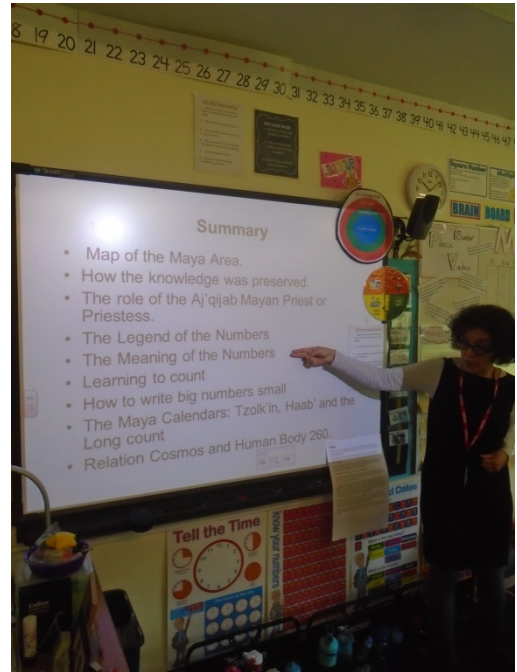
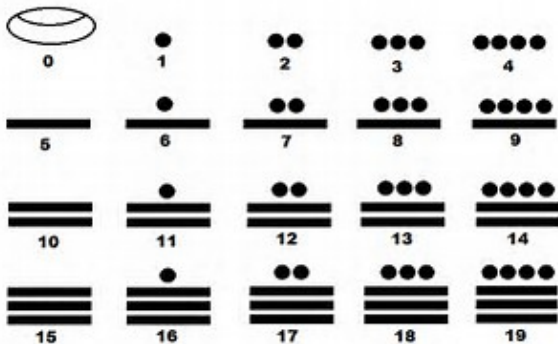


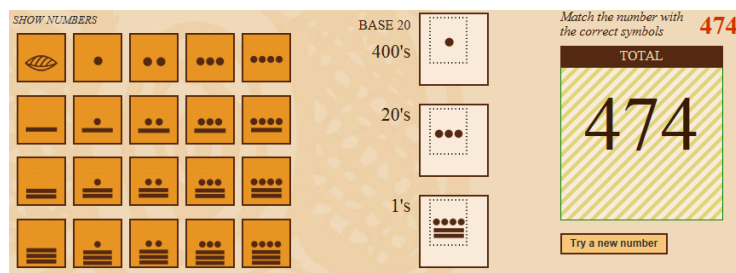
## A Universe of Numbers - The Maya

Year 5 were incredibly lucky to have a parent, Giovanna Miralles de Wilkin, come in to talk to us about the Maya: "A universe of numbers". She is an expert in the Maya sacred calendar and she told us just how key numbers were to the Maya.

She told us that they believed that before the universe existed there were numbers. Number one opened himself up and everything was created. Number two decided that things should be in twos, in pairs: night and day, male and female etc. The other numbers all had a role to play. What a great legend.



We also learned about their number system. We use the decimal or base-10 system. The Mayans used the base-20 system: numbers are written in units of 1s, 20s, 400s, 8,000s, and so on. This system developed from the fact that humans have 10 fingers and 10 toes. This means that 19 is the largest "digit" you can put in a "column". "Columns" are written above each other. (have a look at the picture below)



This system allows very large numbers to be written – and long periods of time to be recorded – and makes complex maths possible. We learned that the Mayans had the concept of zero. It looked like a closed eye – because at night you enter the world of the unknown where things are possible. We used a great website to practice writing numbers in their system.

<http://maya.nmai.si.edu/maya-sun/maya-math-game>. Then we had a go ourselves:

