

## Summer 2024 Reading and Language Arts Assignments Students Entering Grade 6 at St. Ignatius Loyola

Students entering grade 6 in September 2024 are responsible for completing three assignments over the summer. Each assignment aligns with a core standard in the English language arts curriculum (speaking and listening, reading informational text, reading literary text, and writing.) These assignments provide an opportunity for students to practice their skills and demonstrate their understanding of works of literature and selected pieces of informational text that align with the curriculum in various subject areas. Please email Mrs. Hatfield [ehatfield@stignatiusvikings.org](mailto:ehatfield@stignatiusvikings.org) with any questions.

### ***Speaking and Listening:***

Students should choose one of the selected poems and commit it to memory. Students may choose either *Hope Is The Thing With Feathers* by Emily Dickinson or *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost. They should be prepared to recite the poem when they return to school and will be scored using an oral presentation rubric. The recitation will be evaluated on the following: enunciation and pronunciation, memorization, ability to convey meaning, and overall presentation (including eye contact and ability to be heard).

***Reading Informational Text and Writing Across the Curriculum:*** Read the selection *How Did Greeks and Romans Write?* from Common Lit and answer the questions that follow. Question #5 must be answered in paragraph form, and follow all grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules. Print the selection, and the questions, and bring the completed packet back to school on the first day. Extra copies will be available in the school office during summer hours, if needed.

### ***Reading Literary Text:***

All incoming 6th grade students will read *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick. Students should be prepared to discuss the novel when they return to school and will be assessed soon after.

*Hope Is The Thing With Feathers* by Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

*Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf's a flower;  
But only so an hour.<sup>7g</sup>  
Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay

Name: Class:

## How did Greeks and Romans Write? By

Angela Murock Hussein  
2017

*What tools do you use when you need to write something down? Maybe a pen and a piece of paper, or possibly even an electronic tablet? Things weren't quite so simple in ancient times. In this text, Angela Murock Hussein discusses writing during ancient Greek and Roman times. As you read, take notes on what the ancient Greeks and Romans used to write and write on.*

[1] In ancient times, writing was not as widespread a skill as it is today. Usually, only administrators and the wealthy learned the skill. By Greek and Roman times, however, writing generally had become more widespread. Evidence for this fact is the extensive use of public inscriptions by the ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as the increase in the number of personal documents and in simple graffiti that people left behind on walls and monuments, much the same as they do today.



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### A Great Innovation

Both the Greeks and the Romans used an alphabetic system of writing. This means that, for them, each sign represented a single sound, as opposed to many older methods that centered on a syllabic system, with each sign representing a combination of sounds. Responsible for the development of the alphabet used by the ancient Greeks and Romans were the Phoenicians, who lived in what today is Lebanon.

This innovation<sup>1</sup> greatly simplified learning to read and write. Once created, the alphabet was adapted to several languages throughout the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Middle East from the eighth century B.C. onward.

The Greeks and Romans made extensive use of writing to keep records, to correspond, and to compose works of literature and learning. The surfaces upon which a person could write were numerous. Ancient inscriptions on stone, clay, and such metals as lead and bronze are often uncovered at excavation sites,<sup>2</sup> since these materials survive relatively well. However, they were

1. Innovation (**noun**) a new method, idea, or device

not the most widely used writing surfaces, because they were heavy and impractical for day-to-day notes and transactions, as well as for longer works.

## Clever Tablets

Lighter media<sup>3</sup> were required for most written works. Most likely, the most common were waxed boards. These objects, usually fashioned from wood or occasionally from ivory, had a shallow reservoir carved into them that was filled with soft wax. The boards could be used singly or bound together to make a type of book. Typically, two boards were fastened together with hinges and had their waxed surfaces facing each other. Such an object is known as a diptych, which is Greek for “two-folds.” Those with three boards fastened together were known as triptychs. Since wood and wax do not survive well under most conditions, finds of this type of writing tablet are rare. Still, many waxed boards have been found in places such as the deep mines in Romania.

