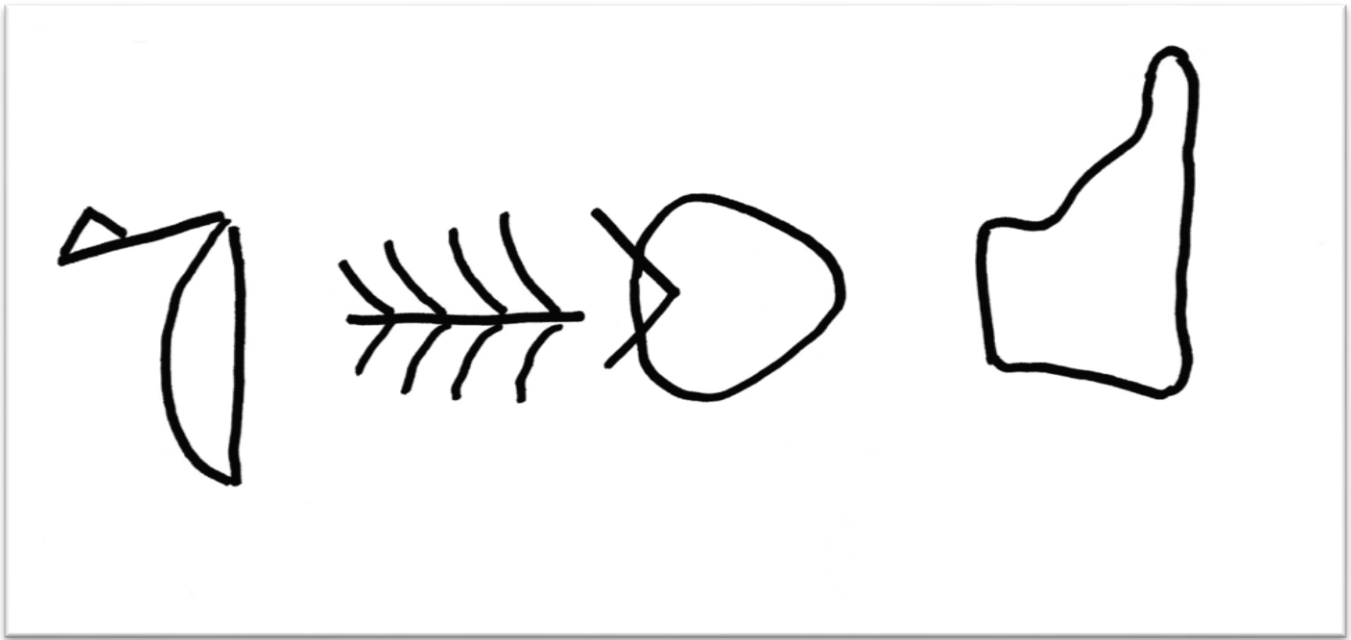
Duplicate the following illustrations for use with the relevant Language Awareness Lesson.



