

# **Amy Oestreicher**

## **Methods of Teaching Art to Children Lesson Plan #2 for Elementary School Children**

**Title of the Lesson** Mayan Hieroglyphics and Stelas

**Unit of Study:** Mayan hieroglyphs, dieties, art and culture

**Lesson # 1:** Learn Mayan hieroglyphics and create a large “Stela” as a class

**Grade** 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **The Big Idea:**

Learn how the Mayan people invented the most advanced form of writing in their age using about 700 symbols – hieroglyphics. Come together as a classroom to great a Stela - the big stone slabs they built to tell the story of special occasions and events. Mayans recorded everything, and their hieroglyphics were used on temple walls and pillars. Learn how imperative this form of writing was to their culture and passing their legacy on - the Mayans wrote everything down.

### **Specific Content Standards addressed in this lesson:**

- Glyphs: picture or a symbol used to represent a sound, a word, or a syllable.
- Learning how to write Mayan hieroglyphs
- Education about Stelas (large stone slab) and their role in society
- How to collaborate together as a classroom on an art project
- What kinds of things Mayans mostly wrote about (gods, leaders, daily life, etc.)
- Since **hieroglyphics** inscribed on a Stela tells a story about a major event, educate students about one of these major events that a Stela might revolve around.
- Since Stelas were designed with drawings as well as hieroglyphics so that people could better understand them, students will refer to artwork from previous lesson as well as new pictures for this lesson to illustrate their glyphs.
- Learn about the the **K'atun**, a special ceremony that was conducted once every 20 years. Each K'atun had a Stela created for it that shared what had happened over the past 20 years.
- Learn the difference between a Mayan glyph, **pictograph, iconograph, Stelas, succo façade, and syllabary.**

### **Specific Essential Questions addressed in this lesson (What leading questions can you ask of students to get them to understand the Big Ideas?):**

- Why was writing everything down so important to the Mayans?
- How did their form of writing help preserve their legacy?
- Why were Stelas so important to them?
- What did the Mayans hold “sacred”?

- What were some important Mayan celebrations that they transcribed?
- How do Mayan glyphs remind you or your own written language?
- How do the Mayan glyphs remind you of art in that era?

**Learning Outcomes/Expectations/objectives:**

*As a result of this lesson, students will understand that:*

- Learn how important recording and writing down everything was to the Mayan Culture
- Learn how to collaborate as a classroom to create one large piece of art, work as a team and also shine individually
- Learn how to write Mayan glyphs
- Understand what a Stela is as well as other Mayan terms in their writing system
- Understand a major Mayan ceremony
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*As a result of this lesson, students will know that:*

- They can write several Mayan glyphs
- They have the confidence to shine on their own while still contributing their part to a group art project.

*As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:*

- write certain Mayan Hieroglyphs, including their name
- familiarize themselves even more with various aspects of Mayan Culture
- Reflect on the importance of writing (even journaling) in their own lives after learning how vital transcribing everything was to the Mayans
- tie links from Mayan cultures to their own cultrue
- see how Mayan art, writing, and culture go hand in hand

Learning Activities: Step-by-step description of the lesson components as follows:

- 1.) Learn the Mayan writing system through explanation and various handouts:
  - a. <http://www.pauhtun.org/MayanGlyphs/syllabary.html>
  - b. <http://www.halfmoon.org/date.html>
  - c. <http://www.famsi.org/research/pitts/MayaGlyphsBook1Sect1.pdf>
- 2.) Have students practice a few glyphs
- 3.) Teach them to sound out their name and write it in glyphs
- 4.) Teach them the differences between a Mayan glyph, **pictograph, iconograph, Stelas, succo façade, and syllabary.**
- 5.) Show students a picture of a Maya pot or mural showing a painted scene and glyphs on this website: <http://www.famsi.org/mayavase>.
- 6.) Brainstorm examples of symbols that are meaningful to us today.

