Understanding the Aztec Codex

Mr. Ralston | Social Studies 8
What is a Codex?

- Basically it is a book.
- Found in many different cultures.
- Aztec used pictograms (pictures) to tell their story.
- Aztec wrote on fig bark (amatl)
- Usually colourful but not always
Take 5 minutes to examine this codex. What do you think it is about?
The Boturini Codex

- Tells the story of how the Mexica left Aztlan because they had offended their main god, Huitzilopochtli, by cutting down a forbidden tree.
- They were forced to wander until their god told them where to settle.
Now that you know the story what do you think the symbols represent?
THE BOTURINI CODEX

- Pictorial in nature, it tells the story of the legendary Aztec journey from Aztlán to the Valley of Mexico.
- Rather than employing separate pages, the author used one long sheet of amatl, or fig bark, accordion-folded into 21½ pages.
- There is a rip in the middle of the 22nd page, and it is unclear whether the author intended the manuscript to end at that point or not.
- Unlike many other Aztec codices, the drawings are not colored, but rather merely outlined with black.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boturini_Codex
Then they moved on to Chapultepec.

"Grasshopper Mountain, the mountain that issued fresh water into the salty lake.

Refers to Time
These were the years they lived in Chapultepec:

In Year 2-Reed they celebrated New Fire in Chapultepec.

The people around Chapultepec made war on them.

They were defeated and sought refuge on Acolco Island, "Place of Twisted Water." Dressed in grass and weeds they wept among the reeds.
For two years most of the people were outlaws:

Chimalmaxochitl, "Water Plant with Shield Petals" and her father, Huitzilihuitl, "Hummingbird Feather" were captured by their enemies and brought before Coxcoxtli, "Pheasant Lord," King of Colhuacan, "Bent Mountain."

They made slaves of those they captured; they stayed in Contitlan, "Place of Jugs." for two years:

Year
3-Flint
&
Year
4-House

5-Rabbit
&
6-Reed
He told them that they must bring him the ears from the Xochimilcans.

They asked for weapons. Coxcoxtli refused them. They agreed among themselves to go anyway. They gathered many ears from the Xochimilcans.

Coxcoxtli offered them freedom if they fought for him in this war.

But Colhuacan declared war on Xochimilco, "Place of Flowers."

Some were sacrificed at Colhuacan.

The Mexica went forth, in bands, with glass knives and war cries, ready to conquer the world.
Explanation using Written Text

- **Page 18**
  
  [http://www.thing.net/~grist/ld/bot/bot18-3.htm](http://www.thing.net/~grist/ld/bot/bot18-3.htm)

- **Page 19**
  

- **Page 20**
  

- **Page 21 & 22**
  
The Class Codex

- 10 clear pictograms (colored) that depict important events in your life

- 2-3 sentences explaining what is happening in your pictogram
The Class Codex
The codex we have examined gives us a glimpse of how the Aztec got to where they were.

How did you get to where you are today?
Assignment

- Create a codex explaining major events in your life and how you arrived to where you are today.

Criteria:

- Your codex should be colourful.
- Contain all pictograms
- Use a variety of symbols
- Represent at least 10 major events in your life.
- In addition you must include a small write up explaining each section of your codex.
Rubric

Symbols (x2)

4 at least 10 symbols. Symbols are expertly clear, distinct and relevant to each event.

3 at least 10 symbols. Symbols are generally clear and relevant to each event.

2 at least 8 symbols somewhat clear but there is some guessing as to the relevancy of the event.

1 less then 8 symbols or the symbols used are too vague and there is much guessing as to the relevancy of each event.
Rubric

Written x1

- **4** Reader is enlightened by the write up and can clearly understand the connection between event and symbol.
- **3** Reader can understand the general connection between event and symbol.
- **2** Reader understands connection but assumption is needed to make larger connection.
- **1** Writing further confuses reader. Reader is left with more questions than understanding.