

How did we send messages before cell phones?

Forever Ago

October 9, 2024

[Episode Link](#)

[Resources for Educators](#)

Joy has a top secret message to deliver. There's just one problem– she's locked outside without her computer or phone! How will she send her VERY important message?

Tags: Science & Technology, Arts & Culture, Identity

Episode: How did we send messages before cell phones?	Grade Level(s): 3-5
Common Core Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none">3-5-W2 (3-5): Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.	Lesson Objective: Students will understand the historical evolution of communication methods, including smoke signals, carrier pigeons, semaphore, and the postal service, and will be able to identify how these methods influenced the development of modern messaging systems.
Key Vocabulary Words: <ul style="list-style-type: none">IndigenousMorse codeSemaphorePneumatic	Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Brains On Universe KWL worksheetBrains On Universe shows response sheet

Engage

Students begin with a discussion on how they currently send messages. Use a KWL chart to fill in what they already know about historical methods of message sending and what they are curious to learn about. Possible questions include: What is the oldest method of sending messages you've heard of? How do you think people communicated over long distances before phones and the internet were invented?

Explore

As the episode plays, pause after each method of communication is discussed to ask probing questions. For example:

- How do you think smoke signals worked, and what might have been some challenges with using them?
- Why were pigeons considered a reliable way to send messages during wars?
- How did the postal service change communication for colonists in America?

Students should take notes on a response sheet about each historical method mentioned in the podcast.

Extend

Activity: Students work in pairs to design a mini-presentation on one historical method of communication covered in the episode. They should include who used it, how it worked, its advantages and disadvantages, and how it influenced modern communication methods. Presentations can be in the form of a poster, slide show, or oral presentation.

To solidify their understanding, students will complete the 'What I Learned' section of the KWL chart and choose a 'Stand-out quote' from the episode that intrigued them the most.

Additional Learning

Listen to the section on 'First Things First' and challenge students to research the three messaging systems: semaphore, pagers, and pneumatic tubes. Have them create a timeline of when each was invented and any fun fact they can find about how they were used or are still used today.

Encourage students to think creatively about how messages will be sent in the future, inspired by the listener ideas shared in the episode. They can write or draw their most futuristic idea and present it to the class.