

Languages of the World

Did You Know...

- ◆ Nobody knows exactly how many languages are spoken in the world today, but there are probably around 7,000.
- ◆ At least 2,000 languages don't have a written form; they're only spoken. Some languages have more than one written form—Japanese has four!
- ◆ Living languages are *always* changing. New words are added to the dictionary every year while other words fall out of use.



The Borrowers

English loves to borrow words from other languages. Just look at some of the words we've "stolen" over the years!

- ◆ alligator (Spanish)
- ◆ chimpanzee (Luba-Kasai [Bantu])
- ◆ chipmunk (Ojibwe [Algonquian])
- ◆ dollar (Dutch)
- ◆ giraffe (Arabic)
- ◆ shampoo (Hindi)
- ◆ tea (Chinese)
- ◆ tycoon (Japanese)



Can you guess which language these words come from?

1. **author** 2. **noodle** 3. **klutz** 4. **candy**

Answers: 1. French, 2. German, 3. Yiddish, 4. Arabic

Cracking the Code

Trying to understand a language you don't know can be like trying to break a secret code. In fact, in World War II, the US military used hundreds of Navajo code talkers to share information they wanted to keep secret. Their code—based on the Navajo language—was never broken.

America = *Ne-he-mah*, "Our Mother"

Battleship = *Lo-tso*, "whale"



The Write Direction

Not all languages are written horizontally from left to right as English is.

- ◆ **Korean** is written in columns that go top to bottom.

- ◆ **werbeH** .tfel ot thgir seog

- ◆ **Ancient Egyptian** Hieroglyphics used to go whichever way looked best.

You could tell where the beginning of a sentence was based on which way the animal hieroglyphics were facing.



Say What?

Kids all over the world love to read! Here's the word book in 5 different languages. See if you can guess the languages!



1. libro (say "lee-bro")
2. книга (say "kuh-nee-ga")
3. 书 / shū (say "shoo")
4. kitabu (say "kee-tah-boo")
5. bok (say "boohk")

Answers: 1. Spanish, 2. Russian, 3. Mandarin Chinese, 4. Swahili, 5. Norwegian