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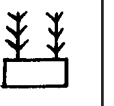
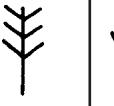
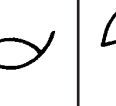








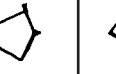
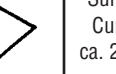

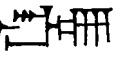



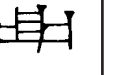
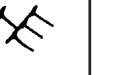
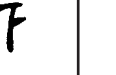

# Make a Clay Cuneiform Tablet






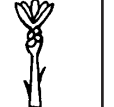
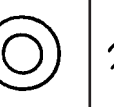
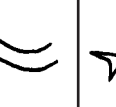
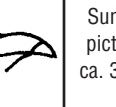






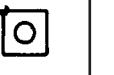
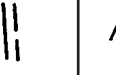
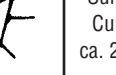

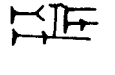





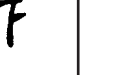
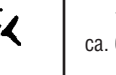
The Sumerian language is the oldest written language we have discovered. Clay tablets with Sumerian writing date to 3500 B.C. The Sumerians' first written marks were pictures of items used in daily life. These pictures stood for words or ideas and were called pictographs. The Sumerians used a stylus made from a sharpened reed to etch the pictographs into soft, moist clay. Later they extended the meanings of the pictures to stand for sounds and syllables, not just the objects themselves.

Over time pictographs changed into simplified wedge-shaped symbols that became known as cuneiform writing. Cuneiform contained about 600 different symbols and was used to express a wide variety of abstract ideas which the earlier pictographs could not do. The cuneiform system of writing was used throughout the Middle East for about 2,000 years for several different languages. Regardless of the source of the symbols, they vary in shape and size.

Look at the chart below which shows the evolution of Sumerian writing. In each column, the top pictograph dates from about 3000 B.C., the one below dates from about 2400 B.C., and the wedge-shaped writing dates to about 650 B.C. At the bottom is the meaning of the writing.

Use the chart and the point of your pencil to write a brief message on a flattened piece of soft clay. Choose either pictographs or cuneiform symbols to write your message. On a separate sheet of paper, write what you intend your message to convey. Have friends decode the message. Did your interpretations agree? If you made a mistake, "erase" your message in the clay, write it correctly, then let the clay tablet dry with the message on it.

									Sumerian pictographs ca. 3000 B.C.
									Sumerian Cuneiform ca. 2400 B.C.
									Assyrian form ca. 650 B.C.
eat	pig	bird	reed	head, voice, speak, word	orchard, to grow, to write	barley	day	cow	Meaning

									Sumerian pictographs ca. 3000 B.C.
									Sumerian Cuneiform ca. 2400 B.C.
									Assyrian form ca. 650 B.C.
walk, stand	donkey	ox	pot	hand, give	date- palm	well	water, seed, father, son	fish	Meaning

# Make a Modern Sumerian-Style Standard

Less than 150 years ago scholars did not know the Sumerians ever existed. When archaeologists began excavating in Mesopotamia, they were searching for the remains of another culture. During their search they also discovered writings and artifacts from the Sumerians.

One of the greatest discoveries was the Standard of Ur. A standard is often carried before a king or queen in a procession. Usually it is in the form of a flag. However, the Standard of Ur is a mosaic of two panels carried on poles—one depicted war, and the other depicted peace.

These panels tell us a great deal about the people of ancient Sumer—the division of labor, the social classes, and the roles of the military. Note on both panels below that the king is pictured prominently on the top layer. What do you think this means? Why do you think slaves are pictured on the bottom layer?

Imagine that future archaeologists are excavating to learn about your culture. Design a standard with three layers like that of the Standard of Ur. Who would be pictured to represent your civilization? Who would be pictured on the top layer? What would they be doing? Who would be pictured on the middle layer? The bottom layer?

Make your standard on a separate sheet of construction paper. Draw and color the standard, outlining each of the figures in black. Color the background and make between each layer designs appropriate for your culture. On the back of your standard, describe each layer. Who did you picture and why? Why did you choose the colors you used?

