

Inuktitut – The Language of the Inuit of Nunavut

Content Areas

Social Studies, Language Arts, Technology, Art

Objective

In Part 1 of the lesson, to be completed in the classroom, students will be introduced to the language of Inuktitut and will practice pronouncing and writing selected words using Inuktitut syllabics. Then, using the Internet, small groups of students will create an Inuktitut/English ABC book, complete with illustrations. (**Optional:** If there are younger children in the same building, pair up two classes and allow older students to share their projects with the younger, teaching them several Inuktitut terms.)

Materials

- Inuktitut Syllabics, Words and Definitions – 1 per student
- Research Sheet – Inuktitut/English ABC Book – 1 per student
- Inuktitut Syllabics – 1 per student
- **Internet Access:**
 1. <http://www.pageweb.com/kleekai/eskimo2.htm>
– for researching Inuktitut terms for dictionary
 2. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/5020_e.html
– for hearing Inuktitut pronunciations
- Download and install Nunacom font (optional):
<http://www.nwmb.com/english/download.php>
or <http://www.nunavut.com>
- Location of Inuktitut Syllabics on a Standard Keyboard
– Reference for teacher if using Nunacom font

Part 1 – Classroom

- 1 **Optional:** Prior to the lesson, teacher may choose to download and install Nunacom font onto the classroom computer or student computers. The Nunacom font will enable teacher/students to type using Inuktitut syllabics. Use Location of Inuktitut Syllabics on a Standard Keyboard to locate each Inuktitut syllabic.

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- 2 Ask students if they know any traditional fairy tales by heart. Are there any stories they are able to tell without reading from a book?
- 3 Explain to students that for thousands of years, the Inuit had no written form of language. All stories and history were passed down from generation to generation orally. There were no Inuktitut books or written documents.
- 4 In the late 1800s, a man named Edmund Peck introduced a system of syllabic writing to the Inuit. From that time on, Inuktitut was both the spoken language and the written language of the Inuit in eastern Arctic Canada.
- 5 Ask students to name the vowels in the Roman alphabet, which is the alphabet we use for the English language. List them on the board. How many are there? How many consonants are there?
- 6 Explain that Inuktitut has fifteen consonants and three vowels, which can be long or short. Give each student a copy of the Inuktitut syllabics and have one on the overhead projector.
- 7 As a class circle the first three vowels, then identify the 15 consonants. Explain that to get a long vowel sound, the Inuktitut symbol is written with a dot above it.
- 8 Pass out the Inuktitut Syllabics, Words and Definitions. Review the Pronunciation Guidelines at the bottom of the page, then read through each word and definition.
- 9 Have students fold the list of words so the syllabics are not showing. As a class, choose one of the words and practice writing it in Inuktitut. Have a volunteer write the syllabics on the overhead projector or the board. Unfold the paper to check if syllabics are correct.
- 10 Allow students time to practice writing one or two more words using Inuktitut syllabics.

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- 11** Challenge students to write their name using Inuktitut syllabics. Remind students that there are only 3 vowels, so if a name contains an e, o or y, students need to write it differently. Generally, the oo sound (u) replaces the oh sound (o) and the e or y with the long e sound is replaced by i. For example:
- Rosa - Ru-sah - ᐃᓂ
 - Norman - Nu-ah-mahn - ᐃᐱᐃᐅ
 - Tommy - Tu-mi - ᐃᐅᐃ

Part 2 – Computer Lab

- 1** Explain to students that in groups, they are going to design an Inuktitut ABC book for children. Each page will have an Inuktitut word, written using our alphabet and Inuktitut syllabics, its English translation and an illustration. The Inuktitut words written using the Roman alphabet will be in ABC order, not the English translations.
- 2** Break students into groups. Each student should have 3-4 pages in the ABC book, so the number of groups will depend on the size of the class.
- 3** Before entering the computer lab, have groups meet and fill out their research sheet together. Review the directions as a class. Students should bring their copy of Inuktitut syllabics to the computer lab.
- 4** Remind students of the meaning of the word “Inuit” (“the people” in Inuktitut). Why was the switch made from “Eskimo” to “Inuit” by the native people of the Arctic? Explain that the web site students will be using for their research uses the word “Eskimo” instead of “Inuit.” Why might that be?
- 5** Once in the computer lab, allow students time to choose their words. Direct students to the pronunciation web site if time allows.

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Evaluation

- 1 Once groups have chosen their Inuktitut words, give them time to complete their ABC book. Recommend that each student have a group member check their use of Inuktitut syllabics before writing it on their page.
- 2 Once books are assembled, have each group present their project to the class. If possible, pair students with a younger class and have them share their books, teaching the younger students several Inuktitut words.



