

Greek Writing activity 6

Modern Greek Language : Literacy in Ancient Polis of Athens

An experiential writing lesson in the metro station of Aigaleo

Title: *From the ancient inscriptions we are inspired ,we comment ,we write ...*

(The metro stations of Athens are mobile museums. The metro station of Aigaleo has inscriptions which remind the passers-by of the importance of literacy in Ancient Athens).



- **Aim of the lesson**

to help students understand the importance that the Polis of Ancient Athens placed on literacy (reading and writing), as a prerequisite for democracy (equal rights and opportunities for all citizens). The democracy of writing and information, which brings alphabetical revolution, will be called upon to serve the institutions of ancient democracy: laws, resolutions, decisions and inscriptions on graves, inscriptions honoring the gods. And the culmination of this public use was connected with the most important democracy of antiquity, Athens.

- **Objectives**

- To realize the importance of literacy in private and public life
To show the necessity of the alphabet use both for the needs in private life (eg expression of personal feelings) and in public life (eg delivering a preplanned speech in the Assembly of the State- Ecclesia) in Ancient Athens.
- To make connections between literacy and democracy
To help the students raise questions about the literacy level in Ancient Athens and associate it with the equality and fairness, basic principles promoted by the democratic political system of Athens.
- To reflect upon the importance of literacy in modern life
To associate their conclusions with the contemporary beliefs about language, according to which the language is considered to be a lively communicative reality with infinite potential (**infinity, diversity**) which often gives power to people who are able to use it effectively. (**omnipotence** of the language)

- **Grade** : 1st Grade of Senior High School , A4, 25 students

- **Topic:** Language and Language Communication

- **Materials used** : inscribed monuments in the displays of the metro station of Aigaleo
- **Time** : Tuesday 13.10.2015

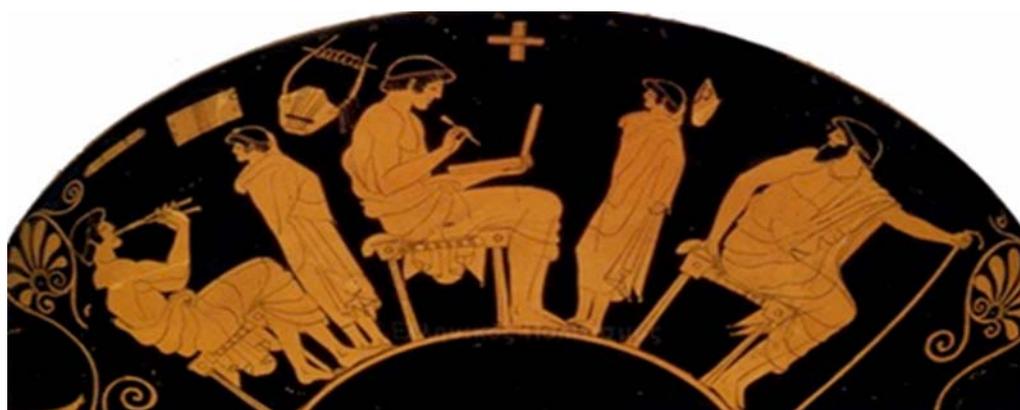
- **ACTIVITIES**

The students are given four different worksheets.

In the first and the second one , they have to write their remarks on what they see.

In the third and in the fourth worksheets, ss imagine themselves as literate Athenians who express their opinions and feelings on a specific occasion of their everyday life in Athens. The stories in the worksheets 3 and 4 are directly related to remarks of worksheets 1 and 2 and are in a way their continuity.

1st Worksheet.



1. Take photos of the pottery in the display.
 2. Read the description of the scene in the display and identify the persons of the teacher of reading, the teacher of writing and the student (pay attention to the gender)
 3. Observe the posture of each, the age and the clothes.
- Write your remarks in a few words.

