

Out of the Starry Night They Came-Aztec, Inca, and Mayan Myths

Grade Level: First Grade

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Length of Unit: Ten Lessons

I. Abstract:

This unit will explore Aztec, Inca, and Mayan mythology. The stories are a vehicle through which much can be learned about the history of these first American civilizations. Students will gain familiarity with them through a variety of media to accommodate various learning styles.

II. Overview:

A. Concept Objectives: Develop an awareness of the first American civilizations by responding to literature in a variety of ways.

B. Content:

1. Maya in Mexico and Central America
2. Aztecs in Mexico
 - a. Montezuma
 - b. Tenochtitlan (Mexico City)
3. Incas in South America (Peru, Chile)
 - a. Cities in the Andes Mountains

C. Skills:

1. Map Skills
2. Count and order to 50
3. Estimate and compare
4. Participation in group games
5. Coordinate motor activity to carry out a goal
6. Sequence a story or a series of events
7. Recall details from stories
8. Compare and contrast writing
9. Use calendars to identify days, weeks, and months
10. Create a representational work
11. Listen for specific details

III. Background Knowledge:

A. Teachers:

1. Reader's Digest. *The World's Last Mysteries*. New York: Reader's Digest Association, 1978.
2. Millard, Anne. *The Incas*. New York: Warwick Press, 1980.
3. Odijk, Pamela. *The Ancient World, The Aztecs*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1989.
4. Odijk, Pamela. *The Ancient World, The Mayas*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1989.

B. Students:

1. Maps and globes: what they represent, how we use them
2. Lakes and mountains: what they are and how they are represented on maps and globes
3. Location of the seven continents on a map and globe
4. Understanding the meaning of an ancient civilization
5. Prior knowledge of pyramids, nature gods, and picture writing of Ancient Egypt

IV. Resources:

Literature Selections:

1. *People of Corn*
2. *Rain Player*
3. *Song of the Chirimia*
4. *The Mouse Bride*
5. *Musicians of the Sun*
6. *Flame of Peace*
7. *Miro and the Kingdom of the Sun*

Teacher Resources:

1. *Aztecs* (Craft Topics) Facts, Things to Make, Activities
2. *Aztec, Inca, and Maya* (Eyewitness Books)

V. Lessons :**Lesson One: Mayan Background**

A. Objectives:

1. Concept Objective: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
2. Lesson Content: Develop an awareness of the Mayan civilization.
3. Skill Objective: To locate North America and Central America on a map and globe.

B. Materials:

1. Map and globe

C. Key Vocabulary:

1. Mayas
2. Central America
3. Rainforest

D. Procedures/Activities:

1. Locate North America and South America on a map and globe.
2. Discuss the location of Central America as being between North America and South America.
3. Define rainforest as a moist and rich soiled area.
4. Discuss how the ancient Mayan civilization lived in this area. Include items such as daily living, cities, how they survived life in the rainforest, and their nature gods.

Lesson Two: *People of Corn* (Mayan tale)

A. Objectives:

1. Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
2. Develop an awareness of Mayan belief of their creation, importance of corn to their civilization, and Mayan number system.
3. Estimate and compare numbers. Count and order objects and numerals to 50.

B. Materials:

1. 50 kernels of dried corn
2. Transparent container
3. Yellow and green construction paper. One sheet of each color (9x12)
4. One half sheet of yellow tissue paper per student cut into one inch squares.
5. Corn worksheet (See Appendix A)
6. Mayan Numerals (See Appendix B)
7. *People of Corn*

C. Key Vocabulary:

1. Maize
2. Creation
3. Kernels

4. Estimate and compare
- D. Procedures/Activities:
1. Define and discuss the word maize.
 2. Define the word creation and the how the belief is different throughout the world.
 3. Read and discuss *People of Corn*.
 4. Show students a container of kernels of corn. Ask students to estimate how many kernels are in the container. List estimates on the board. Count the kernels to find an actual number. Compare the actual number to the student's estimates. Discuss if their estimates are greater, less than, or equal to the actual number. Discuss the difference between our numerals and Mayan numerals. Explain to students the Mayan number system. Have students write numerals 1-10 and write the correct Mayan numeral next to it.
 5. Have students trace leaves on their sheet of green paper. Trace the ear of corn onto the yellow paper. Cut out and assemble one green leaf on each side of the corn. Take squares of yellow tissue paper and twist around the end of a pencil, forming the kernels of corn. Glue to the construction paper ear of corn.

Lesson Three: *Rain Player* (Mayan tale)

A.Objectives:

1. Concept Objective: To develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
2. Lesson Content: Develop an awareness of an ancient Mayan game.
3. Skill Objective: To practice eye-hand coordination.

