

The Story of Lord 8 Deer: A Mixtec Epic

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A WORD ON CREATIVE INSTRUCTION

Every year since I began teaching fourth grade in Texas, the number of state and district mandated testing days has increased. This year, my students will sit behind their manila folder blinders for a total of twenty-two full or half days of exams. Although I believe that teachers and administrators should be held accountable for implementing a successful education system and students should feel responsible for learning the content of the curriculum, I am skeptical that twenty-two days of testing are necessary to prove that my students are learning and that I am doing my job effectively. Many teachers, fearing low test scores or succumbing to administrative pressure, incorporate a large amount of test prep material into their classroom instruction in order to familiarize students with the specific kinds of questions they will see on the real exams. This means that, in many districts in the US, teachers not only lose close to a month of instructional time to the actual exams their students take, but also replace authentic learning experiences and meaningful student and teacher interaction with practice exams. This is an unfortunate consequence of the current trends in education.

As more importance is placed on the results of standardized exams, education becomes more one-sided. In the eyes of many, a student is learning only if he or she can select the right answer from A, B, C, or D, and a teacher is excellent only if he or she can get his students to score high marks on multiple choice exams. However, excellent teaching and an education that will produce curious and intelligent life-long learners must go far beyond raising standardized test scores. In this era of high-stakes testing, it is essential that we continue to create and provide students with exciting hands-on learning experiences that will capture their attention, spark their creativity, and lead them to a greater understanding of the world around them. This curriculum unit has been designed with these goals in mind.

ABSTRACT

In this social studies and writing unit, the students will interpret the Codex Zouche-Nuttall, one of several manuscripts written by Mixtec scribes in pre-Columbian Mexico approximately one and a half centuries before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. We will focus on the section of the Codex that chronicles the life of Lord 8 Deer, the founder of the Mixtec Empire. In order to read the Codex, the students will identify, classify, and interpret the drawings that make up this largely pictorial text. Then, through careful analysis, the story of Lord 8 Deer's rise to power will emerge. This work will provide students with a rare opportunity to investigate the culture of a pre-Columbian Mesoamerican civilization using a primary source. At the end of this unit, the students will retell the story in dramatic form to peers and other teachers during Hispanic Heritage Month in September. The students will also determine the reasons why the Mixtecs invented a system of recording information and how writing is useful for us today.

THE MIXTECS

The civilization that produced the Codex Nuttall is known as the Mixtecs. In the centuries that preceded the Spanish conquest, they ruled over the valley systems west of the present city of Oaxaca in Central Mexico (Coe and Koontz 176). Today their descendents, who populate the same region and still speak the ancient language of their ancestors, are still referred to as Mixtecs (Byland and Pohl 29).

At the time the codex Nuttall was written, the Mixtec rulers were in control of a large empire that they had acquired through conquest and the practice of marrying into the royal lines of other towns. The powerful Aztec empire tried to bring the Mixtecs under its hegemony, but the Mixtecs formed an alliance with their neighbors the Zapotecs and were not conquered (Coe and Koontz 181).

Artistic expression was apparently highly valued by the Mixtecs. They produced fine pieces of gold and turquoise jewelry, carved detailed engravings onto bone fragments, and shaped beautiful polychromatic pottery (Coe and Koontz 179). The Codex Nuttall and other codices produced by Mixtec scribes can certainly also be considered an example of artistic expression, although, these books also served the very important function of legitimizing claims to noble lineage (Boone 238, 239).

The Nuttall's Journey to the Present

The Codex Nuttall is one of several screen-fold books that were produced in central Mexico some time before the arrival of the Spanish (Miller ix). A screen-fold book has its pages attached end to end so that it can be unfolded to reveal half of its pages at one time. Its content is mostly made up of what resembles cartoon-like renderings of people and places. Friar Francisco de Burgoa, a colonial Spanish monk, wrote in 1674 that Mixtec nobles had many such books and that they were “accustomed to fasten these manuscripts along the length of the rooms of the lords for their aggrandizement and vanity...” (Pohl, FAMSI 1).

