

# The San of Africa



*Footprints*  
on Our Land

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# Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	4
The benefits of using a project pack	5
You will need	5
Recommended books and websites	5
Places to visit	6
Sample pictures	6
<b>2. The San (Bushmen) of Africa</b>	7
• Appearance	7
• Desert	7
• Homes	8
• Making poison	8
• Hunting and tracking	9
• Honey and gum	10
• Veld foods	10
• Tsamma melons	10
• Ostrich eggs	11
• Water	11
• Crafts	12
• Rock art	12
• Religion and folklore	13
• Making fire	13
• Language	13
• Music	14
<b>3. Bibliography</b>	15
<b>4. Instructions</b>	
Make your file folder	15
Make your mini-books	16

## Introduction

As homeschooling mothers/teachers, we have discovered that our children take great pleasure in creating something about what they are learning. We do a lot of literature-based learning in our homes, so for them it is special to have something tangible to show for their efforts.

We enjoy using a combination of 'living books' and appropriate reference books when learning about any topic. By reading carefully selected fiction, our children pick up a lot of 'general knowledge' on any given personality, event or era and we enjoy presenting that knowledge in various ways.

We mainly use narrations and notebooking pages to record our work, but to break the monotony we have created various other projects – posters, theme books and these project packs consisting of a collection of mini-booklets.

For free printable notebooking pages on South African themes, visit the Footprints On Our Land site at [www.south-african-homeschool-curriculum.com](http://www.south-african-homeschool-curriculum.com).

Traditionally, school children create theme books about the various people groups of southern Africa, but we realized that for younger children, even with help and supervision, this can be quite an overwhelming task.

However, a mini-book project enables children to work with small bits of information at a time and this is not as overwhelming as having to write a project from scratch.

This project pack is aimed at children aged 7-11 and can be adapted for multiple age levels, commonly found in the homeschooling situation.

On many of the booklets or templates, children can choose to either write or draw the appropriate information, or in the case of younger children, they can dictate the text and a parent or older sibling can write it for them.

## **The benefits of using a file folder project pack**

- A file folder project will enable your children to work on and review key information about the topic being studied.
- It will develop auditory and comprehension skills as well as the ability to search, sift and find answers in a written text.
- The hands-on activities are fun and develop fine motor skills.
- Children love to learn by doing!
- The creative possibilities are endless. Children can be creative and add their unique touch to their projects.
- File folder projects are ideal for multi-level learning.
- Project packs can be incorporated into unit studies, supplement topics of study or stand alone.
- A project gives the children a reason for writing and drawing.
- File folder projects are compact, easy to store and retrieve again later.
- A file folder project can become part of a child's portfolio of work and are a great tool for reviewing completed work.

### **You will need:**

1. Two or more file folders per student
2. Safety scissors
3. Printing paper or card, preferably in different colours
4. Glue
5. Brads
6. Stapler
7. Sticky tape
8. Pencils

### **Recommended books and websites**

The website links included are references that contain relevant information. However, the content may have changed or become a "dead" link. Please always review websites before using the internet with your children. If you find the site contains inappropriate material or is no longer a relevant site, please let us know. Thank you.

- The Khoi & San: <http://www.encounter.co.za/article/49.html>
- The Bushmen of Namibia: <http://www.kalahari-trophy-hunting.com/bushmen.html>
- Introduction to Bushman: <http://www.kalahari-san.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>

## Books

- ***Bushmen: A Changing Way of Life***, David L. Williams; Anthony Bannister; David Lewis-Williams
- ***The San of Africa***, Linda Parker
- ***San***, Megan Biesele

It is recommended that you find books at your local library about the Bushmen / San people to use as you work on this project.

