

**A Brief History of Communication from Cave Paintings to the Worldwide Web**

Communication is so much more than the spoken or written word. Nature itself can also speak to us of its beauty and power through a moonlit night or sunset. Many animal species have developed a system of communication, but humans are the only living things capable of spoken language. Although parrots and some other species of birds can mimic the human voice, they are unable to use it as a language of communication. Effective communication is essential for a variety of reasons. It serves to inform, motivate, establish authority and control, and allows for emotive expression. For humans in particular, communication is also vital for creating a sense of social cohesion. Just as mankind has progressed with the development of farming, infrastructure and trade, our means of communication have followed suit. What began as cave painting and sign language has morphed into an endless variety of ways to express oneself to our fellow human beings.

**Early Communication Methods**

Communication has existed in various forms since man appeared on Earth. The methods, however, may have been limited to sign language at first, then gradually became more sophisticated with speech. The most well-known form of early communication are cave paintings. The pigments were made from the juice of fruits and berries and coloured minerals. These pigments were then used to create depictions on the cave walls. The purpose of the paintings has been questioned by scholars for years, but one theory states that the depictions may have used as a manual for instructing which animals were safe to eat. Other experts disagree and say that cave dwellers used paintings to display the best hunting methods, as well as a way of expressing status or ability as a hunter. Moreover, painting and other forms of art have been used to convey both subtle and more powerful messages over thousands of years right up to the present day.

Other forms of early tribal communication, such as drums and smoke signals also existed and still exist in more remote parts of the world in parts of Africa and the Amazon. However, these methods may attract unwanted attention from enemy tribes and predatory animals. In the centuries that have followed, the written word has become increasingly important, in order to write letters, record laws and other important documents. Today, the internet, email and social media have massively expanded and transformed our communication with each other on a national and international scale. Is this going to benefit us indefinitely, or will such advanced communication eventually be our downfall?

Part 1 - Questions about the text:

1: What was used to communicate before there was writing?

2: What may have been the purpose of cave paintings?

3: Why were drums and smoke signals not a good way to communicate?

4: Why is effective communication important?

5: Why is the internet such an effective tool for communication?

6: Can parrots and other species of birds, communicate with us in our language?

7: Do experts all agree on the purpose of cave paintings?

Part 2: True – False – No Information:

1: The purpose of cave paintings is clearly understood by scholars.

2: Effective communication is essential for a variety of reasons.

3: Cave paintings were definitely used as a manual to show which animals were safe to eat.

4: The pigment for cave paintings only came from minerals.

5: Verbal communication was developed before the written word.

6: Drums and smoke signals are still used today in some parts of the world.

7: Birds can communicate with us by learning and using our language.

8: In the distant past, people used to live in very large communities.

9: The spoken word continues to be developed up to the present time.

10: We no longer use hand written letters because we have email.

Part 3: General questions and discussion:

1: What method of communication do you use most, the written or spoken word?

2: Which is the most important method of communication?

3: How many words do you know in spoken English?

4: How many words can humans learn over a life time?

5: Is the continual advancement in communication a good thing, or is there a downside?

6: What are the things in nature that impress you the most and why?

7: Name some methods of communication that may be harmful to family life and your nation.

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