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| **Inventors of the Alphabet  By Sharon Fabian** |  | http://www.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/edhelp1.gif |

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http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/stories/inventors_alphabet.jpg  
**Directions:**  Fill in each blank with the word that best completes the reading comprehension.  
  
     Back in the years BC, the Phoenician traders were some of the busiest people around. These merchants sailed back and forth across the Mediterranean Sea carrying shiploads of cargo. They traded *(1)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   objects *(2)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   from gold and silver. They traded glass. They traded textiles, *(3)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   textiles dyed with their famous purple dye. All of this trading made their businesses prosper. They kept busy and worked hard to keep their businesses growing.  
     Just as with a business today, one thing that may have slowed them down was record keeping. At that time most writing used symbols for words or numbers. Maybe the Phoenicians decided that a writing system with *(4)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   for sounds would be much more efficient than a system with a different *(5)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   for each word. A system with fewer symbols would *(6)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   be quicker to learn and easier to remember. The Phoenicians began using an alphabet that had only 22 symbols, or letters -- one for each consonant sound.  
     Even though the Phoenicians probably built their alphabet on ideas that they had learned from other cultures, they are often called the inventors of the alphabet. The Egyptians, who are *(7)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   known for their hieroglyphics, had also used symbols that stood for sounds. Other cultures may have used a combination of picture and sound symbols too.  
     Phoenician trading ships helped spread the use of their alphabet. The alphabet *(8)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   from Phoenicia to other civilizations around the Mediterranean, including parts of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. In Greece, writers improved on the Phoenician alphabet by adding vowel sounds. To do this they replaced some consonants that they didn't really need with the new *(9)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   sounds -- a, e, i, o, and u. The alphabet didn't yet have all 26 letters that we use today.  
     The first two letters in the Greek alphabet, alpha and *(10)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  , gave us the *(11)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   *alphabet*.  
     As the alphabet became the standard for writing in the Roman Empire, it went through a few more changes. The Romans added the last few letters to the alphabet, and they developed the style that is still used for much printing today. At the time, they often carved letters into stone, so they developed a style that was suited to stonework as *(12)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   as to writing. The Roman alphabet is the alphabet that we use today.  
     In the *(13)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   AD years, Christian missionaries carried the Roman *(14)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   across Europe and eventually to England, where it became the basis of the English language. *(15)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   used the alphabet as they copied books and found that they needed to make some changes too. They had to decide on combinations of letters to use for English sounds that did not have a symbol in the Roman alphabet. With pages and pages of letters to copy, scribes found that writing in all capital Roman letters took a long time, so they developed quick, rounded forms of the letters. These became our lowercase alphabet.  
     There are other *(16)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   too. One developed in the United States is the Cherokee alphabet, a system of 85 characters developed by Sequoyah to write the Cherokee language. There are languages that still use a system *(17)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   on whole words too, notably the Chinese language. Chinese writers learn to use thousands of symbols, called characters.  
     The Roman alphabet is now used in many parts of the world. Today, it is used to *(18)*  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   the words in many different languages.

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| Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  | http://www.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/edhelp1.gif | Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1. | The \_\_\_\_\_ are usually called the inventors of the alphabet. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  Greeks http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  Romans http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblec.jpg  Egyptians http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  Phoenicians | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 2. | The alphabet we use today is called the \_\_\_\_\_ alphabet. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  Phoenician http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  Egyptian http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblec.jpg  Roman http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  Greek | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 3. | The best definition for an alphabet is \_\_\_\_\_. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  A group of symbols http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  A group of symbols that stand for pictures http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblec.jpg  A group of symbols that stand for words http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  A group of symbols that stand for sounds | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 4. | The Phoenician alphabet spread by \_\_\_ to other countries. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  Sea http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  Land http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblec.jpg  Air http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  Mountain trail | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 5. | The \_\_\_\_\_ alphabet was the first to have symbols for vowel sounds. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  Phoenician http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  Greek http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblec.jpg  Egyptian http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  Roman | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 6. | Christian missionaries spread the alphabet throughout Europe \_\_\_\_\_ the Greeks added the vowel sounds. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  After http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  Before | |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 7. | Try writing a sentence using only consonant sounds. Then exchange with a partner to see if your sentence is easy to read. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/wordline.gif  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/wordline.gif | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 8. | Name two languages that use the Roman alphabet. Name two languages that do not use the Roman alphabet. http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/wordline.gif  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/wordline.gif | |

