

Biblical languages

Introduction

Begin with the modern foreign language the pupils are learning. Does it use the same alphabet as we do?

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. Look at the alphabet we use and compare it with other scripts and alphabets. You can use the first three slides of the **Alphabets and languages** presentation.

Explain that there are many different alphabets and ways of writing. Pupils and staff may be able to share different alphabets that they use, if you have pupils who speak a range of languages. 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

Select from the following activities:

1. Before people could begin to translate the Bible into English and other languages they had to consult old copies of the Bible. Pupils can see some of these on **A gallery of manuscripts** presentation. Translators had to learn different alphabets and languages so that they could read the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. It took many years.
2. Show the rest of the presentation on **Alphabets and languages** and engage pupils in the activities.
 - What do they notice about the Biblical languages?
 - What is unusual, surprising or interesting?
 - Create two class diagrams (one for Hebrew and English and one for Greek and English) to show similarities and differences.



- What problems might a person face trying to translate Hebrew or Greek into English? (For example, idioms such as 'pulling my leg'. Hebrew and Greek also have idioms that cannot be translated literally; the equivalent has to be found.)
- What questions would pupils want to ask a translator?
- Use the questions as a basis for research and discussion.

3. Explain translation by doing some instant translation. It does not matter what language is used. Alternatively use the translation tool on the computer. You could take an extract from the Bible:

'Love your neighbour as yourself'

4. Show/print the Greek alphabet from the **Greek alphabet** presentation. Pupils may like to write their name or initials in Greek.

5. What words, phrases or sentences 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.

The Bible tells the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel over hundreds of years. It tells the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the story of the early Christians. In its stories and teaching Christians learn about living in friendship with God and living in a way that reflects God's values of love, justice and peace. The Bible translators wanted this message of the Bible to be available to all. It was important, therefore, that the Bible was in the language of the people and that the translations were correct.

Reflection

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

Example: Let there be peace and let it begin with me.

Lass Frieden herrschen und beginne mit mir.

The words can be decorated and hung as mobiles in a reflection corner under the heading: 'Words for a better World'.

Learning new alphabets, a new way of writing and whole new languages took many years. Why did Bible translators do this? Why do they still do this? Ask pupils for their ideas.