THE HISTORY OF CODES

Codes have traditionally been used to communicate with others in many ways and for a variety of different reasons. A code can be used to communicate a word, sentence or instruction for someone or something else, like a computer, to understand and follow. A code can be communicated across great distances, or without either person having to actually be in the same city, state or country. It can be a secret code, which is unable to be read by anyone who doesn't have the 'key' or understands that specific coding language. One of the most famous historical codes is Morse code.
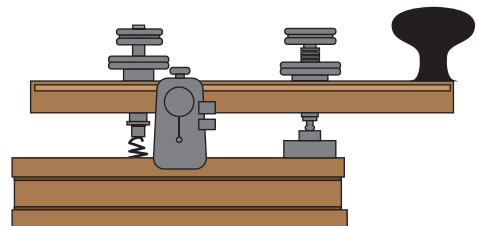
Morse Code

The telegraph was invented in the 1830's and 40's. This form of communication used the power of electricity to send pulses along wire cables. It was the first time in history that a message could be sent faster than the speed that a horse and messenger could ride (or sail!). The telegraph device worked by pushing a key down to complete the electric circuit of the battery. This action sent an electric signal across a wire to a receiver at the other end. It required a physical wire to send the electric signal (or pulse). As the distance increased between the sender and the receiver, a code was needed to understand the signals. Otherwise, the receiver didn't know if a series of frantic pulses meant 'Help, come quickly! The house is burning down' or 'Don't come home unless you want to help clean the bathrooms'.

Samuel Morse developed this code which assigned every letter of the alphabet a different combination of dots (dits) and dashes (dahs). The sender could hold the key down to send a long dash or a quick tap for a dot. This was the first code that bridged the communication distance between people using the power of electricity.

Telegraphs are no longer used to communicate, but as radio communication grew and expanded from America, Morse code became the international mode of communication. Morse code allowed people to send messages all over the world using this common code of dots and dashes so that anyone with an understanding of how to read this code could interpret its messages.

Even today people still know and use some of these coded words and letters. The most famous sequence is o o o - - - o o o.

To 'read' this code, it is important to know that three dots (o o o) = S and three dashes (- - -) = O. So when reading this code as a whole it becomes S O S, which is still the international distress 'code' and most often used at sea by those in distress.

Name _____   **Date** _____

The History of Codes - Questions

1. Literal Comprehension

   a) In the first sentence, the author uses the word many. What other word is also used in this sentence that has a similar meaning?

   _____

   b) Which has the closest meaning to '*contribution to society*'?
   • successfully helping a small group of people
   • benefitting the wider community
   • supporting your community.

2. Purpose for Reading

   a) What is the purpose of this text? (circle the correct answer)
   • to entertain
   • to inform
   • to persuade

   Explain why you chose this purpose.

   _____

   _____

3. Making Connections

   a) Fill in the table below with a text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connection that you can make to the text.

Connection	Words or idea from the text	What am I connecting it to?
Text-to-Text		
Text-to-Self		
Text-to-World		

COMPREHENSION

Name _____   **Date** _____

4. Predicting

a) If this text was to continue for one more paragraph, what do you predict it would be about? (Choose the best answer)

- Where we see Morse code used in modern times.

- Morse codes use on land.

- How Morse code would be used in the future.

Explain why you chose this prediction.

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5. Research Activity: Some people mistakenly believe that S.O.S stands for 'Save our Ship' or 'Save our Souls'. Can you find out if the letters S.O.S really have a meaning?

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