Yugambeh Nation

Name: _____

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Totems and Coats of Arms

Have you ever thought about the connections between Totemism and Heraldry? Many social scientists believe heraldic symbols have their source in ancient European totemism.

Totems are very important to Aboriginal people for a variety of social, spiritual, and economic reasons. As opposed to European Heraldry, where Coats of Arms were reserved for nobility, all members of an Aboriginal group had totems.

Aboriginal Totemism and European Heraldry share many common features, at their core they both *show people who you and your family are*. While heraldry focuses mainly on patrilineal associations, Aboriginal totemism is more complex with matrilineal, patrilineal, and ambilineal associations taken into account. Just as in heraldry how particular designs are owned by certain families, particular totems belong to certain families.

Compare

	European heraldry	Aboriginal totemism
Who has them?		
What do they show?		
How are they passed down?		
Who owns them?		

Words to know. *Patrilineal*: through the father's line. *Matrilineal*: through the mother's line. *Ambilineal*: through either line.

Questions

1. What do many social scientists believe about where heraldic symbols came from?

2. Why does the Reading say Aboriginal totemism is "more complex" than heraldry?