B.Materials:

1. *Rain Player*
2. Hula hoop
3. Lightweight ball
4. Duct tape
5. Cones to mark boundaries for the game

C.Key Vocabulary:

1. Architecture
2. Pok-a-tok

D.Procedure/Activities

1. Read and discuss *Rain Player*. Focus discussion on the favorite game of the Mayans. This was a fast-moving combination of present day soccer and basketball. It was played with a solid rubber ball on a walled court. Teams tried to send the ball through a stone ring above their heads. Hands and feet were not allowed to touch the ball; it had to bounce off of padded hips, shoulders, and forearms. The winning team collected jewelry and clothing from the spectators. The losing team received nothing, and sometimes lost their heads. Discuss the architecture of the ancient ball court. Tell students they will play a version of the pok-a-tok game (The following game was created by Steven Carroll, P.E. teacher from Nichols Hills Elementary, OKC).
2. Pre-game preparation for the pok-a-tok game includes securing a hoop to the wall with duct tape. Using the cones, mark an area about 30 feet by 30 feet.
3. Demonstrate how to play the game by selecting 4 students to model how the game is played and the rules. Tell students they will be playing 2 on 2. Select which group of two gets the ball first. Play begins with a throw in and the ball is moved around the court by dribbling and passing to a teammate. When a player has a clear shot at the hoop, he/she should take it. The defenders may guard and block the offense as in basketball. The defense may not foul the offensive player. If a foul occurs, the play is stopped and restarted with a throw in. The defense may steal the ball by taking control of the dribble, intercepting a pass, getting the rebound after a missed shot, or taking possession of the ball after a shot is made. The offense can turn the ball over by throwing the ball out of bounds, traveling (walking or running with the ball), committing a foul on a defensive player, or scoring a point by shooting through the hoop. Both teams shoot at the same hoop. The

game is ended when a preset number of points are reached as time runs out. Each goal scored is worth 1 point. Multiple teams can play this game if you have a large enough space. Additional hula hoops, balls, and cones would be required.

Lesson Four: *Song of the Chirimia* (Mayan tale)

A.Objectives:

1. Concept Object: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
2. Lesson Content: Developing an awareness of the Mayan social order.
3. Skill Objective: To make comparisons of the social order of the ancient Mayans; to sequence a story

B.Materials:

1. *Song of the Chirimia*
2. Sentence strips (7). These should be made prior to the activity. Look under the activity section for sentences to be written on the strips.
3. Pocket chart
4. Copy of the Mayan chief from the book *A Coloring Book of Incas, Aztecs, and Mayas* (See Handout/Worksheet Section)
5. Color sheet of commoner. (Appendix C)

C.Key Vocabulary:

1. Chief
2. Commoner
3. Spirit
4. Chirimia (a flute)

D. Procedures/Activities:

1. Read and discuss *Song of the Chirimia*. Discuss the different ways the people are dressed throughout the story and how it is indicative of their social order. Commoners usually wore plain white cotton clothing while royalty would dress in brightly colored clothing and wear gold or silver cuffs around their wrists. A jaguar skin and elaborate headdress would denote their rank.
2. On sentence strips, write down the following sentences.
 - a. Clear Sky's daughter, Moonlight, is born.
 - b. Moonlight became very sad.
 - c. The scribe felt it was time for her to marry.
 - d. The search for a husband began.
 - e. Black Feather must learn to sing like the birds.
 - f. The Great Spirit gave him a chirimia.
 - g. Moonlight and Black Feather get married.

3. Color pictures of a commoner and a Mayan chief.

Lesson Five: *The Mouse Bride* (Mayan tale)

- A. Objectives:
1. Concept Objective: To develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
 2. Lesson Content: To develop an awareness of ancient Mayan writing and architecture.
 3. Skill objective: To compare and contrast.
- B. Materials:
1. Two large pieces of brown wrapping paper cut to look like a Mayan step pyramid. The paper should be large enough to fit around a doorway. An additional piece of brown paper is needed to form the top of the pyramid. (See example. Appendix D)
 2. Newspaper to lay under large pieces of brown paper to prevent bleed-through of magic markers.
 3. Black magic markers. (One per student)
 4. Copy of Mayan glyphs (Appendix E)
 5. Pictures of Egyptian and Mayan pyramids
 6. *The Mouse Bride*
- C. Key Vocabulary:
1. Glyphs
 2. Step pyramid
- D. Procedures/Activities:
1. Review pyramids of Egypt. Define step pyramids. Show students a picture of a step pyramid and Egyptian pyramid. Compare how they are alike and different. Review Egyptian hieroglyphs. Show students pictures of Mayan glyphs. Compare how they are alike and different.
 2. Read and discuss *The Mouse Bride*. Teacher should focus the student's attention on the architecture and glyphs found throughout the book.
 3. Lay large pieces of brown paper over the newspaper on the floor. Give each student a copy of the Mayan glyphs and a black marker. Have the students copy glyphs onto brown paper. Do this for both the sides and top of the pyramid. Assemble pyramid around the classroom doorway.

