LEARNING UNIT
Communication in Antiquity

1. UNIT OVERVIEW

- **Title**: Communication in Antiquity

- **Grade Level**: Elementary school students (Grades 2-5)

- **Duration**: 4-5 hours (can be divided into 2-3 sessions)

- **Subjects**: History, Art, Language

Richardson (2011) "Communication in the Ancient World"

2. DESIRED RESULTS
- Literacy competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence

3. COMPETENCE GOALS
Students will be able to:

- Recognize and describe different ancient writing systems
- Understand how writing developed in ancient civilizations
- Create messages using ancient scripts
- Make connections between ancient and modern communication methods
- Appreciate cultural diversity in human communication

Students will be able to reason about essential questions:
- How did ancient people communicate without modern technology?
- Why do different cultures develop different writing systems?
- How has writing changed human societies?
- What connections exist between ancient and modern communication?

4. LEARNING OBJECTIVES
4.1. EXPLORE - Discovering Ancient Communication

- Identify visual characteristics of at least two ancient writing systems
- Describe key differences between writing systems (pictographic vs. alphabetic)
- Understand that different materials influenced how people wrote

4.2. DECODE - Understanding Ancient Scripts

- Read simple words using provided sign lists
- Write their name or a message using an ancient script
- Explain the basic structure of one ancient writing system

4.3. CONNECT - Past and Present

- Explain why ancient societies needed writing
- Identify connections between ancient symbols and modern communication (pictographs
  → emojis)
- Discuss how writing changed human societies

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5. CONTENT

- Ancient civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia)
- Different writing systems: cuneiform, hieroglyphs, early alphabets
- Writing materials: clay tablets, papyrus, stone
- The role of scribes in ancient societies
- Evolution of communication from ancient times to today

6. ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGIES

6.1. Phase 1: EXPLORE (60-75 minutes)

- Introduction (15 min): "How do we communicate? How did ancient people communicate?"
- Visual discovery (15 min): Compare images of different ancient scripts - group discussion using open questions ("What do you notice? How are these different?")
- Materials exploration (15 min): Examine how writing materials (clay, stone, papyrus) influenced script design
- Ancient world context (15 min): Brief introduction to ancient Anatolia/Egypt/Mesopotamia with map

6.2. Phase 2: DECODE (90-120 minutes)

- Guided practice (15 min): Learn to read simple words using sign lists and glossaries
- Hands-on creation (60 min): Choose an activity: Create Your Seal (cuneiform or hieroglyphs), My Bilingual Stele (personal message in ancient script), Secret Message (write coded messages for classmates)
- Peer sharing (20 min): Exchange and decode each other's creations

6.3. Phase 3: CONNECT (60 minutes)

- Timeline activity (15 min): From clay tablets to smartphones - how has communication evolved?
- Modern connections discussion (20 min): Ancient pictographs and modern emojis; symbols we use today
- Reflection (20 min): "Why was writing important? How did it change societies?"
- Creative feedback: Design an emoji to rate the experience

6.5. Methodologies:

- Learning by doing (hands-on activities)
- Cooperative learning (group work, peer exchange)
- Discovery-based learning with open-ended questions
- Differentiated instruction for different ability levels

7. MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Images of ancient artifacts and scripts
- Sign lists and glossaries (cuneiform, hieroglyphs, alphabets)
- Templates for seal-making or stele creation
- Clay or modeling material, cardstock
- Markers, colored pencils, decorative materials
- Maps of ancient civilizations
- Worksheets with answer keys

8. ORGANIZATION

8.1. Spaces: Classroom with tables for hands-on work

8.2. Groupings: Individual work, pairs, small groups (3-4 students)

8.3. Time: Session 1: Introduction + Explore (90 min)
             Session 2: Decode activities (120 min)
             Session 3: Connect + reflection (60 min)

9. ASSESSMENT

9.1. Formative assessment:

- Observation of participation and engagement during activities
- Quality and depth of questions asked
- Ability to decode simple texts accurately
- Creativity and effort in artifact creation

9.2. Summative assessment:

- Completed artifact (seal, stele, or message)
- Oral or written reflection on connections between ancient and modern communication
- Self-assessment using creative feedback methods (emoji design, stickers)

9.3. Criteria for evaluation:

- Understanding of differences between writing systems
- Accuracy in reading/writing with ancient scripts
- Ability to articulate why writing mattered to ancient societies
- Making meaningful connections to contemporary life

10. DIFFERENTIATION

10.1. For students with greater difficulties:

- Simplified sign lists with fewer symbols
- Step-by-step visual guides
- Focus on one writing system only
- Partner support during activities
- Larger fonts and high-contrast materials

10.2. For advanced students:

- Compare efficiency of different scripts
- Create bilingual artifacts
- Research questions: "How did scribes learn? Who could read and write?"
- Analyze how scripts suited different languages

11. VERIFICATION AND DOCUMENTATION
- Portfolio of student work (artifacts created)
- Photographic documentation of activities
- Feedback collection (sticker ratings, emoji designs, informal discussions)
- Teacher observation notes
- Optional: classroom exhibition of student creations

12. INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
- **Art**: Visual analysis, design, artifact creation
- **Geography**: Location of ancient civilizations, trade routes
- **Language**: Language structure, evolution of writing, specialized vocabulary (civilization, scribe, cuneiform, hieroglyph, pictograph, etc.)
- **Technology**: Evolution of communication tools
- **Mathematics:** Pattern recognition in scripts, spatial reasoning (layout and orientation), symbolic representation