

LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY WITH DR KEITH MURPHY

TALKING POINTS

KNOWLEDGE

1. What is the difference between a font and a typeface?
2. Who invented the printing press?

COMPREHENSION

3. What does the method of ethnography involve?
4. Why are fonts important to companies and brands?

ANALYSIS

5. What design features do you think make a font seem more professional and formal?

SYNTHESIS

6. Why do you think the printing press is considered to be such an influential invention? What differences do you think the ability to mass produce texts made to society?

EVALUATION

7. How important do you think fonts are to the functioning of society?
If letters suddenly stopped showing up on our screens, what would happen?
8. Do you think Comic Sans deserves to have such a bad reputation?
Are there any contexts where Comic Sans is useful?

CREATIVITY

9. How would you demonstrate to somebody the effect that font choices can have?

ACTIVITIES

1. Write a paragraph about each of the fonts below, answering the following questions. What emotions does the font evoke in you? What design features do you think are responsible for conveying those emotions? In which contexts might you expect to see the font being used?

Times New Roman

Edwardian Script

American Typewriter

Bauhaus 93

HERCULANUM

Carlz MT

2. Imagine you are starting a business of your own choice. Have a go at designing a font for your company name. Think about the values of your company, the feeling you want to evoke in your consumers, and how you might stand out from the competition.

You can use pen and paper to design your letterforms, or if you are up for an extra challenge, you can use a site like Calligraphr (see More Resources) to turn your typeface into a digital font that will work on your computer.

MORE RESOURCES

- One of the many people Keith interviewed in his ethnographic research was Matthew Carter, the influential designer behind typefaces like Verdana and Georgia. Listen to this talk Matthew gave on his career and design processes:
www.ted.com/talks/matthew_carter_my_life_in_typefaces/transcript?language=en

- Watch this video for an interesting case study on the typeface Futura and its role in one of the most important cultural and political moments in US history:
www.ted.com/talks/douglas_thomas_typography_and_authority_how_a_typeface_helped_launch_apollo
- To gain an insight into what font designers do, have a go at designing your own digital font, using Calligraphr: www.calligraphr.com/en