Lesson Six: Aztec Background

- A. Objectives:
1. Concept Objective: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
 2. Lesson Content: Develop an awareness of the Aztec civilization.
 3. Skill Objective: To locate Mexico and Mexico City on a map and globe.
- B. Materials:
1. Map and globe
- C. Key Vocabulary:
1. Aztecs
 2. Mexico
 3. Mexico City
 4. Tenochtitlan
 5. Island
- D. Procedures/Activities:
1. Locate Mexico and Mexico City on a map and globe. Discuss how they are located south of the United States. Discuss how Mexico City used to be called Tenochtitlan when the Aztecs lived there hundreds of years after the Mayas. Discuss how present day Mexico City differs from Tenochtitlan, the legend about how the Aztecs chose the location, and the last great Aztec ruler, Montezuma.

Lesson Seven: *Musicians of the Sun* (Aztec tale)

- A. Objectives
1. Concept Objective: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
 2. Lesson Content: To develop an awareness of the importance of nature gods to the Aztec civilization.

3.Skill Objective: To recall details from a story.

B. Materials:

- 1.Paper plates (one per student)
- 2.Triangular shapes cut from yellow and orange construction paper (4 yellow, 4 orange per student)
- 3.Magic markers (assorted colors)
- 4.Four 9x12 pieces of construction paper (red, yellow, blue, and green)
- 5.*Musicians of the Sun*

C. Key Vocabulary

- 1.North
- 2.South
- 3.East
- 4.West

D.Procedures/Activities:

- 1.Read *Musicians of the Sun*. Review the directions north, east, south, and west. Ask students to locate those directions in the classroom. Select four students to hold the red, yellow, blue, and green pieces of 9x12 construction paper. Have them stand in a circle (backs to each other). Tell the students to recall which direction the musician of the sun was facing that is represented by the color they are holding. Have them switch places so they are facing the correct direction according to the story. Repeat procedure with another group of four students.
- 2.Inform students that that Aztecs had over 1,000 gods. Review which nature gods were seen in the story. Discuss why the sun god was such an important nature god to the Aztecs. Since the Aztec people worshipped the sun god, sometimes they would have festivals to honor him. Whenever there was a festival, they would wear masks as a way of dressing up for the occasion. Have students look at masks found in *Aztec, Inca, and Maya* (see bibliography).
- 3.Have students construct a sun mask from a paper plate, 4 yellow and 4 orange triangular shapes cut from construction paper, and decorate with magic markers. First, have students use their magic markers to decorate their paper plate (many geometric shapes should be used). Next, staple the 4 yellow and 4 orange triangular shapes onto each child's mask to represent the rays of the sun. Alternate between yellow and orange. Finally, hang each child's mask above his/her desk in the classroom.

Lesson Eight: *Flame of Peace* (Aztec tale)

A.Objectives:

- 1.Concept Objective: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.
- 2.Lesson Content: To introduce the Aztec calendar and method for calculating the passage of time.
- 3.Skill Objective: Comparison of calendars, numerals to thirty-one, days of the week, months, and length of the year.

B.Materials:

- 1.*The Flame of Peace*
- 2.Picture of an Aztec calendar
- 3.Blank copy of our monthly calendar
- 4.Large piece of bulletin board paper cut to a 36 inch diameter.
- 5.Watercolor paint, brushes
6. White drawing paper cut in 9 inch diameter
7. 16 pre-cut shapes for outer ring, 7 pre-cut shapes for inner ring (See Appendix F)

C.Key Vocabulary:

- 1.Day signs
- 2.Fasting

D.Procedures/Activities:

- 1.Discuss how the Aztecs watched the sun and the movement of the stars and how the information was used to make calendars. The Aztecs had a 360-day calendar. It had 18 parts with 20 days (each

day had its own day sign). The 5 extra days were called “empty days.” On those days, all work stopped. No fires were made and people fasted. At the end of the 5 days, new fires were lit. Life and the calendar began again.

2. Using a blank calendar form, have the students fill in the name of the month, days of the week, and place dates in the correct square.

3. Aztec calendar: Choose one student to create the design of someone of great importance, similar to Lord Morning Star, on the 9-inch circle. Distribute one pre-cut shape per student. Have them draw an original design inside each shape. Tell them to keep the design as simple and as big as possible. Their design should be a day sign depicting the present. After drawing their designs, students should paint inside the shapes with bright colors. After the day signs are dry, glue the 9 inch circle in the center of the 36 inch circle and surrounds it with 7 smaller pre-cut shapes. Then glue the larger pre-cut shapes around the outside edge of the circle.

