

Teaching notes on MCG The Greek alphabet

Slide 1

Learning objective: To learn about the Ancient Greek alphabet and to write our names using it.

Slide 2

Here, we start to trace the origins of the alphabet we use today, which hasn't changed much since the time of the Romans.

To appreciate how similar the letters that Romans used are to our modern alphabet, on mouse-click we'll ask the students to find some words in the inscription. Answers are revealed on mouse-click.

Slide 3

In fact, the Romans developed their alphabet from the Greek alphabet, and this is where we get the actual word 'alphabet' from, as illustrated on mouse-click.

Slide 4

Although many of the Greek letters bear a resemblance to our modern letters, some don't. On mouse-click, this slide illustrates some similar and some not-so-similar letters.

Slide 5

The full Greek alphabet.

Which letters seem familiar? Which ones are a bit strange?

- gamma - the capital looks a bit like a malformed 'T' and the lower case looks like a 'y'
- eta - looks like an H
- nu - the upper case is fine, but the lower case looks like a 'v'
- rho - looks like a P. Just imagine it as a capital R that's lost one leg.
- chi - looks like an X but is a 'kh' (back of the throat noise) instead
- omega - lower case looks like 'w', but instead makes an 'oh' sound

A note on H - this is represented at the start of a word by a ' above (or just in front of) a vowel. If a word starts with a vowel but no H sound, it has a ' instead. If you have an h in the middle of a modern word or name (e.g. Rihanna), it's probably easiest to leave it out when transliterating (writing English words with Greek characters).

Missing sounds - Ancient Greek did not have...

- soft c, use sigma σ
- qu, use κ kappa (followed by upsilon if necessary)
- v or f, use ϕ phi
- sh, use χ chi
- y, use u upsilon (which is a bit y-ish anyway)
- j, use ι iota

- w, use uu two upsilons (which is what double-u means)

Slide 6

Game - Guess who? The names of three famous people or things are going to appear on the board.

Working in pairs or individually, students use a whiteboard and marker, along with their alphabet sheets, to work out these three names before a picture confirms whether they're right.

- [mouse-click] 'Ελιζαβεθ
- [mouse-click] picture of Queen Elizabeth
- [mouse-click] 'Αρρυ Ποττερ
- [mouse-click] picture of Harry Potter
- [mouse-click] Μανχεστερ 'Υνιτεδ
- [mouse-click] picture of Manchester United

Slide 7

So, we've had a go at decoding Greek, but it's really good fun to write the letters. Let's try our names.

- [mouse-click] Start by copying it out a few times on a whiteboard.
- [mouse-click] When you've got the hang of it, copy your name in Greek onto a name badge or sticker.

Slide 8

The plenary slide:

Question 1 We use the same letters today as which ancient culture? [Rome/Romans] Where did they get their alphabet from? [The Ancient Greeks]

Question 2 at sound does the Greek letter λ make? ['l' – it's a lambda]

Question 3 There are two versions of the letter 'ο' in the Greek alphabet. Can you write both of them? [Omicron (small o) Οο and omega (big o) Ωω.] What's the difference between how they sound? [omicron is a short 'ο' sound like the 'ο' in 'dog' and omega is a long 'ο' sound as in 'oh no!']