A great number of these books were destroyed during the colonial period: not only Mixtec codices but also those of other civilizations from the region such as the Maya and Aztecs. It was common practice for the Spanish to destroy these books as a means to acculturate the native populations of Mesoamerica, a term that refers to the region known today as Mexico and Central America, and to facilitate their conversion to Catholicism. Much of the knowledge these people possessed has been lost forever as a result of this practice.

Several of these codices were saved by curious collectors, Spanish colonial leaders, and clergymen who shipped the books back to Europe for investigation by the king of Spain and Vatican Church officials. Fernando Cortés himself sent two books back to Charles V in 1519 as a part of the famous “Moctezuma treasure” and some scholars believe that one of these books was the Codex Nuttall, though this cannot be proved (Anders, Jansen, Reyes García 18). The story of how each of these books made it to the modern era is unique.

Another Codex from Mesoamerica known as the Borgia is considered the most important manuscript of the Borgia group, a set of six pre-Columbian codices written in central Mexico by a group other than the Mixtec. After being shipped from Mexico to Italy during the Colonial period, it somehow became a plaything of servant children in a household in Rome before being discovered by Alexander Von Humboldt in 1805 (Byland xiii, xiv). These children were possibly responsible for partially burning several of the pages of this valuable document.

The Codex Nuttall had a similarly turbulent journey to the twentieth century. It was sent to Italy, possibly via Spain, during Mexico's colonial period. There, Church officials examined the book and found it of little interest. Sometime during the mid-nineteenth century, an Italian

nobleman presented the book to the Englishman Hon. Robert Carzon, also known as Baron Zouche (Miller x-xi). In 1898, Zelia Nuttall, working under the auspices of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology of Harvard University, first examined the manuscript at the British Museum where it is currently housed. She later had a facsimile copy produced and thus brought the screen-fold book to the attention of Mesoamerican scholars around the world (vii). In honor of her contribution, the Codex was named after Mrs. Nuttall. The book is often also referred to as the Codex Zouche-Nuttall.

After the Codex Nuttall resurfaced in the modern era, nearly half a century elapsed before scholars understood its content and identified the Mixtec civilization as its creator. At the turn of the twentieth century, Zelia Nuttall suggested that the Codex dealt with the lives and exploits of Aztec warriors (ix). We know now that this is incorrect. During the next five decades Mesoamerican scholars proposed many other theories about what civilization had produced the book and its content but none was accepted as definitive. Then, in a paper published in 1949, the Mexican scholar Alfonso Caso proved conclusively that the Codex Nuttall and the other Codices from this group provided genealogical and historical information of the rulers of two towns in pre-Columbian Mexico: Tilantongo and Teozacoalco, both located in the Mixtec-speaking region of the central Mexican state of Oaxaca (Smith 9). Caso's paper was universally accepted and has served as the foundation for all subsequent research on the Codex Nuttall and other Mixtec codices.

THE STYLE OF THE CODEX NUTTALL

The Codex Nuttall consists of eighty-four pages bound end to end. It can be opened accordion-style to reveal either the first forty-two pages or the last depending on which side is facing up. The pages are made of deerskin that has been covered with gesso, a type of plaster of paris, to create a smooth surface and then painted (Miller viii).

Mixtec scribes used pictures to tell the story of their people. The pages of the Codex Nuttall are covered with pictures that can be classified into three categories: people, places, and dates. People in the Codex are always depicted as full-bodied profiles and are not meant to resemble the actual person they represented (Pohl FAMSI 1). They are cartoon-like in appearance with heads disproportionately larger than bodies. Often they are drawn in a particular way to represent some action or event. For example, a picture in which two people are seated facing each other symbolizes marriage (Smith 55-56).

The places drawn in the Codex are usually hills, towns, or temples and, through extensive field research, archeologists have located several of these places in the valley systems around the city of Oaxaca, Mexico (Byland and Pohl 64-69). Some of these place pictures are qualified to convey further meaning. The scribe or scribes who created the Codex drew an arrow embedded in a hill to symbolize the conquest of a town. On one page, human feet were drawn at the bottom of a hill to indicate that a town was located at the foot of the hill (76).

