





**Neolithic carved tool, 16,000–9,000 BCE**



**Venus of Willendorf, 22,000–20,000 BCE**



























**Cave painting, Altamira, Spain, 16,000–9,000 BCE**



**Painted stones, Mas-d'Azil, France 10,000 BCE**  
**Earliest remains of systematic mark-making.**  
**May be representations of things, but not a language.**



**Small clay tokens were used for recording business transactions in an agricultural society. Differentiated by shape and inscribed with distinct markings. The shapes corresponded to a different category of agricultural products.**

MEANING		OUTLINE CHARACTER, B. C. 3500	ARCHAIC CUNEIFORM, B. C. 2500	ASSYRIAN, B. C. 700	LATE BABYLONIAN, B. C. 500
1.	The sun				
2.	God, heaven				
3.	Mountain				
4.	Man				
5.	Ox				
6.	Fish				



**Cuneiform is a system of writing first developed by the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia c. 3500-3000 BCE.**



**Connections between the Egyptian writing system, Hieroglyphs, and those of the ancient Near East are still debated.**



**What symbols, signs, or images do you recognize in society today?**

**Do they represent (idea/feeling) or communicate (social exchange)?**

**Oral communication takes place in real-time circumstances that rely on presence.**

**Writing communicates in the absence of its author.**

**Many things said in speech cannot be represented in writing and vice versa.**

**What is the written equivalent of an ironic inflection? A whisper? A seductive tone of voice?**

**What is the spoken equivalent of a hyphen? Or a decorative initial? Or a sans serif face? Or the division of text into two columns on a page?**

**How did symbols become a rudimentary form of language?**

**From the practice of continually representing four oxen, four sacks of grain, or four containers of oil came the idea that four could be represented by a sign.**

**What do you think a sign would look like when representing an abstract idea (four-ness) rather than a thing?**