

Hands-On History Fun

Create-A-Craft:

Playing with Cuneiform

Cuneiform was the style of writing the Assyrians used. The symbols, or characters, in cuneiform were wedge-shaped—broad at one point and pointed at the other.

To make a cuneiform letter, begin with creating the “clay” so you can have something to imprint. Here is a great recipe for making a salt dough clay:

You will need: 1 cup flour; 1 Tbsp. oil; 1 cup dark tea water (use plain water if you wish to color the dough with food coloring); ½ cup salt; 2 tsp. cream of tartar

Combine the ingredients in a large saucepan. Stir constantly over a medium heat, using a wooden spoon. Keep stirring! Eventually, the watery soup will turn into a thick mixture which

can be formed into a ball. You will need to knead this ball several times even though it is very hot. (Put the leftover dough in a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator.)

Make a ball of clay, then roll it out to about ½ inch thickness. Cuneiform was usually inscribed on rectangles, so carefully trim the edges until you have a rectangle. Next, using a table knife (not a sharp knife!) make wedges in the clay. You may want to use some of the symbols listed here, or you may want to create your very own. After you are finished, let the cuneiform tablets air-dry.

Did you know that when the royal library at Nineveh was discovered, archaeologists found more than thirty-thousand “books”? Each one of these “books” was in the form of cuneiform tablets!



mountain



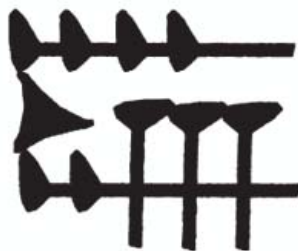
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