When writing place names, Mixtec scribes often utilized phonetic substitutions for these names. "This generally took the form of rebus or 'puzzle writing' in which a concept difficult to picture is substituted by another sign of different meaning but identical or near-identical sound" (Coe and Koontz 177). An example of rebus writing from our own language would be the sentence "I saw Aunt Rose" represented in picture form by an eye, a tool used for cutting wood (saw), a six legged insect (ant), and a flower (rose). The use of this technique would help the reader to determine the names of some of the towns and places mentioned in the Codex.

The Mesoamerican calendar is used in the Codex to give the dates of important events. Calendar dates also appear next to the picture of most people in the Codex. In pre-Columbian

Mixtec society, a person's birthday served as his actual name. Usually, a date that appears next to a person is his or her name (Pohl FAMS I 2).

A detailed and age-appropriate guide to reading and understanding the Codex Nuttall can be found in Appendix A at the end of this publication.

BORROWERS OF IDEAS

Civilizations in Mesoamerica evolved through similar stages as other civilizations throughout the world (Coe and Koontz 43). Groups shared, borrowed, or stole ideas and technology from one another and incorporated them into their way of life often changing or improving them in the process. Many beliefs, scientific notions, farming techniques, and other cultural aspects were shared by different groups of this region.

One example of this is the Mesoamerican calendar, which is used extensively in the Codex Nuttall. The structure of this 260-day calendar has been used throughout Mesoamerica for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. No one is sure exactly when or by whom the system of thirteen-numbers and twenty-day signs was established, but it was certainly long before the Mixtec rose to power. The earliest record of its use was found on a stone carving at a dig site in Chiapas, Mexico and depicts the date 8 December 36 BC (Coe and Koontz 79).

Other components of the Mixtec writing system appear to have been borrowed from neighboring Mesoamerican groups. In the Codex the pictures in profile of people are a typical style of rendering human subjects in the region, and similar images have been discovered on the stone ruins of towns and temples of other civilizations throughout Mesoamerica (94).

Evidence of rebus writing has been discovered close to the Mixtec region at the ruined city of Monte Albán located east of the Mixtec valleys in the neighboring Zapotec region. These stone carvings date from between 150 BC and 150 AD: a long time before the Mixtec codices were written. Since other groups in the region practiced rebus writing, the Mixtecs probably borrowed the idea and adapted it to suit their own needs (177). Though this unit does not focus on the transfer of technology from one civilization to another, that could be the subject of a social studies unit for older students.

ORAL PERFORMANCES

Although it also depicts the religious ceremonies and creation myths of the Mixtec (Carmack, Gasco, and Gossen 416), the Codex Nuttall primarily deals with the life and exploits of the ruling nobility. On its pages, one can find pictures that depict the births, deaths, marriages, wars, conquests, and alliances of the elite class.

By chronicling the dynastic lineage of Mixtec rulers, the Codex served a very important function within Mixtec society: it could be used to legitimize an individual's claim to the ruling class. In other words, if a person's ancestors appeared on the pages of these books, he had the right to rule. These books were unfolded and displayed for the nobility during special ceremonies and feasts, and trained singers retold the story depicted on the pages (Pohl FAMS I 2).

These oral performances were the way in which the Mixtec codices were read. Unlike our system of writing, which conveys literal word for word meaning and can be read by any literate person on his or her own, the Mixtec system "provided a model or key – widely varying in its degree of detail and specificity that the speaker interpreted orally" (Carmack, Gasco, and Gossen, 406). These books were used as a kind of storyboard for trained singers who performed the books for gatherings of nobles and rulers. Like the scribes who produced the Mixtec codices, the singers who performed them attended years of training at special schools.

LORD 8 DEER “BLOODY JAGUAR CLAW”

The saga of Lord 8 Deer is a classic tale of an ambitious ruler willing to expand his realm by any means available. Born the son of a priest, 8 Deer was not destined to become even a minor ruler (Boone 241), but through his determination and strength and the help of the gods, he became the greatest and most powerful warlord in this civilization’s recorded history.

The story begins as Lord 8 Deer meets with Lady 9 Grass, a witch and guardian of the Temple of Death. In exchange for power and glory he offers his soul to her. His wish is granted, and he begins a very successful military campaign to bring other towns in the region under his control. Periodically, he takes a break from the conquest to make alliances or to dress as a priest and make offerings to the gods in thanks for his victories in battle.

