Name: _____ Date: _____

Counting with Beads on an Abacus

Circle group

Long before calculators, people needed a way to count. Shopkeepers had to add up what people owed. So they used an abacus.

An abacus is a wooden frame with thin rods. Each rod has beads that slide. The beads on one rod are ones. The beads on the next rod are tens.

To add, a person slides beads to one side. Each bead is one more. When the ones are used up, the person moves a bead on the tens rod.

An abacus was used in many places. Some people still use one now.

Questions

1. Who needed to add up what people owed?

_____

_____

2. What is an abacus made of?

_____

_____

3. What do the beads on the next rod stand for?

_____

_____

4. How does a person add on an abacus?

_____

_____

5. Why did people long ago use an abacus?

_____

_____

Words to know

calculators: small machines that do math for you
shopkeepers: people who own or run a small store
abacus: a frame with beads that is used to count and add

rods: long, thin sticks

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Counting with Beads on an Abacus

Triangle group

Long before calculators, people needed a way to count and add. Shopkeepers had to add up what people owed. So they used a tool called an abacus.

An abacus is a wooden frame with thin rods. Each rod holds beads that can slide back and forth. The beads on one rod are ones. The beads on the next rod are tens.

To add, a person slides beads to one side. Each bead moved is one more. When the ones are all used up, the person moves a bead on the tens rod instead.

An abacus was used in many places around the world. Some people still use one today. They can work with it very fast.

Questions

1. Who needed to add up what people owed?

_____

_____

2. What is an abacus made of?

_____

_____

3. What do the beads on the next rod stand for?

_____

_____

4. How does a person add on an abacus?

_____

_____

5. Why did people long ago use an abacus?

_____

_____

Words to know

calculators: small machines that do math for you
shopkeepers: people who own or run a small store
abacus: a frame with beads that is used to count and add
rods: long, thin sticks

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Counting with Beads on an Abacus

Square group

Long before the invention of calculators, people still needed a dependable way to count and add. Shopkeepers, for example, had to total up what their customers owed, so they relied on a tool called an abacus.

An abacus is a wooden frame crossed by thin rods, and each rod holds beads that can slide back and forth. The beads on one rod stand for ones, while the beads on the neighboring rod stand for tens.

To add, a person slides beads to one side, and each bead that moves counts as one more. Once all the ones have been used up, the person moves a bead on the tens rod instead.

The abacus was used in many places around the world, and some people still use one today, often working with it astonishingly fast.

Questions

1. Who needed to total up what customers owed?

_____

_____

2. What is an abacus made of?

_____

_____

3. What do the beads on the neighboring rod stand for?

_____

_____

4. How does a person add on an abacus?

_____

_____

5. Why did people long ago rely on an abacus?

_____

_____

Words to know

calculators: small machines that do math for you
shopkeepers: people who own or run a small store
abacus: a frame with beads that is used to count and add
rods: long, thin sticks

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Counting with Beads on an Abacus

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Counting with Beads on an Abacus

Easier · 94 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.3

1. Shopkeepers.
2. A wooden frame with rods and beads.
3. Tens.
4. They slide beads to one side.
5. There were no calculators, so it helped them add.

Triangle: Counting with Beads on an Abacus

This passage · 116 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.5

1. Shopkeepers.
2. A wooden frame with thin rods and beads.
3. Tens.
4. They slide beads to one side, one for each number.
5. There were no calculators, so it helped them add.

Square: Counting with Beads on an Abacus

Harder · 134 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.6

1. Shopkeepers.
2. A wooden frame crossed by thin rods that hold beads.
3. Tens.
4. They slide beads to one side, and each bead counts as one more.
5. Calculators had not been invented, so it gave them a way to add.