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| **Answer Key** |

     Back in the years BC, the Phoenician traders were some of the busiest people around. These merchants sailed back and forth across the Mediterranean Sea carrying shiploads of cargo. They traded *(1)*  cast-metal   objects *(2)*  molded   from gold and silver. They traded glass. They traded textiles, *(3)*  especially   textiles dyed with their famous purple dye. All of this trading made their businesses prosper. They kept busy and worked hard to keep their businesses growing.  
     Just as with a business today, one thing that may have slowed them down was record keeping. At that time most writing used symbols for words or numbers. Maybe the Phoenicians decided that a writing system with *(4)*  symbols   for sounds would be much more efficient than a system with a different *(5)*  symbol   for each word. A system with fewer symbols would *(6)*  certainly   be quicker to learn and easier to remember. The Phoenicians began using an alphabet that had only 22 symbols, or letters -- one for each consonant sound.  
     Even though the Phoenicians probably built their alphabet on ideas that they had learned from other cultures, they are often called the inventors of the alphabet. The Egyptians, who are *(7)*  best   known for their hieroglyphics, had also used symbols that stood for sounds. Other cultures may have used a combination of picture and sound symbols too.  
     Phoenician trading ships helped spread the use of their alphabet. The alphabet *(8)*  spread   from Phoenicia to other civilizations around the Mediterranean, including parts of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. In Greece, writers improved on the Phoenician alphabet by adding vowel sounds. To do this they replaced some consonants that they didn't really need with the new *(9)*  vowel   sounds -- a, e, i, o, and u. The alphabet didn't yet have all 26 letters that we use today.  
     The first two letters in the Greek alphabet, alpha and *(10)*  beta  , gave us the *(11)*  name   *alphabet*.  
     As the alphabet became the standard for writing in the Roman Empire, it went through a few more changes. The Romans added the last few letters to the alphabet, and they developed the style that is still used for much printing today. At the time, they often carved letters into stone, so they developed a style that was suited to stonework as *(12)*  well   as to writing. The Roman alphabet is the alphabet that we use today.  
     In the *(13)*  early   AD years, Christian missionaries carried the Roman *(14)*  alphabet   across Europe and eventually to England, where it became the basis of the English language. *(15)*  Scribes   used the alphabet as they copied books and found that they needed to make some changes too. They had to decide on combinations of letters to use for English sounds that did not have a symbol in the Roman alphabet. With pages and pages of letters to copy, scribes found that writing in all capital Roman letters took a long time, so they developed quick, rounded forms of the letters. These became our lowercase alphabet.  
     There are other *(16)*  alphabets   too. One developed in the United States is the Cherokee alphabet, a system of 85 characters developed by Sequoyah to write the Cherokee language. There are languages that still use a system *(17)*  based   on whole words too, notably the Chinese language. Chinese writers learn to use thousands of symbols, called characters.  
     The Roman alphabet is now used in many parts of the world. Today, it is used to *(18)*  spell   the words in many different languages.

Answers to Reading Comprehension Questions  
  
**1**  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  Phoenicians  
**2**  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblec.jpg  Roman  
**3**  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbled.jpg  A group of symbols that stand for sounds  
**4**  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  Sea  
**5**  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubbleb.jpg  Greek  
**6**  http://stories.edhelperclipart.com/clipart/bubblea.jpg  After  
**7**  Answers will vary.  
**8**  Answers will vary, but may include English, Spanish or Italian ( use Roman alphabet), and Chinese, Japanese, Korean ( do not use Roman alphabet).