4. Compare the length of the present month with the 20 day Aztec month. Greater, less, or equal.

5. Compare the length of the Aztec year with our year. Greater, less, or equal.

Lesson Nine: Inca Background

A. Objectives:

1. Concept Objective: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.

2. Lesson Content: Develop an awareness of the Inca civilization.

3. Skill Objective: To locate South America, Peru and the Andes mountains on a map and globe.

B. Materials:

1. Map and globe

C. Key Vocabulary:

1. Incas

2. South America

3. Andes Mountains

4. Peru

5. Altitude

6. Masons

D. Procedures/Activities:

1. Locate South America, Peru, and the Andes Mountains on a map and globe.

2. Discuss how the ancient Inca civilization lived in high altitudes where the air is thin and cold.

Travel was difficult and the people relied on llamas for transportation. Include items such as daily living, their cities (noteworthy are Cuzco, the capital city, and Machu Picchu, the “city in the clouds”), and the skillful masons needed to build their great cities. Compare the Inca gods to those worshipped by the Mayas and Aztecs.

Lesson Ten: *Miro in the Kingdom of the Sun* (Inca tale)

A. Objectives:

1. Concept Objective: Develop an awareness of an ancient civilization.

2. Lesson Content: Develop an awareness of Inca art.

3. Skill Objective: To sequence a series of events.

B. Materials:

1. *Miro in the Kingdom of the Sun*

2. Modeling clay or playdough (one half stick per student)

3. Heavy tagboard cut in 6X6 squares (one per student)

4. Toothpicks (one per student)

C. Key Vocabulary:

1. Sculpture

2. Cuzco

3. Figure

D. Procedures/Activities:

1. Read and discuss *Miro in the Kingdom of the Sun*. Focus on the colorful and exaggerated representations of characters in the story.
2. Look at pictures of different figures sculpted from clay found in many of the teacher's resource. (see Bibliography). Discuss the meaning of the words figure and sculpture.
3. Divide students into groups of six. Give each student a half a stick of modeling clay (about the size of a tennis ball). Have them sculpt a figure of one of the characters Miro encountered on her journey (puma, bird, crab, alligator, winged boa constrictor and sun). After making their sculptures, have the students arrange them in the correct sequence that Miro encountered them in the story.

VI. Culminating Activities:

Make a comparison chart. List all three civilizations. Have students recall things that were the same/different about each civilization. Include items such as where they lived, climate, cities, rulers, artwork, gods, farming, and daily life.

Each civilization had powerful rulers. Discuss the similarities of the ruler's dress, focusing on how they all use the colorful feathers for their large, stunning headdresses. Have children make a ruler headdress (like one Montezuma would have worn) using the directions found in *Aztecs* (page 8-9). Each civilization had beautiful artwork. Review the pictures of the different artwork from all three civilizations found in all of the teachers and student resources. Focus on the mosaic artwork as you review the pictures. Explain how it was and is made. Have the children choose a pattern (Appendix G) or draw their own to be filled in with 1 inch by 1 inch brightly colored paper squares, creating a mosaic picture.

VII. Handouts/Worksheets:

A. Copyrighted Material:

1. Mayan Chief color sheet from *A Coloring Book of Incas, Aztecs, and Mayas*. Santa Barbara, CA: Bellerophon Books, 1993.