## Places to visit

!Kha ttu – The San Culture and Education Centre

<http://www.khwattu.org/index.asp>, Tel +27(0) 22 492 2998

40 minutes drive, 70km north of Cape Town, off the R27

Omaheke San Trust,

Gobabis, Namibia. Tel: +264 62 564073,

Email: [info@santrust.org](mailto:info@santrust.org)

## Sample pictures of the completed file folder project



Front flap

Back flap



Inside folder 1

Inside folder 2

## The San (Bushmen) of Africa

In centuries past, when the Khoi-khoi people encountered the indigenous, hunter-gatherer nomads that roamed various areas in Africa, they called them the 'San', which means food-gatherers. Unlike the Khoi-khoi, the San people did not keep domestic livestock, but relied on wild game which they hunted for food.

Although *nomadic*, different groups stayed within specific areas. They would move around within their roughly demarcated areas in search of game and water, according to the seasons. They were very possessive over their water holes and would even kill a person trespassing and taking their water without permission.

In time, other tribal groups and white colonists encroached upon the San's traditional hunting grounds. Some went to live with them and others moved on west and north in search of land where they could continue to live their traditional lifestyle freely.

Today they are found only in the northwestern Cape of South Africa, the Kalahari, Namibia and Botswana. Nowadays, most groups are less nomadic than their ancestors were.

### Appearance

The San people are small, lightly-built, yellow-skinned people with peppercorn hair. They tend to have heart-shaped faces and fine facial features. Older people are often heavily wrinkled from a life in the harsh African climate. The women tend to store fat in their buttocks and have sharply hollowed backs.



### Deserts

The Kalahari is one of the desert areas of Africa and the San have an amazing ability to survive in this thirst-land.

A desert is an area with an arid climate, where it almost never rains. Deserts often look barren and lifeless, but on closer study, there can

be an amazing variety of plants, animals and people who have managed to survive in the dry, desolate conditions.

Deserts can be burning hot during the day, but temperatures drop suddenly, even to below freezing when the sun sets over the horizon.

### **Homes**

Since the San are nomadic they built huts of grass thatched over a framework of branches, planted into the ground and tied with strips of bark of the knob-thorn tree at the apex. The men usually gather the branches and construct the framework, while the woman gather grass and set about thatching the hut in layers. The finished hut is quite warm, which is necessary when temperatures drop suddenly after sun set in the Kalahari.

The huts are also waterproof to provide shelter from storms in the rainy season



Sleeping places are usually hollowed out of the sand and covered with grass and a fur kaross is used as a covering in cold weather. The San have few household possessions. Skin karosses, loin cloths and aprons are the San's only clothing. Their semi-nomadic life makes it impractical to possess anything that is not easy to carry.

Huts are usually built in a circular arrangement around a central fireplace, which is the focal point of community life.

All San bands move with the seasons in search of food and water, but they will also pack up and move if someone has died or if there has been a serious misfortune in a particular place. They will not return to that place until the grave or the event has been forgotten by all.

### **Making poison**

Different groups use different substances for making poison, used on the tips of their hunting arrows. Some use the poison of scorpions and



spiders while others use the juice of a specific beetle grub. A lethal concoction is mixed that on entering the bloodstream of man or beast, will cause convulsions, bleeding and paralysis, leading to a slow painful death.

### **Hunting and tracking**

The men have the task of hunting to provide meat for their community. They are very skilled in this bush art and are excellent trackers.



In modern times, San men are often called in by the police to help track criminals that have moved through bushy areas. They are able to recognize inconspicuous signs like a broken twig, a depressed clump of grass, or a dislodged pebble and follow the tracks of wanted persons.

Although the San are superstitious about chameleons, they believe that if a chameleon crawls across a bow, the owner will have luck on the hunt.

The most common animals the San hunt are various antelope, but other game such as giraffe, warthog or snakes may be hunted or trapped.



Men usually hunt in groups, first looking for spoor and then choosing which animal in a group they will choose as they quarry.

Once the victim has been shot, they often have to follow the wounded animal for a long time, until it finally dies. They are known for their stamina.

The San never kill more than what is necessary for their own survival and so they live in harmony with nature, never upsetting the delicate balance of the ecology of the areas where they live.

