

Year 6 History
Wednesday 10th July 2020: Lesson 5+ The Mayans

To explain what the Maya writing system consists of, how words are constructed and what codices are.

Success Criteria:

- I can identify key facts about the Maya writing system.
- I can answer questions about the Maya writing system and codices.
- I can construct Maya words using syllabograms and logograms.

Activity 1

What do you know about Maya writing?

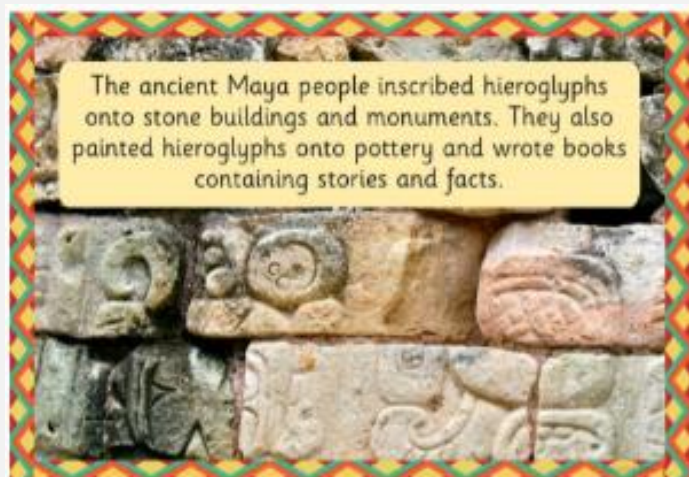
Discuss the following questions with your partner/ someone at home.

1. What does Maya writing look like?
2. Where have you seen examples of Maya writing in your learning about the Maya so far?
3. What do you think the Maya may have written about? Why?
4. What would you like to find out about Maya writing?

Activity 2-

Read all the Maya Writing Fact Cards.

Use the information on the fact cards to help you complete the Maya Writing Fact Hunt Activity Sheet.



The ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing system consisted of a series of signs and symbols called glyphs.



Although most Maya people would be able to read and write some glyphs, it was only the priests and noblemen who would know the whole written language.



Maya scribes wrote books called codices (or a codex if there was only one). These books were written on paper made from the bark of fig trees.



Some glyphs used in Maya hieroglyphic writing are called logograms. Logograms represent a whole word.



CHAN
'sky'



WINIK
'person'



WITZ
'mountain'



K'IN
'sun'



B'ALAM
'jaguar'



K'AK'
'fire'

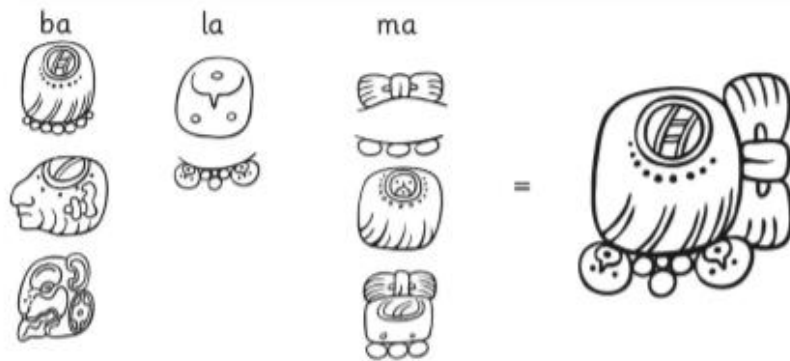


BAK
'bone'