B. Handouts:

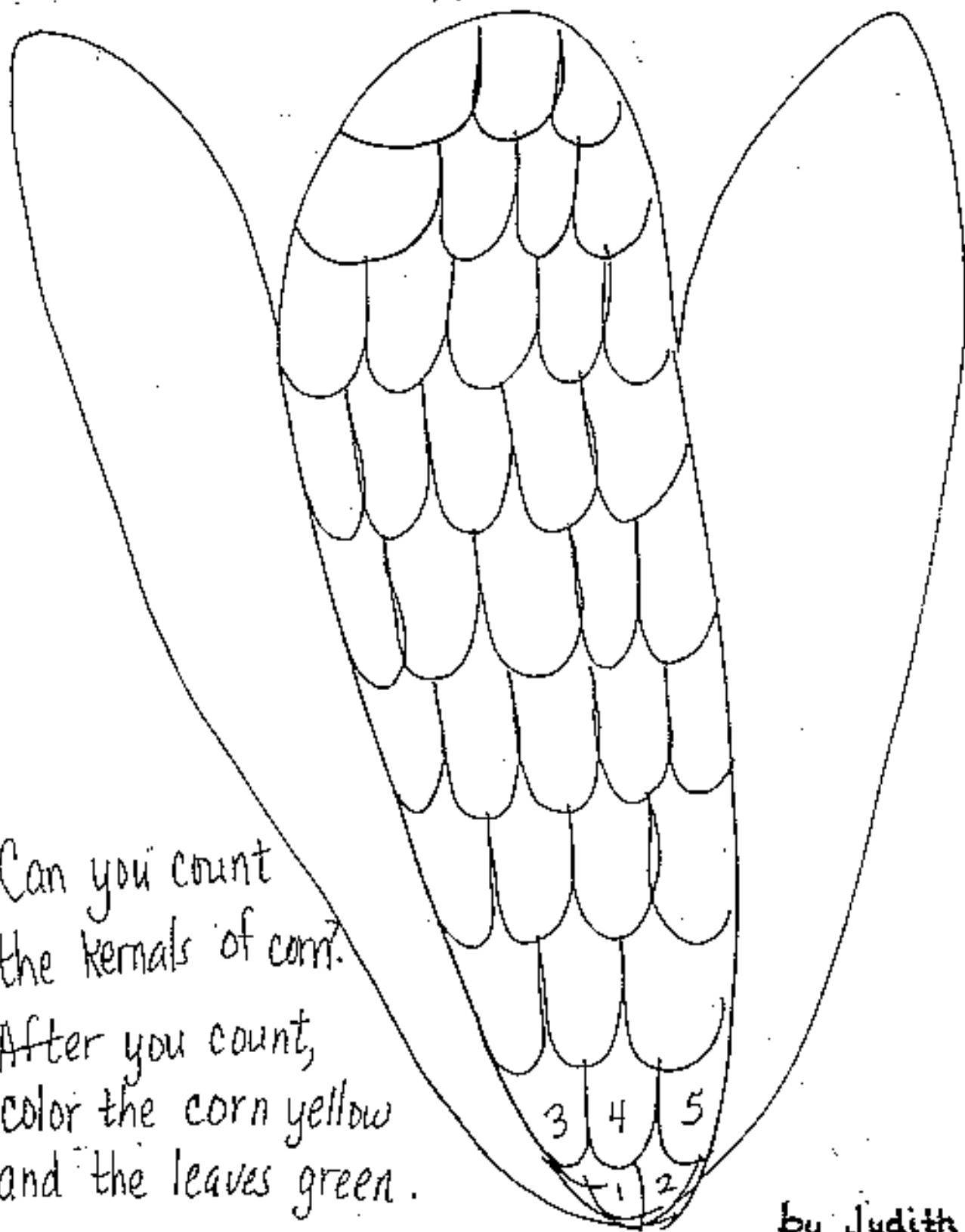
1. Appendix A: Corn worksheet.
2. Appendix B: Mayan Numerals.
3. Appendix C: Color sheet of commoner.
4. Appendix D: Example of Mayan pyramid to go around a doorway.
5. Appendix E: Mayan glyphs.
6. Appendix F: Shapes of Aztec calendar.
7. Appendix G: Pattern for mosaics.

VIII. Bibliography

- Baquedano, Elizabeth. *Aztecs, Incas, and Maya*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Dupre, Judith. *The Mouse Bride*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
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- Volkmer, Jane Anne. *Song of the Chirimia*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1990.

Wisniewski, David. *Rain Player*. New York: Clarion Books, 1991.
Wood, Tim. *The Aztecs*. New York: Penguin Group, 1992.

Appendix A.



Can you count
the kernels of corn?
After you count,
color the corn yellow
and the leaves green.