After a kill, the whole group joins in the feast, singing and dancing in a trance-like ritual around the fire. When game is scarce, the group splits up into smaller parties to search for food.

### **Honey and gum**

Although there are no candy stores in the desert, the San also enjoy sweet treats. Honey is one of their favourites. They have a mutually beneficial relationship with honey guides, which are honey-loving birds.

If a honey guide is sighted, the San will follow the bird, which calls harshly all the way, leading them to a bee hive. Here the San will light a fire stick and smoke the bees out of the hive and then rob it of some of the honeycomb. They always set aside a piece of the treat for the honey guide, which feeds on the wax and on bee grubs.

Another form of desert candy is the gum of the camel thorn tree. These trees produce a tasty gum that is much loved by the San as well as tree rats and kori bustard birds.

### **Veld foods**

The women are the main food providers for their clan. While modern, westernized women go to supermarkets like Wal-mart or Pick n Pay, the San women simply pick and don't pay! They bring home roots, berries, tubers and fruits on a daily basis, while the men may be out hunting for days at a time in search of game.

The San live mainly on a vegetarian diet, with meat only making up about 20-30% of their diet.

The women use digging sticks and skin bags for their food-gathering expeditions. They gather in groups, chatting and singing as they go along, often with children alongside, who help and learn to identify edible plants.

### **Tsamma melons**

These citron melons are most useful and valuable to the San people. Not only are they a wonderful source of moisture when water is scarce, but they are juicy and tasty too. The seeds can be roasted and taste similar



to peanuts. They can also be ground into flour and used for baking. The empty rinds of the melons can be used as pots, plates and eating bowls.

Children also love to play with tamma melons, using them as bowling bowls or as targets to aim at with their bows and arrows.

### **Ostrich eggs**

An ostrich egg is a rare find for the San. Since one ostrich egg is the equivalent of about 24 hen's eggs, it makes a good meal.



A small hole is drilled in the shell and the contents emptied out into a bowl. The eggshell can then be rinsed clean and used to store water. The hole is plugged with grass and a small piece of soft springbok skin. After closing the egg with the plug, the grass is wet so that it expands and seals the opening like a cork in a bottle. Often the

egg shells are buried to store the water for later times when they will be needed.

The branch of a driedoring plant makes a useful egg whisk to mix the egg to make scrambled ostrich egg for the clan!

Broken ostrich egg shells are used to make beads. These are threaded along with porcupine quills and seed pods to make necklaces and bracelets.

### **Water**

The San can't just open a tap when they need water. This commodity is usually very scarce and so they go to great trouble to find it, protect it and store it.

Not only is rain essential for the San, but also for the plants and animals on which their existence depends.

Protecting their water holes can be a matter of life and death in times of scarcity. Most of the Kalahari, the area in which the San now live, is without water for most of the year.

The San often rely on other sources of moisture, such as melons and tubers to survive.

A certain amount of water is stored in hollowed out ostrich egg shells. The San are also skilled at locating underground water in dry riverbeds. They insert a reed straw into the sand and suck up the water.

When it rains in the Kalahari the San rejoice and celebrate.

### **Crafts**

The San can't just pop out to the local DIY store, when they need something. They have to make everything they need from natural resources – their tools, utensils, clothing, weapons and even toys - nothing from nature is wasted.

Wood from trees is used to make bows and arrows. Reeds or branches are used to construct hut shelters, the rinds of melons are used for bowls, egg shells are used as storage containers for water.



When an animal is killed, every part of it is used: the hide will be used for a blanket or clothing, the bones are used as knives, needles or other utensils. Their skills are passed down from one generation to the next.

### **Rock art**

San paintings and etchings are prolific throughout Africa, indicating that they once roamed all in many places across the continent. More than 6000 sites of rock art have been found in southern Africa.

Most paintings are in subtle shades of red and yellow ochre, white and black and depict scenes of hunting, camp life, the collecting of honey and gathering of plant food and rituals.

Archeologists and anthropologists believe that much of the San art has a religious interpretation.

