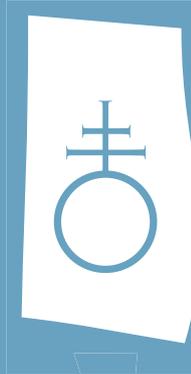


PRINTING  
PRESS

books

letterpress

GUTENBERG



NATIONAL  
PRINT MUSEUM  
Músaem Náisiúnta Cló

Primary School  
Curriculum Links

tablet  
illuminate  
PAPYRUS  
TYPE  
scribe

Printing  
and Bookmaking

Factsheet 1

Fact and  
Activity Pack

bookbinding  
MANUSCRIPT  
books  
Interactive  
Classroom  
Activities

Did you know that without the printing press, books like the ones we read today would not exist?

This Primary School Teacher's Fact and Activity Pack will take your pupils on a journey of discovery through the history of books, where they will learn how the invention of the printing press changed the way books were made so that everyone can enjoy them today!

FUN

suitable for 4th - 6th Class

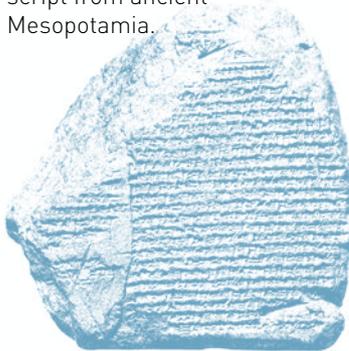
Factsheets

# Factsheet 1:

## Where did it all begin?

### The First Books before the Invention of the Printing Press

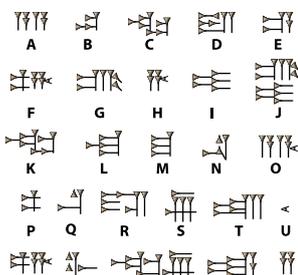
Clay tablet with cuneiform script from ancient Mesopotamia.



### Clay Tablets

The very first form of the book can be found over 5000 years ago (3300 BC) in ancient **Mesopotamia** (today's Iraq). These ancient people wrote on **clay tablets** in a script called **cuneiform**. Cuneiform is one of the earliest forms of writing and its 'letters' are made up of **wedge shaped** characters. The people who wrote on clay tablets were known as **scribes**. Scribes used a stylus, which was made from a dried blunt reed (a type of tall grass), to write upon a wet tablet. This made it easy for them to carve out their script. Once finished, the scribe would leave the tablet out in the sun to dry. If he wanted to use the tablet again, he would soak it in water and then wipe the cuneiform characters away (an ancient form of recycling). So what did they write about? These ancient scribes wrote about events that were happening during their time (like a journalist writes for a newspaper today) and they also recorded myths, fables, poetry, and the laws of the land.

Cuneiform script code breaker!



Ancient Egyptian scroll



### Did you know ?

A huge number of clay tablets have been excavated by archaeologists in countries like Iraq and Iran and over half a million are yet to be translated and read by historians.

### Interesting fact...

The word cuneiform comes from the Latin word *cuneus* which means 'wedge'.

### Scrolls

The next form of the book after the clay tablet was the scroll. **Ancient Egyptian** scribes began writing on scrolls made from **papyrus** around 5000 years ago (3000 BC). Papyrus is a material like paper, which was made from the papyrus plant. This plant once grew in large amounts in Egypt along the banks of the river Nile. An ancient scroll was made by gluing separate sheets of papyrus together to create one long sheet. This was then rolled into a scroll and sometimes a wooden roller would be attached to each end. Egyptian pens were made from thin, sharp reeds which were dipped into ink made from plants and soot. The ancient Egyptian scribes used scrolls to record information about their religion and government. They wrote in **hieroglyphics**, a type of writing which is made up of pictures and symbols.

Papyrus was unsuitable to use in the damp rainy countries of Europe, as once there it began to rot very quickly. So the Europeans used **parchment** made from animal skin instead. Today we cut down many forests to make our books, however in ancient times people had to slaughter 1000s of animals, including cattle, sheep, rabbits and even squirrels, to make their books!

### Curriculum Links

#### History:

Working as a Historian: Time and chronology, Change and continuity, Cause and effect, Using evidence. Strands: Story, Early people and ancient societies, Continuity and change over time

#### English:

Strands: Competence and confidence in using language (Units: Reading: Reading for pleasure and information; Developing interests, attitudes, information retrieval skills and the ability to think; Responding to text)