by Judith
Beatty

Appendix B
Mayan Numerals

• 1

•• 2

••• 3

•••• 4

— 5

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— 6

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— 7

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— 8

••••
— 9

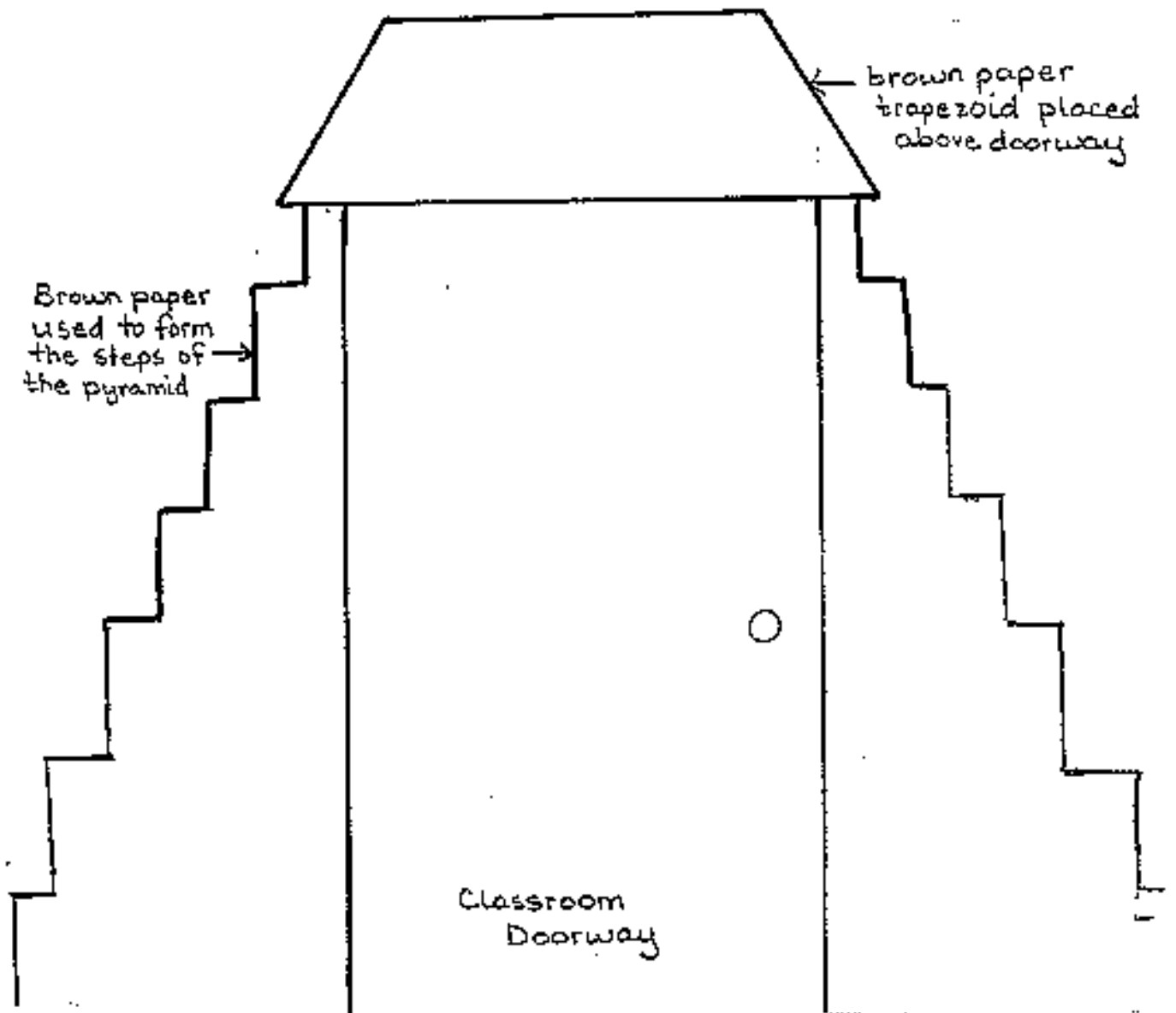
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Appendix C



