Writing in Code

The pigpen cipher is a secret way of writing traced back to the 1500s. It has been used by religious groups, countries, armies, and spies! It is a simple substitution cypher that uses geometry, and exchanges letters for symbols which are fragments of a grid. It can be set up in different ways, but the most common example is this:

Materials:
- Pencil
- Paper
- Pig Pen Cipher (found on last page)

Procedure:

1. Look at this example of how to use the cipher.

You find the shape in the pig pen cipher then use the letter inside the shape.

WELCOME

2. Now, try figuring out the message below:

____ ___ _ _____!

3. Now that you know how the pig pen cipher works, try writing a secret message of your own!
Can other people figure it out?

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WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The pig pen cipher one of many different substitution cipers. A substitution cipher uses a letter, number, or symbol to replace a real letter in a message. Now that you know, can you make your own cipher for secret messages?

A = 1

DID YOU KNOW?

An **etymologist** is someone who studies words and where they come from. If you liked this activity, maybe etymology is for you!

Pig Pen Cipher

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