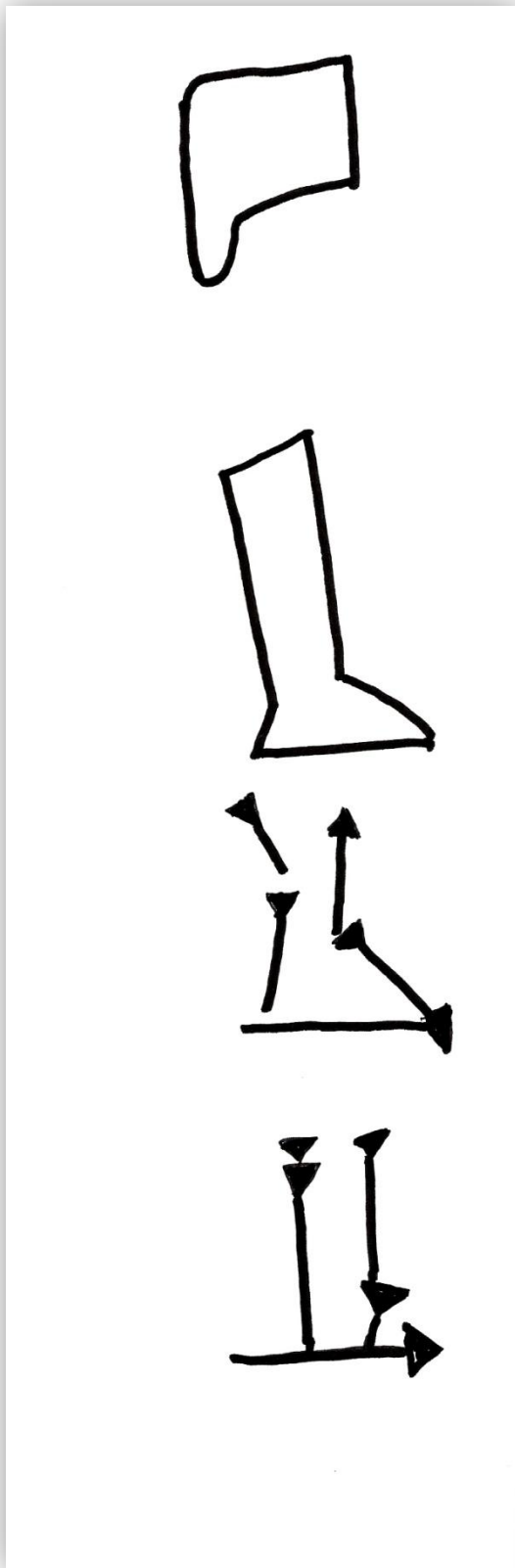
## #1: SYMBOLS



## #2: EARLY WRITING: CAVE DRAWINGS



### #3: EARLY SUMERIAN WRITING



#### #4: LATER SUMERIAN CUNEIFORM WRITING



# 5



# 6



# 7



# 8

#5, #6, #7, #8: EGYPTIAN HEIROGLYPHIC WRITING

I	Y	≡	△	1	9	✱
Z ZAYIN WEAPON	W WAW HOOK	H HE UNKNOWN	D DALETH DOOR	G GIMEL THROW-STICK	B BETH HOUSE	STOP ALEPH OX

γ	𐤎	l	𐤋	𐤏	⊕	𐤅
N NUN FISH	M MEM WATER	L LAMEDH OX-GOAD	K KAPH PALM OF HAND	Y YODH HAND	T TETH UNKNOWN	H HETH FENCE

X	W	𐤑	⊙	𐤒	𐤓	○	≡
T TAW MARK	SH SHIN TOOTH	R RESH HEAD	Q QOPH MONKEY	S SADHE FISHHOOK	P PEH MOUTH	MUTE AYIN EYE	S SAMEKH SUPPORT

## # 9 PHOENICIAN ALPHABET

<b>Α</b> <b>Alpha</b> (al-fah)	<b>Β</b> <b>Beta</b> (bay-tah)	<b>Γ</b> <b>Gamma</b> (gam-ah)	<b>Δ</b> <b>Delta</b> (dei-ta)	<b>Ε</b> <b>Epsilon</b> (ep-si-lon)	<b>Ζ</b> <b>Zeta</b> (zay-tah)
<b>Η</b> <b>Eta</b> (ay-tah)	<b>Θ</b> <b>Theta</b> (thay-tah)	<b>Ι</b> <b>Iota</b> (eye-o-tah)	<b>Κ</b> <b>Kappa</b> (cap-pah)	<b>Λ</b> <b>Lambda</b> (lamb-dah)	<b>Μ</b> <b>Mu</b> (mew)
<b>Ν</b> <b>Nu</b> (new)	<b>Ξ</b> <b>Xi</b> (zie)	<b>Ο</b> <b>Omicron</b> (om-e-cron)	<b>Π</b> <b>Pi</b> (pie)	<b>Ρ</b> <b>Rho</b> (roe)	<b>Σ</b> <b>Sigma</b> (sig-mah)
<b>Τ</b> <b>Tau</b> (taw)	<b>Υ</b> <b>Upsilon</b> (up-si-lon)	<b>Φ</b> <b>Phi</b> (fie)	<b>Χ</b> <b>Chi</b> (kie)	<b>Ψ</b> <b>Psi</b> (sigh)	<b>Ω</b> <b>Omega</b> (oh-may-gah)

#10 : GREEK ALPHABET



ABCD →

← DCBA

#11

A	↑
B	C
C	B
↓	A

#12

→ ABCDEF

LKJIHG ←

→ MNOPQR

WVUTS ←

#13

WRITINGISEASYT

HESPELLINGISHA

RDDOYOUSEEW

ATIMEAN

#14

#11, 12, 13, 14: GREEK WRITING STYLES



## #15: ROMAN ALPHABET

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M**

**N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**

A B  
ALEF BETH

PHOENICIAN

ALPHA BETA

GREEK

ALPHABET