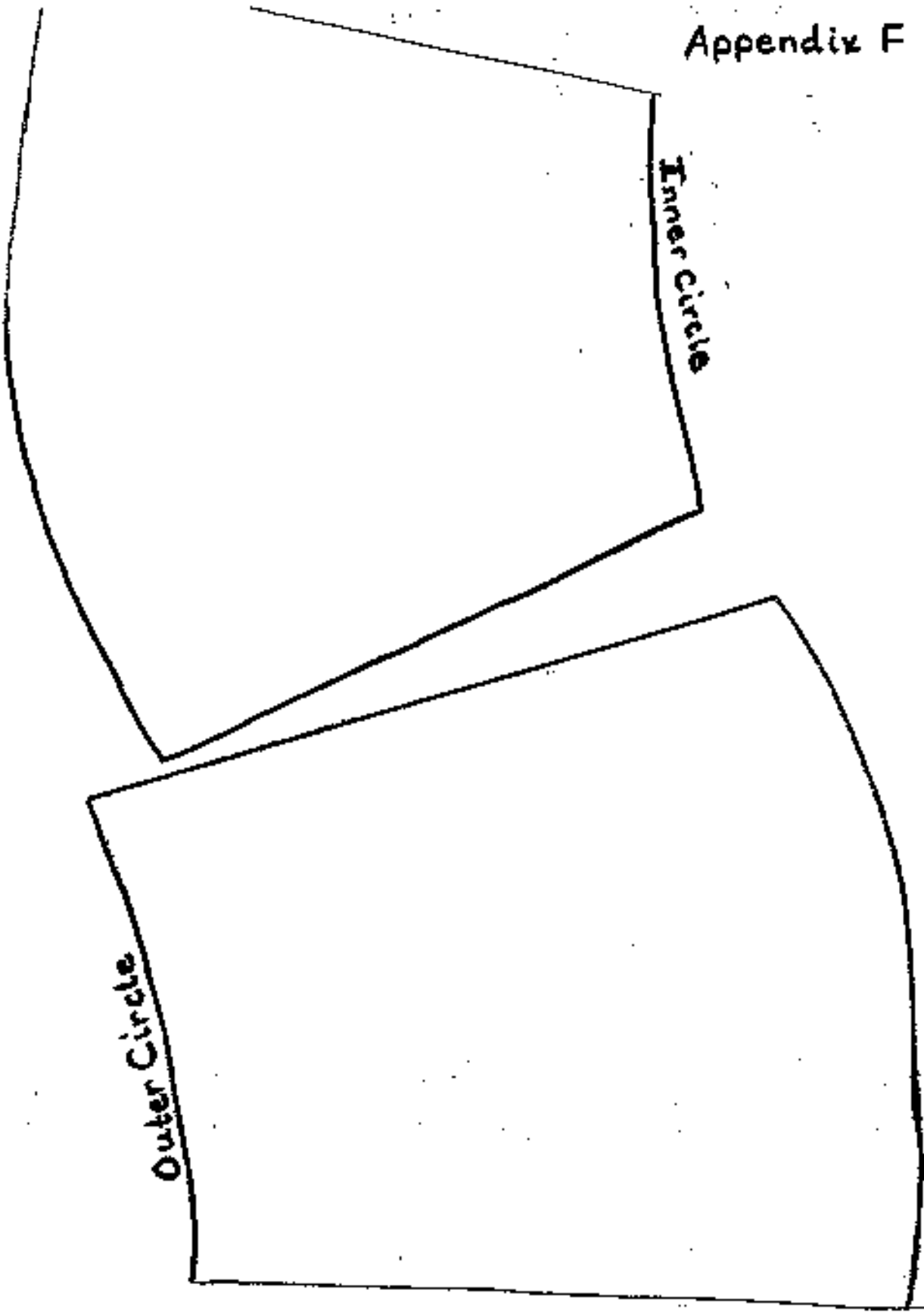
Appendix D

Mayan Pyramid



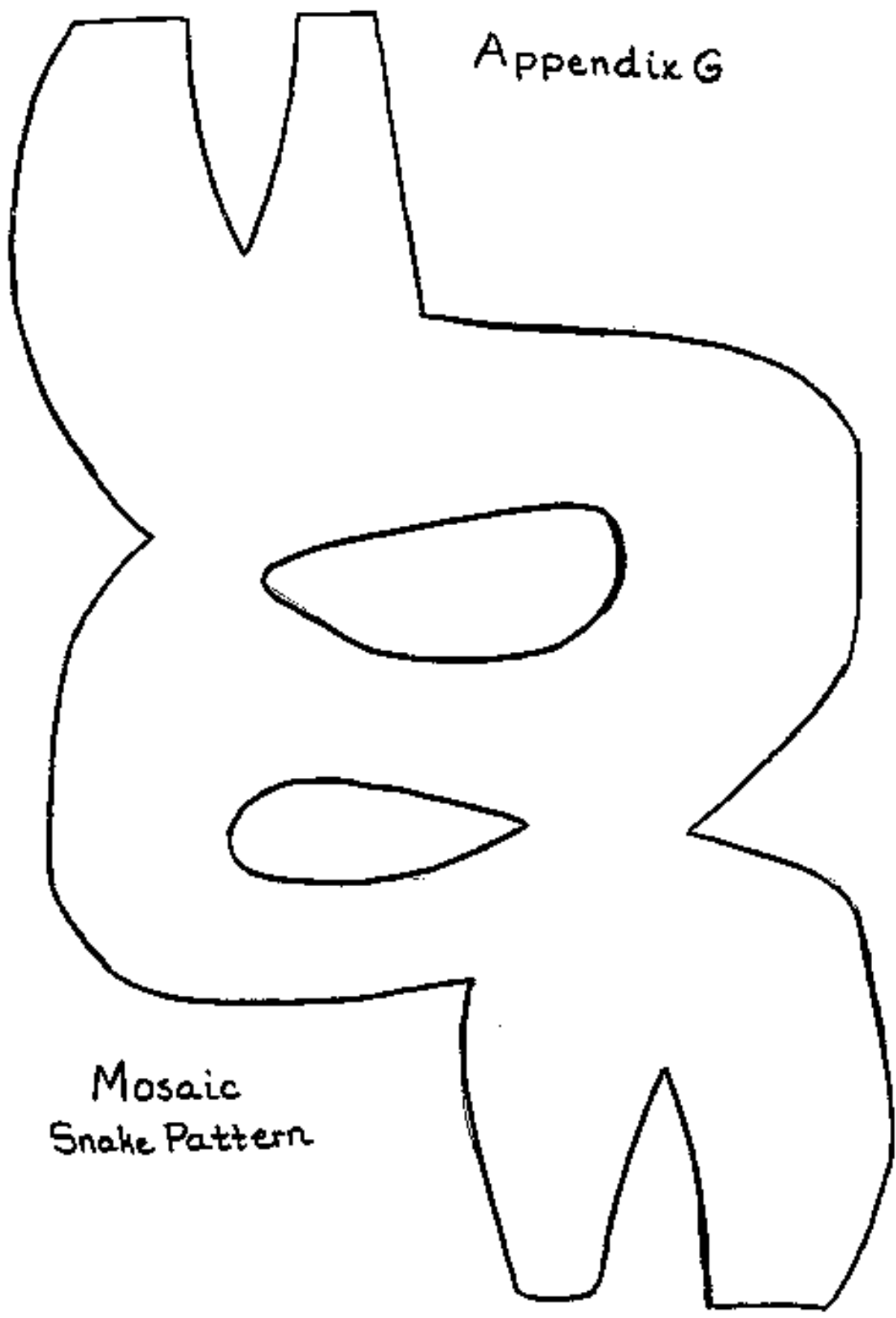
Appendix F

Inner Circle

A diagram showing a sector of a circle. The sector is bounded by two radii and an arc. The inner boundary is a smaller arc, and the outer boundary is a larger