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Inuktitut Syllabics

Inuktitut Syllabics, Words and Definitions

ᐃᐅᐃᑕ	Inuit	The people of the Canadian Arctic
ᐃᐅᑲ	Inuk	One person; singular of Inuit
ᐅᐅᑕᑕ	Nunavut	Inuit land and the name of territory in Canada
ᑭᑕᑕᑲ	Qulitak	Outer fur parka
ᑭᑕᑕᑕᑲ	Qalipaaq	A lighter, windproof, often waterproof, parka
ᑲᑭᑲ	Kamik	A lightweight, very warm, hide footwear worn by the Inuit
ᐅᐅᑲᑲ	Nanuk	The polar bear
ᑕᑕᑕ	Tuktu	Caribou, the staple of the Inuit diet. One caribou is tuktu and two are tuktuut.
ᐅᑕᑕᑕᑲ	Natsiq	The seal
ᐱᐅᑲᑕᑕ	Inuksuk	A stone marker the Inuit use in many capacities such as hunting caribou, warning of danger, directing and showing a place of reverence. An Inuksuk is on the flag of Nunavut.
ᑭᑕᑕᑕᑕ	Qamutik	A sled used by the Inuit.
ᑭᑕᑕᑕᑕᑕ	Qimmiq	The Canadian Inuit sled dog.
ᑭᑕᑕᑕᑕ	Qanik	Falling snow.

Pronunciation Guidelines

- K** – hard sound of k, as in king
- Q** – kh sound, pronounced deep in the throat
- J** and **Y** – the j and the y are interchangeable and should be pronounced as y in you
- S** – generally pronounced as **sh**
- I** – pronounced as **ee**
- U** – pronounced **oo**
- NG** – pronounced with a single sound, as in singing
- DLERK** – at the end of a word is pronounced like **TSLERK**

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Research Sheet

INUKTITUT/ENGLISH ABC BOOK

Name:

Group Members:

What are the letters for which you are responsible?

Web sites for Research

1. <http://www.pageweb.com/kleekai/eskimo2.htm> – for researching Inuktitut words for ABC Book
2. http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/5020_e.html – for listening to Inuktitut phrases

- 1 Visit the first web site listed above. Choose a word for each letter for which you are responsible. Write the word in Inuktitut, Inuktitut syllabics (if possible) and its English translation below.

Inuktitut Word	Inuktitut Syllabics	English Translation

- 2 Once you have completed the table above, visit the second web site. Listen to common phrases spoken in Inuktitut.

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Inuktitut Syllabics

LOCATION OF INUKTITUT SYLLABICS ON A STANDARD KEYBOARD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	-	=
ᐅ	<	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	-	ᑭ
Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	{ }	
ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭᑭᑭ	ᑭᑭᑭ	ᑭᑭᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ
A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	:	"	
J	>	ᑭ	ᑭ	()	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	:		
Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	<	>	?		
ᑭ	<	ᑭ	?	H	ᑭ	ᑭ	<	>	ᑭ		
q	w	e	r	t	y	u	i	o	p	[] \	
ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ
a	s	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	;	'	
ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ
z	x	c	v	b	n	m	,	.	/		
ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	ᑭ	,	.	ᑭ		

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Inuktitut Syllabics

INUKTITUT SYLLABICS

When using Inuktitut syllabics, writing the character with a dot above it (ᐃ̇) represents long vowels.

h	ᐃ	a	ᐅ	u	ᐇ	i
p	ᐅ	pa	ᐇ	pu	ᐃ	pi
t	ᐃ	ta	ᐅ	tu	ᐇ	ti
k	ᐅ	ka	ᐇ	ku	ᐃ	ki
g	ᐃ	ga	ᐅ	gu	ᐇ	gi
m	ᐅ	ma	ᐇ	mu	ᐃ	mi
n	ᐃ	na	ᐅ	nu	ᐇ	ni
s	ᐅ	sa	ᐇ	su	ᐃ	si
l	ᐃ	la	ᐅ	lu	ᐇ	li
j	ᐅ	ja	ᐇ	ju	ᐃ	ji
v	ᐃ	va	ᐅ	vu	ᐇ	vi
r	ᐅ	ra	ᐇ	ru	ᐃ	ri
q	ᐃ	qa	ᐅ	qu	ᐇ	qi
ng	ᐅ	nga	ᐇ	ngu	ᐃ	ngi
t	ᐃ	ta	ᐅ	tu	ᐇ	ti