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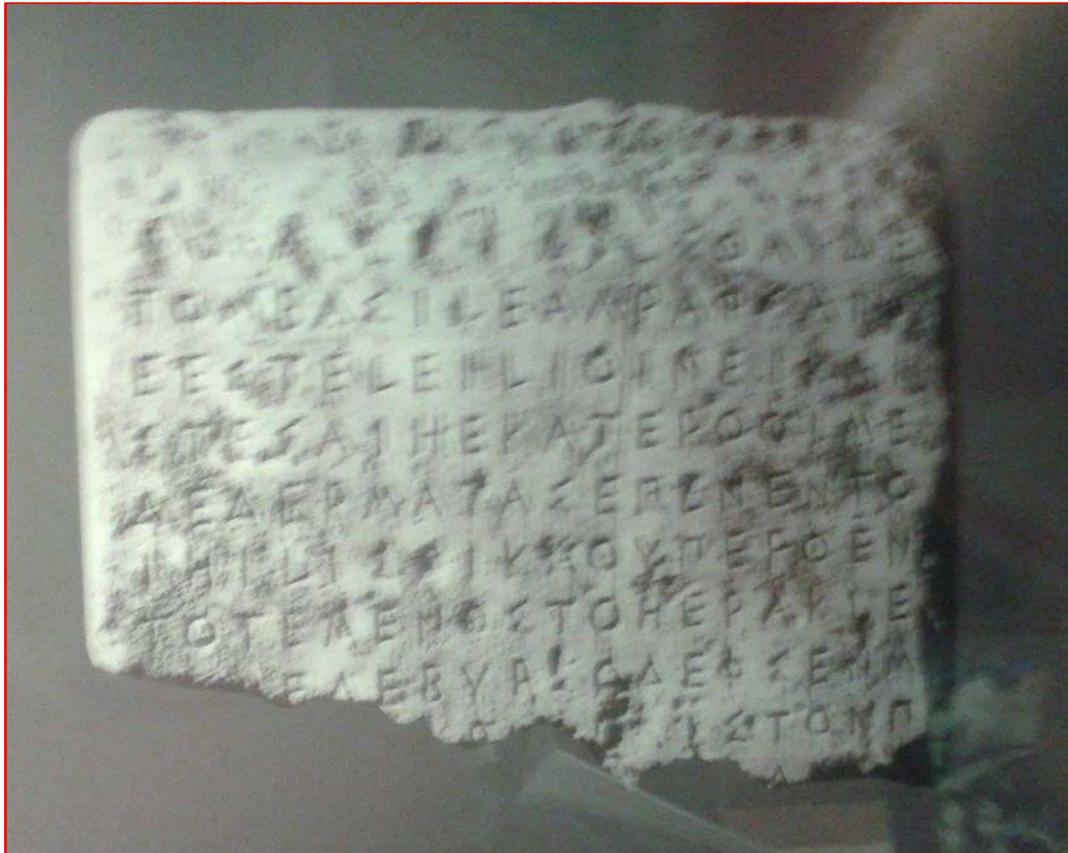
4. Answer the questions.

These people took over the education of the boys in Ancient Athens and taught

The..... teaches.....

The..... teaches.....

2nd Worksheet



1. Take photos of the INSCRIPTION ON THE DISPLAY

2. The inscription refers to a resolution related to.....

(look at the note which is about the inscription so that you can answer)

3. Can you identify a word which is carved on the stone?

If yes, write it down.

4. What do you notice about the kind of letters the Ancient Greeks wrote and about the way words were written?

3rd Worksheet

Make up a story in which the protagonist, a young person called Pyrrias, has been taught the Greek alphabetic writing by a teacher (in worksheet 1), a fact which enables him to read and write.

Pyrrias of our story won the first prize in a dance competition and he was awarded a cup as a prize. He considers that to be an important event in his life and wants to remember it. That's why he decides to carve his name on the cup and he can carve the letters of his name by

himself, because he knows how to write. What kind of feelings could this knowledge cause to him? Could the knowledge of reading and writing offer self-confidence to our young man? You can start the story like this :

My name is Pyrrias. I am able to read the Homer epics and write.

.....
Think if the reading skill of the Greek alphabet was privilege of few people or its acquisition was gradually spread to more Athenians.

4o Worksheet

Imagine you are an Athenian citizen who disagrees with the resolution on the inscription, which you read in the second worksheet.

You have to go to the Assembly of the State- Ecclesia and explain why you disagree. For this reason, you have to prepare a speech to deliver when you are given the floor. But you have to take down notes so that you learn them by heart and are able to talk confidently.

Write down some notes in a few words.

They might start as follows:

Dear fellow citizens, I read the resolution

.....
.....

Think whether the basic knowledge of reading and writing was necessary so that a citizen could judge the laws of the state and make a speech at the Assembly of the State. Did the Democratic political system want the Athenian citizens to be literate?

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HOMEWORK

1. Read the following view expressed by an archeologist. Do you agree?

“The education of young people in classical Athens was an issue directly related to the establishment of the democratic political system, which pursued the wider expansion of reading and writing among its citizens.”

2. Do you believe that your visit today to the metro station confirms the view that we analysed in class that the characteristics of the language are **the infinity, the diversity and omnipotence?**