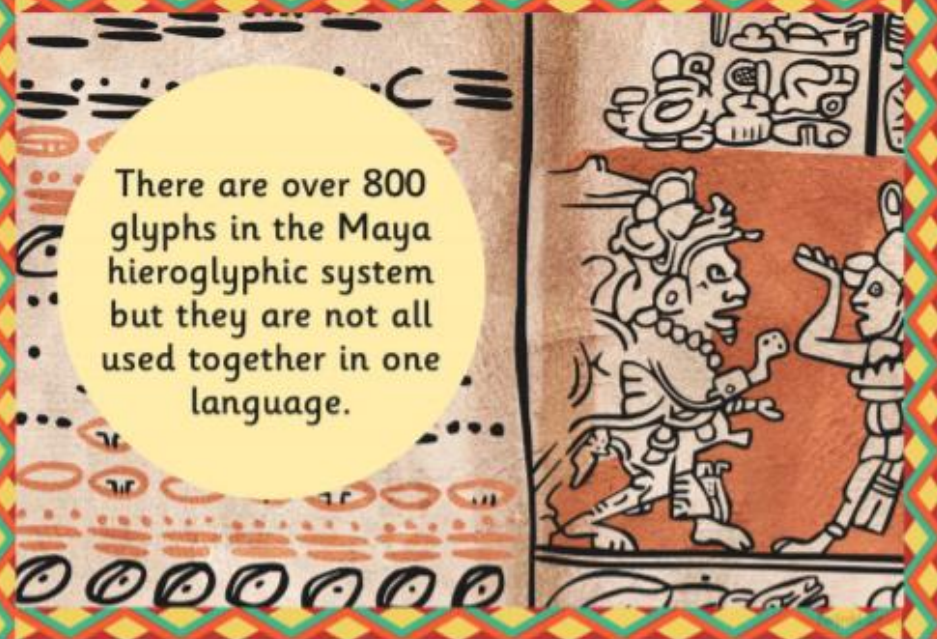


WAY
'spirit'

Some glyphs in Maya hieroglyphic writing are called syllabograms. Syllabograms represent a unit of sound.

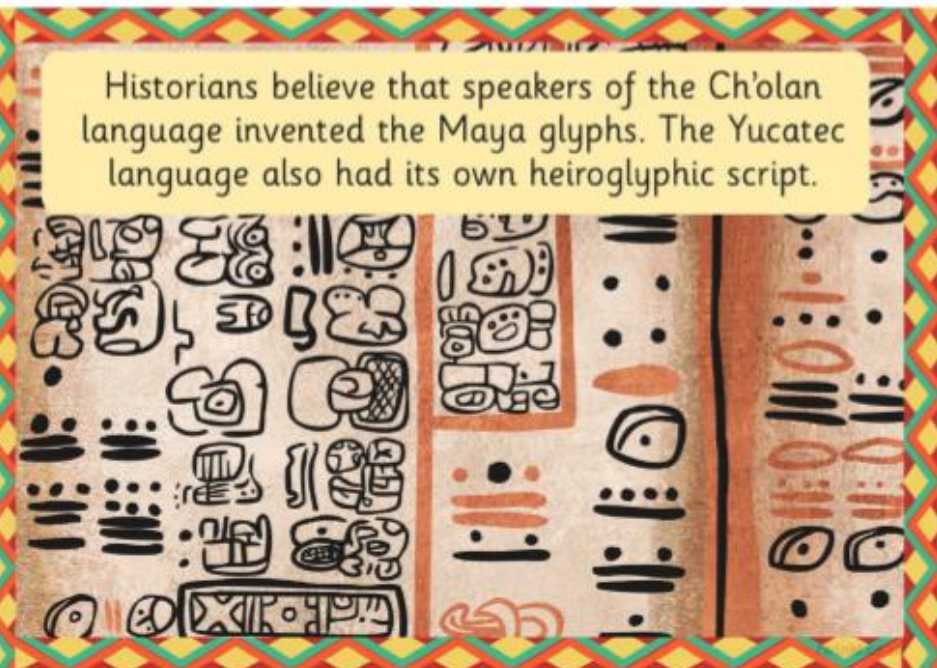


There are over 800 glyphs in the Maya hieroglyphic system but they are not all used together in one language.



There were a large number of different languages because there were many groups of Maya people who each had their own culture, traditions and language.

Historians believe that speakers of the Ch'olan language invented the Maya glyphs. The Yucatec language also had its own hieroglyphic script.



Maya Writing Fact Hunt Activity Sheet.