arc. The region between these two arcs is shaded. The text "Inner Circle" is written vertically along the inner arc, and "Outer Circle" is written vertically along the outer arc.

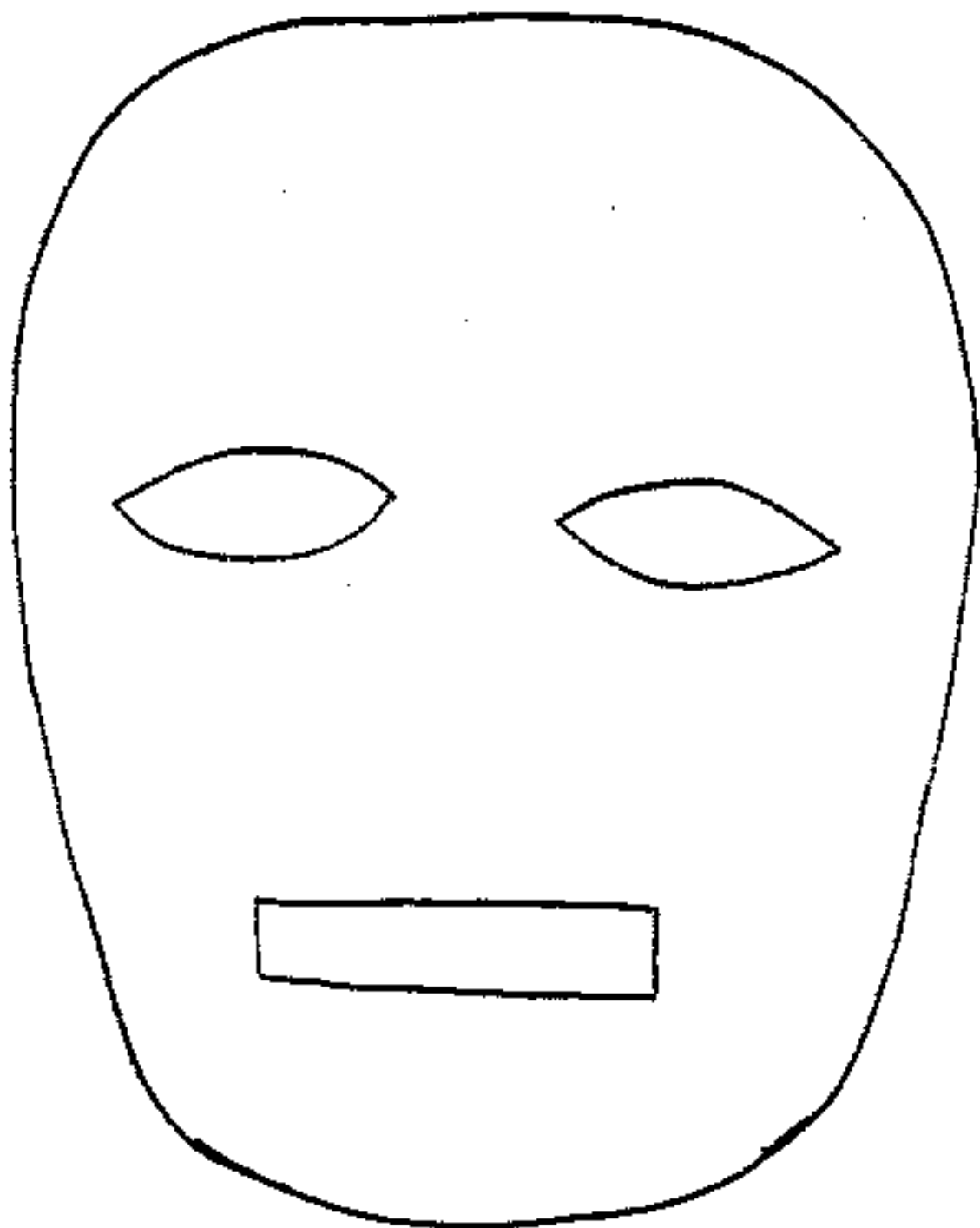
Outer Circle

Appendix G



Mosaic
Snake Pattern

Appendix G



Mosaic Mask Pattern