

Your Mayan Name

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is for student to determine the how the Maya may have constructed their language.

Objectives: Students will identify Maya syllables that might correlate to their English names.

Background Information:

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

Materials:

- A copy of the Maya syllabary for each student. One is attached or they are available in several books such as Michael Coe's *Breaking the Maya Code* or on the internet. (A useful version is at www.halfmoon.org, along with directions for using the syllabary to write names.)
- A piece of paper for each student
- colored markers, pencils, or paint

Student Activity:

1. Have students break his or her name 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 the students match the syllables from their names to the syllabary.
3. The syllables are then combined into blocks to form word glyphs. Examples of word arrangements are:

ka	jo	ne	be	ve
te				li

4. Students write the letter on their paper in the order of their design.
5. Student cut out the syllabary glyphs that match the syllables in their name.
6. The students glue the glyphs on a sheet of paper. This is their Mayan name.

Yucatec Maya Pronunciation and Everyday Phrases

Written Mayan	Sounds Like
a	'ah' as in 'calm'
e	'eh' as in 'effort'
i	'ee' as in 'keen'
o	'oh' as in 'open'
oo	same sound as 'o' but held longer
u	'oo' as in 'moon'
x	'sh' as in 'bush'
<i>Some Everyday Mayan-English Phrases</i>	
<i>Mayan phrase</i>	<i>English phrase</i>
Bix a belex?	Hi, how are you?
Maloob	I'm fine, OK.
Yum botic	Thank you
Mixba	You're welcome
Tu'x ka binex?	Where are you going?
Kin bin tin nah	I'm going home
Koox tun	Let's get going