

# Digital Citizenship

## Lesson Title: Emojis: Such Characters!

### High School



#### Essential Question:

Is the use of emojis a sign of future communication or a temporary cultural fad?

#### Materials:

- Emoji chart
- Internet Access for emoji creation links

## Procedure:

#### Introduction:

1. Begin by asking students what they think of when you say the word “emoji.” Class could begin by googling Shigetaka Kurita, who created the first emoji, or share the following information about Kurita and emoji history.

#### Facts about emoji history:

Emoji is the Japanese term for picture word. These “picture characters” or pictographs are standardized and built into [most Japanese] handheld technology.

- The first emoji was created in 1998 or 1999 in Japan by Shigetaka Kurita, who was part of the team working on NTT DoCoMo’s i-mode mobile Internet platform.
- Shigetaka Kurita used manga, Chinese characters, and street signs to create symbols to convey emotions and thoughts that would be usable by anyone and emotionally neutral to users, symbols that would not stir “strong likes or dislikes.” (Wall Street Journal, March 26, 2014)
- Emojis are used internationally as their meaning translates across languages and cultures.
- Emojis differ from emoticons (see below).
- A single picture message can be the size of hundreds if not thousands of text messages.

#### What’s an emoticon?

Emoticon is a compound word for emotion + icon and is a group of characters used to represent an emotion. They are usually little smiley faces that are preprogrammed onto phones.

## What's an emoji?

Emoji is Japanese for “picture word.” Emoji are often pictographs—images of things such as faces, weather, emotions, or activities. Emoji are now considered a set of predefined pictures with meanings that a smartphone user can choose to include in texts and email messages.

### Sources:

- <http://www.iemoji.com/articles/where-did-emoji-come-from>
- Complete research on Shigetaka Kurita, the father of emojis <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2014/03/26/meet-shigetaka-kurita-the-father-of-emoji/>
- <http://on.wsj.com/1hXk25c>
- <https://www.theartofed.com/2016/03/15/teach-students-make-emojis/>

2. Share the emoji chart with the class and ask students for their translations of each and when it is appropriate to use them.
3. Compare and contrast an emoji or emoticon with other forms of expression such as paintings, poetry, photography, and human interaction (a hug, a kiss, a snicker). How does each make you feel? What makes you feel better, a smiley face emoji or a real smile on your best friend's or a parent's face? Why? When is one more appropriate than the other? Why?
4. Emojis have become such an integral part of texting conversations and expression that it is challenging to imagine a world without them. What would online conversation be like without emojis?
5. Many people predicted that the emoji would not last, but they have and continue to grow in variety and usage. For example, in 2013, the Emoji version of Herman Melville's classic, *Moby Dick*, was accepted into the United States Library of Congress, and many other classics have followed, including all 66 books of the *King James Version of the Bible*. Penguin Books publishes *OMG Shakespeare*, condensed versions of the Bard's plays using emojis and “Whatsapp-esque messages.” (*Independent*, June 12, 2015) Plans are in the making for an entire social network called “emojili” written using only emojis. Do any of these examples feel appropriate to you? Why or why not?
6. Next, tell students that they will create a project based on using emojis to communicate. They may choose among the following:
  - Design an original emoji and write a descriptive paragraph about it. Use the drawing tools on Google Draw or Google Docs or other app that supports original creations. You also have the choice to draw the emoji freehand. Your paragraph should explain the symbolism, the design process, and the artistic choices made to create a clearly understood emoji.
  - Translate a poem, the lyrics to a song, or a children's book into emojis.
  - Write a paper persuading a literary scholar that emoji translations of classic books are legitimate works of art/literature OR deeply disrespectful fads to the authors and the literary world.
  - A topic of your own choosing.
7. Set a timeframe and due date for completion. On the due date have students share their work with each other.

## Conclusion

Ask students to discuss the essential question: Is the use of emojis a sign of future communication or a temporary cultural fad? Explain your answer.

# Say What?



Source: <http://getemoji.com/>