Eventually, 8 Deer’s conquests lead him so far from home that he enters the Other World or the realm of the gods. There, he meets the Sun God and presents him with offerings of jade and gold. The Sun God, in turn, offers Lord 8 Deer a sword that serves to legitimize his newly formed empire. Lord 8 Deer returns to his home and shortly thereafter his half-brother, 12 Movement, is assassinated. The story in the Nuttall ends as Lord 8 Deer avenges his brother’s death by sacrificing nobles from a rival town who may have been responsible for 12 Movement’s death (Anders, Jansen, Reyes García, 177-179).

The correct reading and understanding of the story of Lord 8 Deer is a great challenge and will require diligent effort by the students. By reading and carefully analyzing this story, the students will be able to develop many of the fourth grade skills included in the social studies and language arts curriculum.

UNIT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

This unit has been designed to target several of the fourth grade social studies objectives described in the Houston Independent School District’s (HISD) curriculum. These objectives can be categorized into two groups: one, information analysis and two, a cultural study of a pre-Columbian Native American civilization.

According to the social studies curriculum, students in fourth grade should learn to use “a variety of sources to acquire information.” Once this information has been gathered, students will organize it using “such skills as sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause and effect relationships, and comparing and contrasting. The analysis of information focuses on identifying the main idea, summarization, making generalizations, drawing inferences and making predictions, and drawing conclusions.” Further, “the students will differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources of information” (*Project CLEAR*, Unit 2: Being a Historian).

The central activity of this unit is for the students to retell the story of Lord 8 Deer as it appears in the Codex Nuttall. This will be done in a similar format to the way in which the Mixtec singers performed the story. The students will select the pictures from the Codex that depict the main events in the life of Lord 8 Deer and paint a larger version of each picture. The students will retell the story of Lord 8 Deer in dramatic form for the student body during Hispanic Heritage Month in October. The pictures will serve as the scenery for our play and as a visual prompt for the students as they tell the story.

The students will be limited to choosing a maximum of 10 pictures from the Codex to tell the story of Lord 8 Deer. This will challenge students to employ a variety of strategies to interpret the text and determine which pictures depict the main events in story. Pages forty-two through eighty-four of the Codex chronicle the life of Lord 8 Deer. In the interests of efficient use of time, I will only use approximately half of the pages of this section. I will select the pages we

will use based on whether or not they contain a significant event of the story. Even with this reduction in material, the students will face the daunting task of identifying 10 main idea pictures from the more than 200 that appear on the selected pages.

The students will organize the information from the story using skills such as sequencing, categorizing, and identifying cause and effect relationships. Students will then form groups of two and will be assigned a section of the Codex to analyze. The students will identify the main idea of their assigned section and will select the picture that best depicts it. Finally, the students will write a narrative to accompany the picture they have selected, which they will later read to the audience during the presentation.

The history section of the fourth grade social studies curriculum states that students will “identify Native American groups in Texas and the Western Hemisphere before European exploration,” and “compare and contrast lifestyles of Native American culture groups in pre-Colombian Texas and the Western Hemisphere.” (*Project CLEAR*).

As the students read and analyze the Codex, they will learn about the Mixtec way of life. The Codex contains information on Mixtec religious practices, social organization, dress, warfare, marriage, and the Mesoamerican calendar. The students will deepen their knowledge of Mixtec culture by creating costumes and replicas of artifacts based on the pictures in the Codex to wear and use for their dramatic performance. The use of a Mixtec primary source to learn about their way of life can be a valuable experience and a unique way to gather information.

The students will use their social studies textbooks to read about several Native American groups that lived in Texas before the arrival of the Spanish, and they will compare and contrast the way of life of these people to that of the Mixtec.

This unit will also target several objectives of the District’s fourth grade language arts curriculum. While preparing for their dramatic interpretation, the students will “select and use objects, pictures, and other visuals to enhance an oral presentation” and “use props, costumes, and other materials to enhance dramatic presentations” (*Project CLEAR*, Unit 1: Author study.)

