

An Artifact Speaks • Artifact Information Sheet

Artifact Name: Cuneiform Tablet

Time Period of the Original: c. 1700 BCE

Culture/Religion Group: Ancient Mesopotamia

Material of the Original: Clay

Reproduction? Yes



Background Information:

This information is quoted directly from the website of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, which has the original of this tablet in its artifact collections:

This type of school tablet is called a “lentil” or “bun.” The convex-shaped back fits naturally into the palm of the hand. There are 4 rows of signs on the front of the tablet. The teacher in ancient Nippur inscribed the signs in rows 1 and 2. The student then took the soft tablet and copied the text into rows 3 and 4. Our student was learning Sumerian signs that were already 1000 years old. The signs in row 1 were pronounced *gi-gur* which translates “reed basket.” Row 2 reads *gi-gur-da*, and that means a type of large reed basket. This lesson was both for handwriting and vocabulary.

See the Cuneiform Information Sheet for general information on cuneiform writing.

Source:

<http://www.penn.museum/games/cuneiform.shtml>