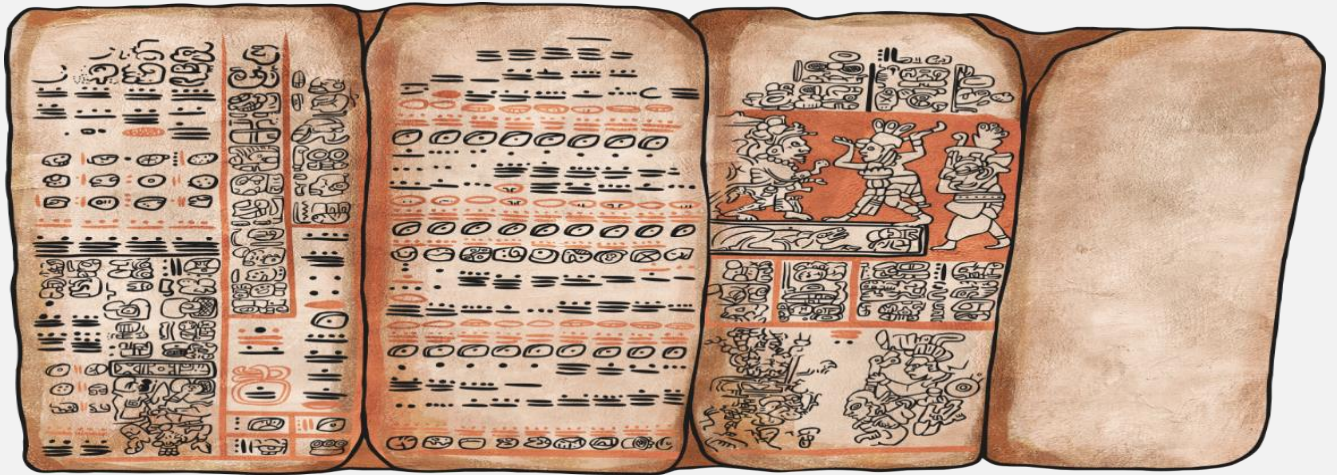
<p>The type of writing system used by the Maya people is called...</p>	<p>These people knew the whole Mayan language...</p>	<p>Maya books are called...</p>
<p>Glyphs are...</p>	<p>The different types of glyphs used in Maya writing are...</p>	<p>Maya hieroglyphs have been found...</p>
<p>Some examples of Mayan languages are...</p>	<p>Maya books were made of...</p>	<p>My own amazing Maya writing fact...</p>

Codices

The Maya people also wrote books made of the bark from fig trees. One book is called a codex and the plural is codices.

The codices were written by professional scribes and contained information about astronomy, gods, war and history.

Rather than having separate pages, the codices unfolded like a concertina.



The Last Codices

Unfortunately, when the Spanish arrived and set to conquer the Maya, their priests burned as many Maya codices as they could find as they considered them to be the work of the devil. Three genuine Maya codices remain, and they were discovered 'hiding out' in Europe. These codices are named after the places they are kept.

- **The Dresden Codex:** part of the Royal Library collection in Dresden, Germany.
- **The Madrid Codex:** Housed in the Madrid Archaeological Museum, Spain.
- **The Paris Codex:** Housed in the National Library of Paris, France.

A fourth codex was discovered in the 1960s, but historians cannot decide if it is real. It is called the Grolier codex.







Activity 3

Maya Hieroglyphs

Maya hieroglyphic writing can be made up of syllabograms (representing sounds) or logograms (representing whole words).

Logograms often resemble the thing that they represent, so it is easy for us to see what they mean, but others are more tricky.

Look closely at these logograms. Can you match them to their meanings?

			
to grab	fire	to scatter	jaguar

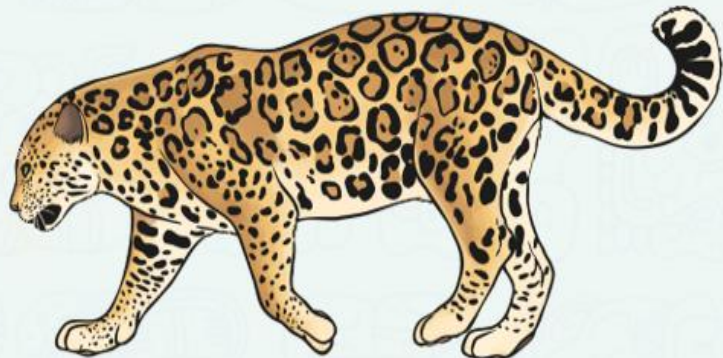
Syllabograms

About 150 syllabograms were used in the Maya script and syllables were often represented by more than one glyph. This meant that different people could spell the same words differently depending on which syllabograms they chose to use.