- 7.) Look at a picture from a Maya pot or painting. Have the students identify glyphs and iconographs in the picture.
- 8.) In-Class Discussion: What kinds of clothes are the Maya wearing? What does their style of dress tell you about their environment? Does the picture tell you anything about the natural environment? Do you see any of the plants or animals that might have been important to the Maya?
- 9.) have students List and sketch pictures of five artifacts they see in the pictures, on plain white computer paper – like bracelets, headdresses, etc. Have them share it with the student sitting next to them and why they chose it.
- 10.) Teach the students briefly about K'atun – how every 20 years the Mayans recorded everything. A different royal family ruled each Maya city. So each Maya city erected its own stela during the K'atun to honor its own ruling family.
- 11.) Roll out large Butcher paper on a low row of desks or pinned to the wall. Have each of the students transfer name glyph blocks to the “Stela.”
- 12.) Have students draw one symbol from what they sketched on the computer paper onto the Stela
- 13.) 3. Create a translation of the information on the Stela using paint, markers, pencils, crayons, oil pastels, and puff paint — including the information in the glyphs as well as the story that the picture and symbols end up creating
- 14.) Clean up, hang up painting

**Pacing – how much time will each component take?**

- 1.) Learn the Mayan writing system through explanation and various handouts – 20 minutes
- 2.) Have students practice a few glyphs – 5 minutes
- 3.) Teach them to sound out their name and write it in glyphs – 10 minutes
- 4.) Teach them the differences between a Mayan glyph, **pictograph, iconograph, Stelas, succo façade, and syllabary.** – 5 minutes
- 5.) Show students a picture of a Maya pot or mural showing a painted scene and glyphs on this website: <http://www.famsi.org/mayavase>. – 5 minutes
- 6.) Brainstorm examples of symbols that are meaningful to us today. -5 minutes
- 7.) Look at a picture from a Maya pot or painting. Have the students identify glyphs and iconographs in the picture. – 5 minutes
- 8.) In-Class Discussion: What kinds of clothes are the Maya wearing? What does their style of dress tell you about their environment? Does the picture tell you anything about the natural environment? Do you see any of the plants or animals that might have been important to the Maya? – 5 minutes
- 9.) Have students List and sketch pictures of five artifacts they see in the pictures, on plain white computer paper – like bracelets, headdresses, etc. Have them share it with the student sitting next to them and why they chose it – 15 minutes
- 10.) Teach the students briefly about K'atun – how every 20 years the Mayans recorded everything. A different royal family ruled each Maya city. So each Maya city erected its own stela during the K'atun to honor its own ruling family.
- 11.) Roll out large Butcher paper on a low row of desks or pinned to the wall. Have each of the students transfer name glyph blocks to the “Stela.” – 15 minutes
- 12.) Have students draw one symbol from what they sketched on the computer

- paper onto the Stela using paint, markers, pencils, crayons, oil pastels, and puff paint – 20 minutes
- 13.) 3. As a class, reate a translation of the information on the Stela – including the information in the glyphs as well as the story that the picture and symbols end up creating – 15 minutes
- 14.) Clean up., hang up painting – 10 minutes

***\*\*\*That would bring the total time to roughly 135 minutes, give or take. This could be divided over a two day period – an hour and 10 minutes each. The first day could be the overview of glyphs, Stelas, learning how to transcribe in Mayan as well as learning to write their own name, and using the practice sheets in the handouts, etc. The second day could be sketching the Mayan artifacts from the pictures an creating a large Stela on butcher paper as a classroom\*\****

### **Introduction/Opening:**

*(How will you begin to lead the students towards the outcomes you expect of them?)*

By giving a brief introduction Mayan writing, its importance to their culture, and the artistic quality that they glyphs have. I will refer to the history I went over in the previous lesson, and explain K’atun to further establish how vital their system of writing was and how they recorded everything. Because of that, we can better understand their culture today.

### **Demonstration:**

***(Does something need to be demonstrated to make these expected outcomes clearer?)***

Many visual representations. More slides of pictures – of Stelas, hieroglyphics, and of paintings done of Mayan daily life. Also will show pictures of glyphs on pyramids, sacred books, and other mediums. I will also demonstrate writing actual glyphs, and the handouts have exercises to help students with this writing.

### **Body**

#### **Activity #1**

- Intro/Overview. Slides, Showing Art, explaining the importance of glyphs. Establishing these key differences:
  - **Glyph:** Shortened version of hieroglyph. In Maya writing – more like short syllables than single letters.
  - **Pictograph:** A sign that pictures a real thing.
  - **Iconograph:** A stylized symbol of a “real thing” used in a drawing or painting.
  - **Stela:** monument, either carved or plain on large round flat stones or altars. Other glyphs that are often seen on stela stand for the accession of a king, the performance of a ritual, or the capture of a rival king.
  - **Stucco facade:** Wet plaster, which could be carved or molded, used as building decoration. On the front side of a building.
  - **Syllabary:** A set of symbols used for syllables. Maya writing is composed

of combinations of syllables rather than letters. The syllabary provides a comparison of the symbols to combinations of letters.