Bushman art, both paintings and etchings, is a legacy to the modern world, of the life of the Bushmen people in times past.

## Religion and folklore

Most San believed that the world was created by a supreme being, named /Kaggen, the trickster-deity. He is believed to be able to take on many forms, such as eland, hare, snake, vulture or praying mantis. When not in one of these forms, he is believed to lead an ordinary life, hunting, fighting etc.

The Bushmen believed that the eland was /Kaggen's favourite animal.

The modern Bushmen of the Kalahari believe in two gods: the Great God, from the east, who is powerful and good and the lesser god from the west. Like the southern Bushmen they believe in spirits of the dead, but not as part of ancestor worship. The spirits are only vaguely identified and are thought to bring sickness and death.

The San were great storytellers and passed on their stories from generation to generation. Many stories are about animals who were once people, as well as the sun, moon, rain and wind.

## Making fire

Instead of a lighter or matches, the San have their own fire-making sticks. With great skill they rub a small reed between their palms, pressing it into another stick all the while. Eventually the friction causes the fire-making stick to glow and it can then be used to light kindling for making a fire.



## Language

The sounds of the San languages are considered to be the most complex in the world. There are several varieties of this group of languages, known as the Nama languages.

Family clans would often speak different tongues from their neighbouring *kinsmen*, but there would normally be a fair degree of similarity & understanding between them.

They consists of most distinctive clicks and other unique sounds.

There are three main click sounds, indicated by the following signs:  
/, ! and //

1. / or dental click. To make this click, the tip of the tongue is placed behind the upper front teeth and it is then pulled away making the fricative sound.

2. ! or alveolar - palatal click. For this the tip of the tongue is pressed firmly against the hard palate at the top of the mouth. It is then snapped down very sharply creating a loud pop-sound!.

3. // or lateral click. The tongue is placed behind the alveolar ridge in the top of the mouth. It is released at the sides by being drawn in from the teeth. The sound produced is much like the sound that drivers of horses make to signal them to stop or go.

### **Music**

By now you will have guessed that like everything else, the San used natural resources to make their music instruments. Cocoons and seeds tied around their ankles made a rattle-sound when they danced. They used a bow, called a gorah, which resonated when played by beating on the string with a stick. Today they also use commercially-made items such as paraffin tins and brass wire to make instruments.