In fourth grade, students are expected to “read widely from texts representing fiction and non-fiction genres including: biographies, personal narratives, fictional narratives, historical fiction, fables, folktales, and plays.” (*Project CLEAR*, Language Arts Curriculum, Objective ELA.R.4.02.c.) The story of Lord 8 Deer is an epic, and though the curriculum does not include this genre in its list, the students will study its definition and compare and contrast it to the other genres that we will study during the school year.

While writing the narrative that will accompany the main idea picture they have selected, the students will also go through the steps of the writing process, which is a major objective of the language arts writing curriculum. These steps include: develop drafts, revise selected drafts, edit drafts for specific purposes, proofread one’s own writing and that of peers, and publish final drafts. (*Project CLEAR*, Objectives: ELA.W.4.05.b, c, d, and e).

STUDENT BENEFITS

During this unit, the students will develop many of the important skills that are listed as objectives in the fourth grade curriculum for HISD. Nevertheless, covering curriculum objectives is not the only reason I wish to teach this unit in my class. I believe the subject and goals of this unit are of special relevance and importance to my students based on my knowledge of their home culture and personal observations of their specific needs.

Our study of the Codex Nuttall is particularly appropriate due to the cultural connection it has to my students, all of whom are either immigrants or the children of immigrants from Mexico or Central America. Many of my students maintain strong cultural ties to their or their parents’

country of origin. They often return in the summer to visit relatives. The Codex is a part of Mesoamerica's vast and fascinating history. In the past, my students have always shown a keen interest whenever we have studied a subject related to Mexico and Central America. And so, long before they read *Beowulf*, *Ivanhoe*, *El Cid*, or *The Odyssey*, my students' first experience of reading an epic will be of a warrior who conquered part of the land that many of them consider their first home.

Finally, I believe this curriculum will be beneficial for my students based on my own observations during the three years that I have worked as a fourth grade teacher in HISD. During the development of this unit, my students will have an opportunity to practice the craft of oral storytelling, an essential skill to becoming a good writer.

Unfortunately, many of my students live in households in which parents either do not have or do not make the time to talk to their children. This has a significantly negative impact on their development as writers. As parents talk to their children and ask simple questions like "How was your day?" or "What happened at school today?" children learn to explain events clearly. Parents give further guidance on how to be effective storytellers when they ask their children questions that help them stay focused on important events instead of simply listing details and probe for useful missing information to complete a story. Through this process, children gradually develop the ability to tell a story without much listener intervention and later this skill serves as the foundation for their development as writers. However, many of my students do not develop their oral storytelling ability before coming to school and, therefore, find it difficult to express themselves clearly and fully in their writing. For this reason, we will practice telling and retelling the story of Lord 8 Deer focusing on explaining the main events clearly and in the proper sequence.

Our study of the Codex will also provide an opportunity to reflect on the reasons for the development of writing systems in ancient civilizations. As we read the text in class, I will ask students to consider why the Mixtecs invested such a considerable amount of human and material resources to produce these books and the advantages recording this genealogical and cultural information in written form had over recording it orally.

The students will also explore the roles writing plays in our own society and in our own lives. It is a typical reaction of students to groan and ask, "Why do we have to do this?" when a teacher introduces an activity to the class. That groan can be especially loud when a teacher introduces a writing activity. This makes sense, as writing requires a lot of work. By discussing the reasons why writing was invented in the first place and several important applications that writing has in our modern world, I hope my students will begin to view writing as an important tool rather than a tedious chore.

FINDING RESOURCES

Naturally, it would be impossible to teach this unit without acquiring a copy of the Codex Nuttall. Dover Publications Inc. has published Zelia Nuttall's full-color facsimile of the original document, and it is relatively easy to purchase this inexpensive paperback online. Large public libraries and university libraries may carry the *Codice Zouche-Nuttall*. This resource includes a full-color photographic reproduction of the actual Nuttall and its pages are attached end to end just like the original. Displaying this resource in class could help students visualize how the Nuttall was meant to be viewed and read by the Mixtec. Also included in this publication is a book that explains each picture of the Codex and a black and white copy of each page of the Nuttall. These pages can be photocopied and used in class as consumables by students.

As previously mentioned, two fellows from this seminar and I have produced a manual for interpreting the Codex Nuttall, which can be found in Appendix A at the end of this publication.

