

# Invent Your Own Symbols

Week 21 • Wednesday • Hands-On: Write Like Sequoyah

## Reading Time

Sequoyah's writing system is called a **syllabary**. Instead of one letter per sound like our alphabet, each of his 85 symbols stood for a whole syllable — like 'ka,' 'lo,' or 'tsi.'

Inventing a writing system is REALLY hard. Sequoyah had to listen carefully to every sound in the Cherokee language, design a symbol for each one, and make each symbol easy to remember and quick to write. Some people laughed at his idea — but he kept going.

His daughter Ayoka was one of his first students, and she learned it quickly! When Cherokee leaders saw father and daughter passing secret written messages, they were amazed. Today, YOU get to be the inventor!

## Reading Questions

1. What is a syllabary?

2. Who was one of Sequoyah's first students?

3. What did Sequoyah do when people laughed at his idea?

## Hands-On: Design Your Symbol Code

**Step 1:** In the boxes below, invent 6 symbols for these words: SUN, WATER, FRIEND, HOME, HAPPY, GO. Make each symbol simple and easy to remember.

**Step 2:** Write a short message using ONLY your symbols (example: FRIEND GO HOME SUN = 'my friend went home in the sunshine').

**Step 3:** Teach your symbols to a family member — just like Sequoyah taught Ayoka.

**Step 4:** Send them a symbol message and see if they can read it!

## My Six Symbols

Draw your symbols: 1) SUN, 2) WATER, 3) FRIEND, 4) HOME, 5) HAPPY, 6) GO. Label each box!

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

## After the Activity

1. Write your symbol message here (in symbols, then in words):

2. Could your family member read your message? What was tricky?

3. Now imagine making 85 symbols like Sequoyah. Why was his work so amazing?

## Review

| I did it!                        | Circle one    |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| I invented six symbols           | YES / NOT YET |
| I wrote a message in my symbols  | YES / NOT YET |
| I taught my code to someone else | YES / NOT YET |