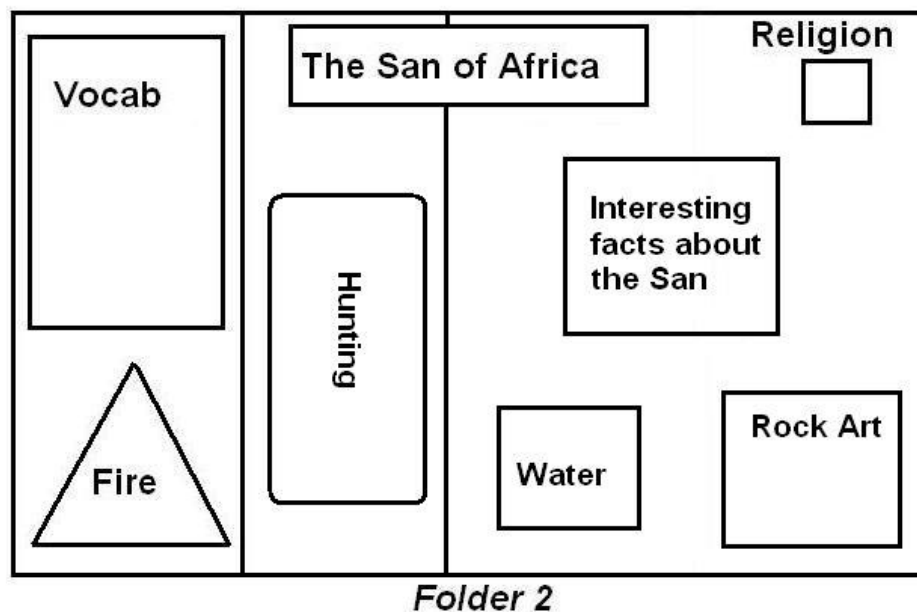
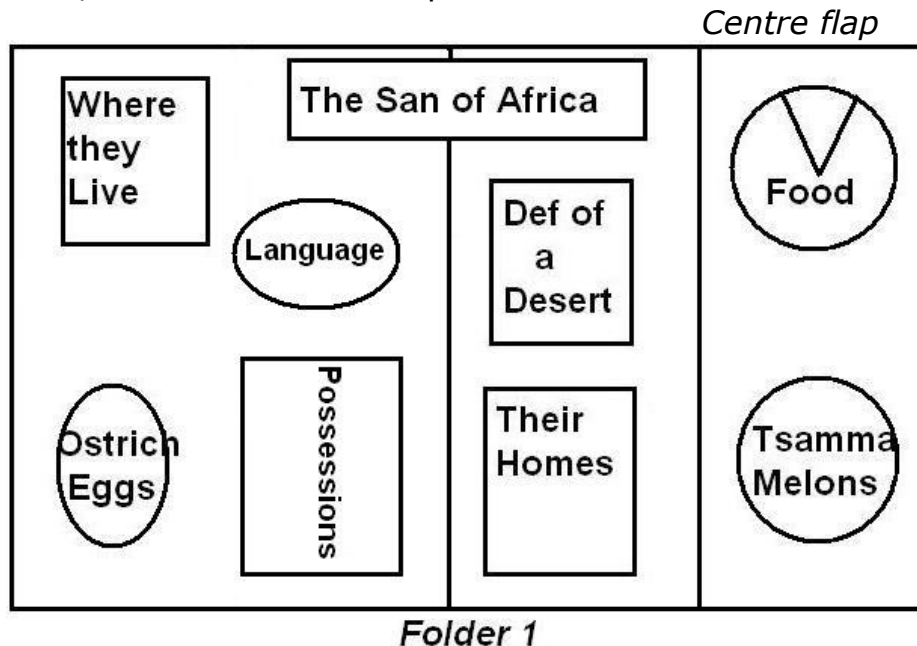
### **Bibliography**

1. Bannister, A. *The Bushmen*, Struik
2. Barker-Johnson, B. *All About South Africa*, Struik, 2004
3. Nadine Clark, *Get Bushwise, A Desert Safari*, Struik, 2007
4. The Khoi & San: <http://www.encounter.co.za/article/49.html>
5. The Bushmen of Namibia: <http://www.kalahari-trophy-hunting.com/bushmen.html>
6. Introduction to Bushman: <http://www.kalahari-san.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>

# Instructions

## Make your file folder

1. Open your file and lay it flat. Fold the outer edges of your file to the centre and press them down to make a new fold on one side.
2. Repeat with the second file.
3. Now glue the two files together along one side where you have folded it, to make a centre flap.



## **Make your mini-books**

After carefully reading the information provided, complete the mini-books using the facts you have learned.

### **1. Where they live**

List the countries where the San live and shade those areas on the map of Africa.

Staple the top flap over the bottom page along the top to make a lift-up booklet.

### **2. Their Homes**

Draw or describe the homes of the San inside the booklet.

### **3. Their Food**

List or draw the foods that the San eat in the hexagon provided. Place a brad through the black dot to make a rotating wheel.

### **4. Their Language**

Describe the most significant features of the San language on the speech balloons provided. Cut out the speech balloons and staple them on top of each other to make a booklet.

### **5. San Possessions**

List or draw San possessions under the relevant label on the layer booklet provided. Staple it at the top.

### **6. Uses of Ostrich Eggs**

Cut out the egg shapes and make a fan booklet by inserting a brad through all four pages as indicated on the cover page by the O. Describe and/or draw the various ways that ostrich eggs were used by the San.

### **7. Uses of Tswana Melons**

List the uses of tswana melons inside the circular flap booklet.