[5] The inscriptions found on uncovered writing tablets prove that people used the boards to record receipts, legal documents and agreements, letters, and other practical information. All of these could be made official with a personal stamp. The boards were light and portable, and the wax offered an advantage. It was soft, so writers could scratch words into it with a stick called a stylus. This tool was sharp on one end and flat on the other. The sharp end would etch the text into the wax. The flat side was used to erase the text, by smoothing the wax. These boards could be reused numerous times.

## Carefully Fashioned Reeds and Skins

Other writing surfaces were made from materials that resembled the thin sheets of paper we use today. The best known of these was papyrus. Papyrus is a type of river reed that is native to Egypt and other areas in the eastern Mediterranean. The stalk of the plant would be cut into strips and laid out flat in a crisscross pattern. The strips would then be placed under weights to bind them together. The reeds had a natural adhesive within them that served to seal the strips to each other. This “paper” was then allowed to dry, and the resulting “sheets” could be used in much the same way as we use paper today. They could also be attached together to create longer sheets, which were then rolled up to make scrolls.

Animal skins were also used. There were two major types: vellum, made from calfskin, and parchment, made from calfskin, sheepskin, or goatskin. For both, the skin was first scraped thin and then drawn flat to dry. There were also books crafted out of linen cloth. Other materials

2. an area where earth has been removed to find something buried

3. Here, “media” is the plural of “medium,” which refers to the different surfaces people wrote on.

that were commonly used for short notes and simple documents were potsherds<sup>4</sup> and bits of stone. On all of these surfaces, the writing was done with ink.

## Meet the Pen and Its Ink

Ancient inks were made, most often, from soot or ash. This was done by burning various materials and then adding to the mixture a binding agent,<sup>5</sup> such as animal or plant glue. Other colors, such as red, could be made from mineral pigments. In either case, the coloring agent would be ground to a fine paste before an adhesive was added, and the mixture was left to dry in small clumps that resembled cakes. To use the ink, a writer needed only to add water, much as we do with watercolors today.

Ink was applied with a pen, which could be made of different materials. The oldest known pens were fashioned from reeds. The fibers of the plant would absorb a small amount of ink, but they had to be dipped repeatedly in ink as the writer worked. The same principle applied to feather pens, which used the central rib of the feather as a tube to soak up a small amount of ink for writing. Metal nibs, or pen tips, have been found that date at least as far back as Roman times. These indicate that manufactured pens were available as well. For reed and feather pens, a new tip could be created when the old one no longer worked properly. All that was needed was a small knife that had a crescent-shaped blade to pare<sup>6</sup> off the end.

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4. a broken piece of pottery
5. a material or substance that holds other materials together
6. to trim something by cutting its outer edges

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses the central idea of the text?
  - A. Most Greek and Roman writing tools were made from stone, meaning that they survived the best over time.
  - B. Ancient civilizations, such as the Greeks and Romans, crafted their own tools to be able to write and record important information.
  - C. By studying the written materials left behind by the Greeks and Romans, experts have learned that only the wealthy were educated.
  - D. Ancient Greeks and Romans are responsible for the simplified alphabet style used by most countries today.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "This means that, for them, each sign represented a single sound, as opposed to many older methods that centered on a syllabic system, with each sign representing a combination of sounds." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "The Greeks and Romans made extensive use of writing to keep records, to correspond, and to compose works of literature and learning." (Paragraph 3)
  - C. "The surfaces upon which a person could write were numerous." (Paragraph 3)
  - D. "Since wood and wax do not survive well under most conditions, finds of this type of writing tablet are rare." (Paragraph 4)
  
3. Which of the following describes the author's main purpose in the text?
  - A. to describe the different writing tools made and used by ancient Greeks and Romans
  - B. to argue that modern society owes a lot the inventions of the Greeks and Romans
  - C. to emphasize how similar ancient writing tools were to today's tools
  - D. to show how the ancient Greeks' alphabet evolved over time
  
4. How does paragraph 5 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
  - A. It emphasizes how little experts know about the writing tools that most ancient civilizations used.
  - B. It shows how that all ancient civilizations used stone as writing surfaces, not waxed boards.
  - C. It shows how the ancient civilizations were able to make better tools and materials to meet their needs.
  - D. It highlights how similar the tablets used by the Greeks and Romans in the past are to our tablets today.
  
5. How do the writing materials left behind by the Greeks and Romans contribute to what we know about them today?