

Biblical languages

Introduction

Look at the alphabet we use. Compare it with other scripts. Talk about different languages. Some pupils may live in or have visited different parts of the British Isles where other languages are spoken. They may have been to other countries or speak languages other than English themselves. You can use the first three slides of the *Languages of the Bible* presentation slides. With some pupils you may wish to use the 5 – 7 presentation *Alphabets and languages*.

Explain that there are many different alphabets and ways of writing. If you have pupils or staff who speak a range of languages they may be able to share different alphabets that they use. Make a display of different types of writing: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Tamil, Russian, sign language, Braille . . .

Useful websites for scripts and alphabets:

www.word2word.com/alphabet.html List of alphabets of the world

www.ancientscripts.com This site has ancient scripts and many still in use today e.g. Bengali, Arabic

www.omniglot.com A guide to languages and alphabets of the world

www.britishsignlanguage.com Description and video of a wide range of words in sign language

www.british-sign.co.uk/fingerspelling.php#print Finger spelling chart

www.bl.uk/learning/images/whywrite/large4897.html The alphabet in Braille

Core material

Learning new alphabets, a new way of writing and new languages took many years. Why did Bible translators do this? Christians wanted the message of the Bible to be read by all. The Bible is full of stories about God and Jesus but, for Christians, the Bible is more than just another book. In its stories and teaching they learn about living in friendship with God and living God's way; a way of love, justice and peace.



Select from the following activities:

1. Use the rest of the Presentation **Alphabets and languages** and engage pupils in some of the activities. Do any of the children have names that come from Hebrew or Greek? (You will find lists of names on the presentation.)
2. What do they notice about the Biblical languages?
 - Is anything surprising or interesting?
 - What is like English? What is different?
 - What difficulties do you think a translator might face translating the Bible into English and other languages? (For example, idioms such as 'pulling my leg' which are not understood in a different language/culture. Hebrew and Greek also have idioms that cannot be translated literally; the equivalent has to be found.)
3. Explain translation by doing some instant translation with the children. It does not matter what language is used. Alternatively use the translation tool on the computer. You could take an extract from the Bible:

'God is love'

Before the Bible could be translated into English for people to read, the translators had to learn Hebrew and Greek. It took many years.

4. Show or print the Greek alphabet from the Presentation **Greek alphabet**. Pupils may like to write their initials in Greek.
5. What words would the pupils want to translate so that lots of people could read them? These should be words that make the world a better place.

Reflection

The words the pupils suggested under point 5 can be typed and printed on card. The same word in a different language can be printed on the back of the card using the computer translation facility.

Example: Peace / Paix

The words can be decorated and hung as mobiles in a reflection corner under the heading: 'Words for a better World'. You can find some information about translation on this site:

www.wycliffe.org/resources_test.html