Our goal was to create a resource that would explain the format and the content of the Nuttall in clear and simple language that students will easily understand. We hope this will make the story of Lord 8 Deer more accessible to teachers and students.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson One: What's the Big Idea?

Lesson Objective

The students will determine the main idea of a section of the Codex Nuttall by organizing events in terms of cause and effect and order of importance.

Materials Needed

- A copy of the important sections of the Codex Nuttall that chronicle the life of Lord 8 Deer posted on the wall in the correct sequence
- Pencils
- Paper

Previous Work

This lesson will be taught after students have been introduced to the story of Lord 8 Deer. At the beginning of this unit, each student will receive a black and white copy of a page of the Codex. I will show students several examples of full-color pages and the students will then color in their black and white pages. The goal of this activity is to allow the students to familiarize themselves with the pictures in the Codex. After the students have completed their pages, we will hang them up on the wall in the correct sequence.

We will use the posted copy of the Codex to tell the story of Lord 8 Deer. First, I will tell the story in its entirety pointing to pictures on the wall to illustrate the events. Eventually, the students will take over the story telling. This will begin as I ask them to recall the events on the pages of the Codex and as we practice telling the story over and over again, committing the important events to memory, the students will be responsible for describing more of the events in the story. This process will take several days to accomplish, and it will be complete when the students are able to describe the events taking place on the pages of the Codex with little or no intervention. Once the students reach this level of comprehension, they will be able to accomplish the objective of this lesson.

Procedure

I will state that today we will work to determine the main events of the story of Lord 8 Deer by listing the events and then selecting the most important one as the main event. To introduce this concept, I will ask the student to list orally some of the things they will do during this week. All responses will be accepted. I will then list two of the activities the students had mentioned and then ask students to determine which is the more important of the two. For example, I may say 'go to the dentist' and 'eat dinner' as two activities. The students will likely decide that 'go to the dentist' is the more important event as it does not happen everyday. I will assist students if they struggle to give appropriate reasons.

I will display a picture of the busy kitchen of a restaurant for the students. This cartoon-style picture depicts several related events: a pot boils over, two cooks both point at the pot and yell at each other, a waiter rushes through the out door with a tray of food, the sink is full of dirty dishes, a radio plays in the back, a young man dressed in street clothes holds a help wanted sign and speaks with a worried looking cook.

I will ask students to describe what is going on in the picture. As students describe different events, I will list them on the overhead projector or on the blackboard. Once several events have been listed, I will ask the students to think about what is the most important event in the picture. I will facilitate this discussion with guiding questions. To determine the main event in the picture, the students will interpret the relationships between the events depicted. The main event will be the one that is directly related to all of the other events in the picture. Eventually, the students will determine that the picture of the young man applying for a job is the main event of the picture because all of the other events in the picture – the arguing cooks, the pot boiling over, and the dirty dishes – are the result of there not being enough help in the kitchen.

I will then distribute a card with a number on it to each student. The numbers are from one to ten and correspond to numbers that have been previously placed over the posted pages of the Codex Nuttall. Each number has been listed on two separate cards. I will tell students to stand up, take a piece of paper and a pencil, and stand under the pages of the Codex with their number.

I will explain to the students that now their task is to list all of the events they can see on the pages of the Codex they have been assigned. The students will have to come up with a minimum of six events within the time limit of ten minutes. I will circulate the room and assist students who appear to be having difficulty while the students complete this activity. Once the ten minutes are up, the students will be given an additional ten minutes to discuss the relationship of the events they have written down, determine the main event of their assigned pages, and select the picture that best represents this important event. As before, the teacher will work with groups that cannot agree or are unsure.

Once all of the groups have completed this activity, the students will circle the picture they have determined to be the main event of their section, and they will share their decision with the rest of the class. Following this work, in subsequent lessons, the students will paint a larger version of the picture they have selected and write a narrative to describe the important event they have chosen.

Lesson Two: Names and dates in the Codex

Lesson Objectives

The students will distinguish between dates of important events and the names of people in the Codex Nuttall. The students will interpret the Mesoamerican calendar to properly name dates and names listed in the Codex Nuttall.

