

Lesson Plan 4: The Greek alphabet

by Nicole Wellington; download lesson plan as PDF

5-minute activity

Lesson plan

1. Print out this [graffito of the Greek alphabet](#). (Additional images [here](#).) (Or project the image onto your SmartBoard.)
2. Laminate copies if possible.
3. Have students trace over the graffito to see if they can figure out what it is. Perhaps you have done an extension lesson on the Greek alphabet with your class. Or perhaps this can be the initial jumping off point. Students will be able to recognize some letters that are similar to the Latin alphabet, as well as other Greek letters that they use in math.

Extension Activity

Have students practice the Greek alphabet. Have them write their English and Latin names in ancient Greek- stressing that it is more about the sound of each letter. For students who have a “W” in their name, I typically use the digamma, and for students who have a “V,” I typically have them use beta.

Further Discussion

Why was someone practicing the Greek alphabet?

Rome, certainly by the imperial period, must have been a multilingual environment. While Latin was the official language used to write a will or to argue a legal matter, the geographical spread of the Roman empire brought an influx of conquered peoples and slaves whose original language was not Latin. Pompeii and Herculaneum have Latin and Greek graffiti. Pompeii also has many graffiti written in Oscan, a sister language to Latin with a different alphabet, spoken in southern Italy from the sixth to the end of the first century BCE.

While Rome secured its position of power in the Greek speaking world as an empire, the Roman people continued to hold the study of the Greek language and Greek literature in high regard. The Romans believed that part of a student’s education should include learning the Greek language. For young men of the upper class, the capstone of their education was often to travel to Athens to study fully immersed in Greek. ([Lesson plan 7](#) explores more about Roman education.)