### **8. Interesting Facts about the San**

Cut out the puzzle pieces. Place glue on the grey dots on the shape that follows and glue the puzzle pieces to the corresponding pieces. Bend the 'necks' of each of the pieces so that they can be lifted individually.

Write facts that you found interesting on the underneath shape.



### **9. Finding and Storing Water in the Desert**

List the places the San find water and describe how they get it and store it. Fold down the flaps of the envelope booklet.

### **10. The Definition of a Desert**

Fold along the black lines so that the pictures meet in the middle on the outside of the shutter-fold.

Write your definition of a desert on the inside.

### **11. Rock Art**

Describe the materials used by the San to do rock art and the significance of their paintings. Add any other interesting facts or information that you have discovered about San paintings.

### **12. Tracking and Hunting**

Place your foot on a page, draw the outline and cut it out. On the footprint, write about how the San tracking and hunting skills.

### **13. Religion**

Cross fold booklet: Make a list of people or animals that the San believed had supernatural powers.

Glue down the centre block of the booklet and fold the other flaps down.

### **14. Making Fire**

Describe how the San make fire inside the triangle flap book.

### **15. Vocabulary/Word search**

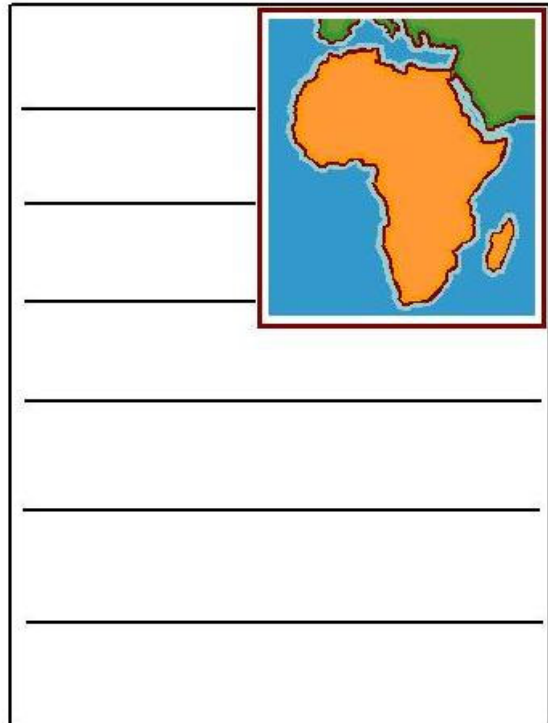
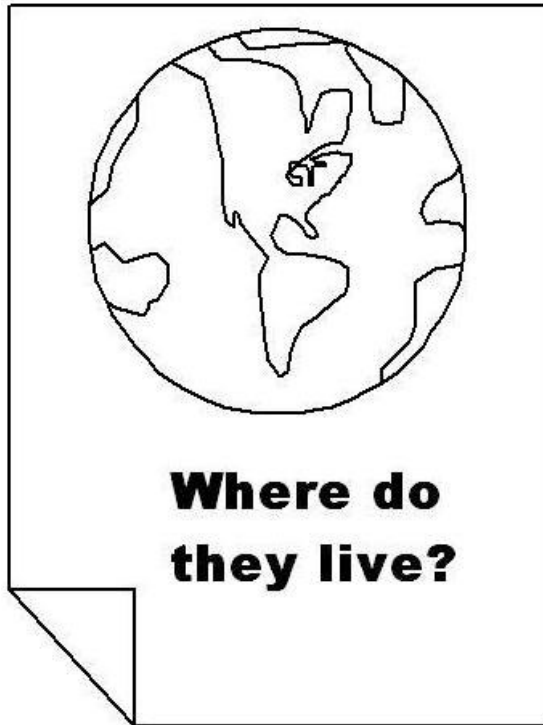
Complete the word search and look up the meaning of any new words in a dictionary.