For example, the Maya word for jaguar is b'alam which can be split into three syllables b'a – la – am, with the final 'a' silent.

Have a look at the syllabograms for the syllables in b'alam. How many different ways of spelling the word can you find?

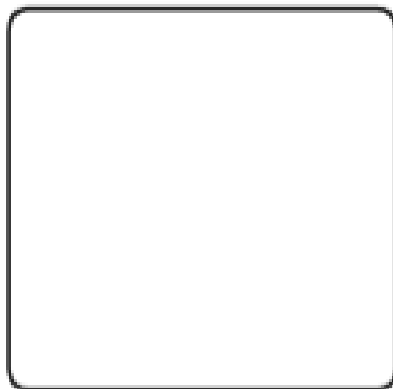
Remember there is a logogram for the word jaguar too!



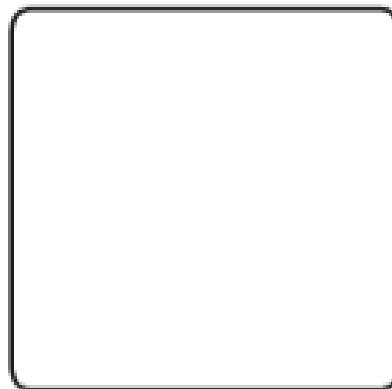
Logograms



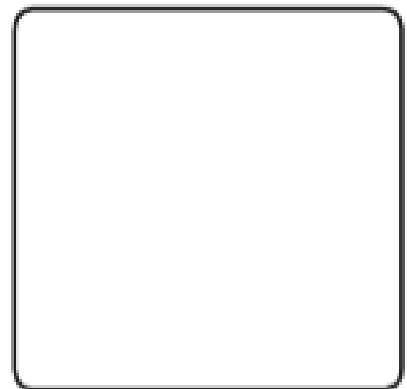
Can you draw some Maya logograms and write down their meanings?



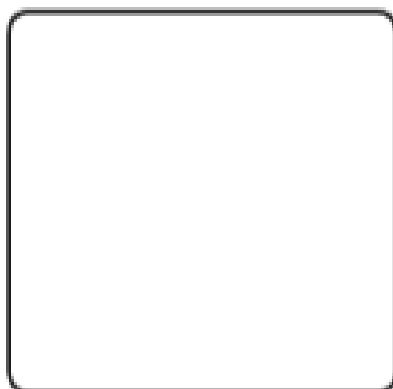
Name and Meaning



Name and Meaning

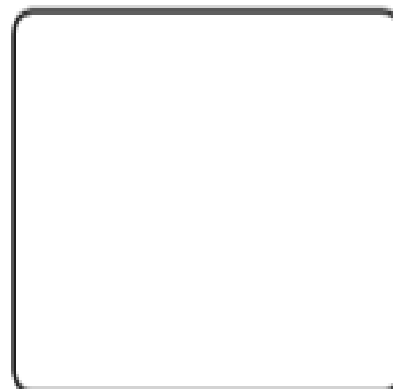


Name and Meaning



Name and Meaning

My own Maya style logogram



A description of my design:



chan
'sky'



winik
'person'



witz
'mountain'



k'in
'sun'



b'alam
'jaguar'



k'ak'
'fire'



bak
'bone'



way
'spirit'



juun
'book'



ja'
'water'



ajaw
'lord'



muyal
'cloud'



ix
'woman'



ch'am
'to grab'



k'uk'
'quetzal'



chan
'snake'



ch'ul
'holy'



chok
'to scatter'



jaab
'year'



yax
'blue/green'



pakal
'shield'



tok
'flint'



naj
'house'



k'al
'twenty'

