AWESOME stories

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This image depicts an example of Olmec glyphs. Scholars believe that Olmec writing, via glyphs like these, may have been the first writing system in the New World. Image online via <u>Mesoamericas</u>.

In 1862—when Abraham Lincoln was president and the *Resolute* was still owned by the Royal Navy—a man named Jose Maria Melgar discovered something unusual in Mexico's Gulf-coast-state of <u>Veracruz</u>.

What he found—the statue of a colossal head—would provide scholars with important clues about early civilization in the Americas.

About sixty years later, someone else found another giant head. What did the statues depict? Who had created them?

Before these discoveries, historians believed that <u>Mayans</u> were the first people in the area. But <u>the statues</u> had interesting facial features which differed from Mayan art. Experts pondered why.

Other artifacts, found in the same <u>general area</u>, were also inconsistent with Mayan work. Some were carvings of a beast which was <u>half-jaguar</u> and half-man. <u>Who was this</u>?

Marshall Saville, director of New York's <u>Museum of the American Indian</u>, weighed the evidence and determined (in 1929) that the findings were created by a previously unknown people. <u>Hermann Beyer</u> had reached the same conclusion two years earlier.

They named the <u>civilization</u> Olmec, <u>meaning</u> "those who live in the land of rubber" in <u>Nahuatl</u> (the ancient language of the Aztecs). Both believed this civilization, and its <u>area of influence</u>, predated the Mayans.

Studies <u>continued</u> and more <u>discoveries</u> were made in the Mexican towns of <u>San Lorenzo</u> and La Venta. The tallest head, found to date, is over eleven feet.

<u>Experts</u> now <u>believe</u> that the Olmec civilization was the first complex society in Mesoamerica. It <u>may</u> have started about 1500 B.C., flourished between 1200 B.C. and 300 B.C.—then <u>disappeared</u>. No one knows why.

<u>Archaeological digs</u> and discoveries also reveal the Olmecs had a <u>written form</u> of communication. Using a type of hieroglyphics—referred to as Olmec glyphs—<u>they created</u> what are "believed to be the <u>earliest form of</u> <u>writing</u> ever found in the New World."

The problem, however, is that scholars—such as Dr. Mary Pohl from Florida State University—<u>do not</u> yet fully <u>understand</u> the <u>writings</u>. (The audio clips are from NPR.)

So ... given that the <u>Olmec civilization</u> flourished in the warm climate of Gulf-coast Mexico, could a connection exist between the Olmecs and Native Americans who lived in the area we know as South Dakota?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/OLMEC-GLYPHS-National-Treasure-Book-of-Secrets

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

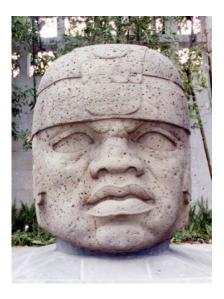
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/OLMEC-GLYPHS-National-Treasure-Book-of-Secrets

Media Stream



OLMEC GLYPHS





Veracruz - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy the <u>tips4mexico.com</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Veracruz-Map-Locator</u>

<u>Veracruz - Colosal Head</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY-SA 3.0. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Veracruz-Colosal-Head</u>



Evidence of Olmec Writing Image online, courtesy the <u>nsf.gov</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Evidence-of-Olmec-Writing</u>



Half-Jaguar Statue Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. License: CC BY 2.0. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Half-Jaguar-Statue</u>



Olmec sites or sites with Olmec influence 9. Monte Albán 1 1. Tlatilco 10. El Viejón 1 2. Cuicuíto 11. La Mójarra 2 3. Chalcatzingo 12. Tres Zapotes 2 4. Texpa 3. San Lorenzo 2 6. Olinalá 15. La Venta 2 7. Oxotitlán 16. El Manatí 2 9. Lux Bercas 17. Balancín 2

n 18. Chiapa de C 19. Xoc 20. Pijijiapan s 21. Izapa o 22. Abaj Takalik 23. Monte Alto 24. Chalchuapa

Olmec Areas of Influence - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy the Alternative Archaeology website. View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Olmec-Areas-of-Influence-Map-Locator

Olmec Artifact

Image online, courtesy the <u>crystalinks.com</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Olmec-Artifact</u>

Olmec Head - San Lorenzo Image online, courtesy the <u>latinamericanstudies.org</u> website. PD View this asset at:

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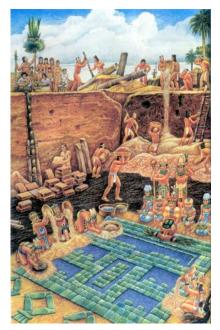


<u>Olmec Sites - Map Locator</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Olmec-Sites-Map-Locator</u>



Olmec Statue

Image online, courtesy the <u>latinamericanstudies.org</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Olmec-Statue</u>



Recreation of Olmec Civilization

Image online, courtesy the <u>latinamericanstudies.org</u> website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Recreation-of-Olmec-Civilization</u>

Tuxtua Mountain of Zapotes Mexico Sam Marin Laguna de los Cerros Lano del Jicaro La Venta	0.0
Laguna de los Cerros Llaro del Jicaro	- Ch
	San Andrés
Miles Tencchtildan Km 25 San Lorenzo & Porero Nuevo El Azuzul • e El Manati Las Limas	Sonso

San Lorenzo - Map Locator

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