Materials Needed

- Copy of the Codex Nuttall posted on the wall
- Overhead transparency of the Mesoamerican calendar (located in the Manual), Gregorian calendar month of February, two pages from the Codex Nuttall
- Photocopies of Mesoamerican calendar
- 5 X 7 blank index Cards
- Pencils
- Crayons

Sequence

When the students read the Codex Nuttall, they will do so in the same way it was read by the Mixtec themselves: as an oral performance. I will model this performance several times for the students, and gradually as they become familiar with the story, they will take over the responsibility of telling it themselves. I will also teach the students how to interpret the more complex aspects of Mixtec picture writing. In this lesson, I will show students how to determine whether a picture of a date in the Codex is really a date on which an event occurred or the name

of a person. This lesson will be taught after I have introduced the students to the story of Lord 8 Deer and instructed them on the structure of the Mesoamerican calendar.

Procedure

I will begin this lesson by placing a transparency of the Mesoamerican calendar on the overhead projector. We will review quickly that the Mixtecs did not use the same calendar as we do, but rather one that employed a system of numbers and names. I will ask several volunteers to invent some dates on this calendar by combining a number from the left side of the calendar with one of the names from the right side.

I will then explain that the Mixtecs considered their calendar to be so important that a person's name was actually the day on which he was born. I will then place a transparency of the Gregorian calendar month of February on the overhead and explain that if we used the same system and you were born on February fifteenth, your friends and family would refer to you as February fifteenth. I will ask the students to imagine for a moment that we used the same system and to think what their names would be. For example, I was born on November twenty-ninth and so if we named people the way the Mixtec did, my name would be November twenty-ninth. I will then ask the students to state what their name would be if we used the Mixtec system.

Despite the dual role the calendar plays in the Codex, determining whether a date is actually the date of an event or the name of a person is generally simple. With a few exceptions, if a calendar date is close to a person, it is his or her name, and if it is close to a place, it refers to the date on which something important happened there. I will place a transparency copy of a page of the Codex Nuttall on the overhead and point out several examples of dates and names to the students. I will then ask students to identify names and dates on a second transparency page.

Once the students have shown that they are able to correctly identify names of people on the pages of the Codex, I will introduce the following activity. Each student will create a Mixtec action card that depicts a person from the Codex. I will post the following instructions on the board:

1. Find a picture of a person in the Codex that you would like to draw.
2. Draw this person on one side of your index card using a pencil and crayons.
3. Draw the name of this person as it appears in the Codex.
4. Use your copy of the Mixtec calendar to write the name of this person in English.

I will then distribute the materials that the students need to complete the activity, tell them that they have one half-hour to complete the activity, and allow students to move to the part of the room where the Codex is posted. Once the students have completed their action cards, the students will share their work with the class.

Lesson 3: Why We Write

Objective

The students will describe several situations in which writing serves a useful function.

Materials Needed

- Play money in the amount of \$200.00. Bills should be a mixture of ones, fives, tens, and twenties.
- 10 3X5 cards

Procedure

I will explain to the students that we are going to play a short memory game. I will choose a student volunteer to play the role of a wealthy person and give him \$200.00 in play money. I will

explain to the wealthy students that he is a really nice guy who is always willing to help his friends, which is a lucky thing for all of them because they never have any money. Next, I will distribute 10 index cards to random students in the class. Each card will have an amount of money written on it. I will explain to the class that when I call on a student with a card, he or she will walk up to the wealthy student and ask to borrow the amount of money written on the card. The wealthy student will loan the money and try to remember the names of the borrowers and the amount of each loan.

One by one, the students will come up and ask to borrow money. After each student returns to his or her seat, I will ask the wealthy student to recall to whom he has given out money and how much was each loan. Eventually, as more and more students come up, the wealthy student will no longer be able to keep track of all of his loans. If the students seem to enjoy the activity I will choose another student to play the role of the lender and we will play the game again.

At the end of this activity, I will ask the class how the wealthy student could have kept track of his loans. I expect them to determine that it would be easy to do this by recording the transactions on paper. I will then ask the class to brainstorm situations in which writing is used to record important information. We will discuss several examples they will give. To conclude this lesson, we will record the reason illustrated today on a poster titled 'Why we write.' Future lessons will demonstrate other ways in which writing is useful to us.

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