- Have students write their names in Mayan hieroglyphics:
  - Our writing system uses letters representing individual sounds that are combined into words. The Maya writing system is different in that words are divided into syllables. Symbols are used to represent these syllables. In English, we occasionally use a single symbol or “letter” to represent a syllable, like when we use “a” as a word as in “a horse.” For students to write their names using Maya glyphs, they must first break their names into syllables:
  - Kate = “ka” + “te”
  - Some names are more difficult, because you must add an imaginary or silent letter: Jon= “jo” + “ne”
  - Some names include sounds that are not found in Maya languages, like “r.” You can use the syllabary to find a substitute or you may leave that letter out of your translation, as shown in my name:
  - Beverly= “be”+ “ve” + “li” 2. Have each student break his or name into syllables. 3. Have the students match the syllables from their names to the syllabary. 4. The syllables are then combined into blocks to form word glyphs. Examples of word arrangements are:
  - Have the students use glyphs from the syllabary to replace the English syllables in their own name in blocks on a sheet of paper.
    - ka
    - te
    - jo
    - ne
    - be
    - ve
  - *This lesson on writing student’s names was courtesy of [www.mercermuseum.org/](http://www.mercermuseum.org/)*

### **Transition**

Time for students to ask questions, share their opinions, talk about if they felt this writing system was more challenging than what they know, as well as if they think it is more or less expressive.

### **Activity #2**

Show students more pictures of Mayan life and paintings depicting this, they have them sketch five artifacts they see in the paintings. After setting up a large roll of butcher paper, the students write their name in hieroglyphics as well as the artifacts they drew.

### **Transition**

After cleaning up, discuss how the large roll of butcher paper acts as a Stela for the “community” of the classroom. Discuss and share the artifacts they drew on the Stela.

Talk about what it was like writing their names in hieroglyphics, as well as how it was to work as a classroom together on one project.

### **Closure**

Discussion, check-in, more sharing what they learned about Mayans and asking them to discuss: What does their “Stela” say about *their* “community”?

### **Materials needed for the lesson: (List these materials per student): Attach handouts (if any).**

- Oil pastel
- Computer paper
- Pencils/pens
- Sharpies
- Student-Grade acrylic paint
- Brushes and cups with waters, napkins and paper towels
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Squeezable puff paint
- Construction paper

### **Teacher Materials needed for demonstration:**

- projector
- computer
- slides of art/hieroglyphics
- Handouts for class (in links shown earlier)
- Books with Mayan paintings in it
- Pins or tape to hold up butcher paper

### **Modifications/Extensions (for students on IEP’s or language differences.)**

- Extra assistance and explanation
- Supplementary handouts
- Student peer mentor
- Have them sit in front of class if they have any additional questions
- Write key words on white board
- Help them write their name in hieroglyphis

### **Assessment of Student Understanding**

**(How will you assess student understanding of the content of the lesson?)**

- › **Authentic, performance based tasks that have students apply what they have learned and demonstrate their understanding.**
- › **includes pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment evidence**

- › Can be individual or group based
- › Can include informal methods (such as thumbs up, thumbs down, and formal assessments, such as quiz, answers to questions on a worksheet, written reflection, essay
  - Looking at how the students did on the handouts of writing exercises
  - What artifacts they chose from the paintings to sketch
  - their discussion afterwards and the questions they ask
  - how well they worked as a classroom together
  - how well they were able to engage in the following two lesson plans in terms of writing hieroglyphics
  - How well they can translate the various writing/sketching activities done in class into making one big Stela on the butcher paper

Assessment of Student Understanding

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  - I will see if the Stela is an accurate representation of Mayan hieroglyphics and symbols
  - How accurately they were able to transcribe their names
  - Assess their discussion/questions afterwards.
  - At very end, students will give thumbs up/thumbs down for how well they understood the lesson.
  - At very end, students will give thumbs up/thumbs down for if they liked working as a team, and how it helped/hurt their comprehension of the lesson material – discussion follows.



**Elementary School Mayan Unit:**

**Lesson 1: Mayan Art/Culture History Lesson**

**Lesson 2: Mayan Hieroglyphics and Stelas**

**Lesson 3: Making a Mask of a Mayan God**