### **16. Book Review**

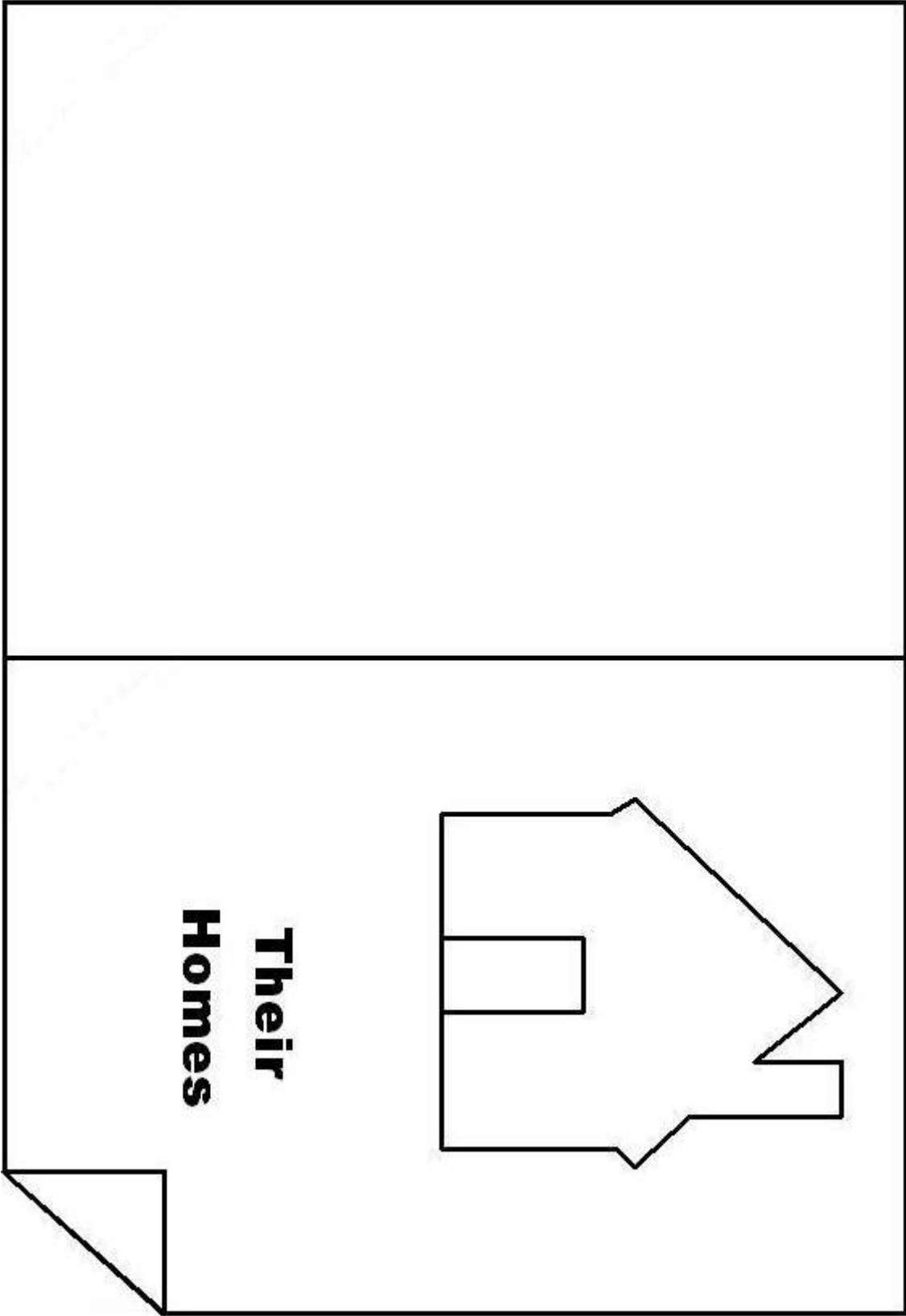
If you have read any interesting books on this topic, write a book review and include it in your project file folder.

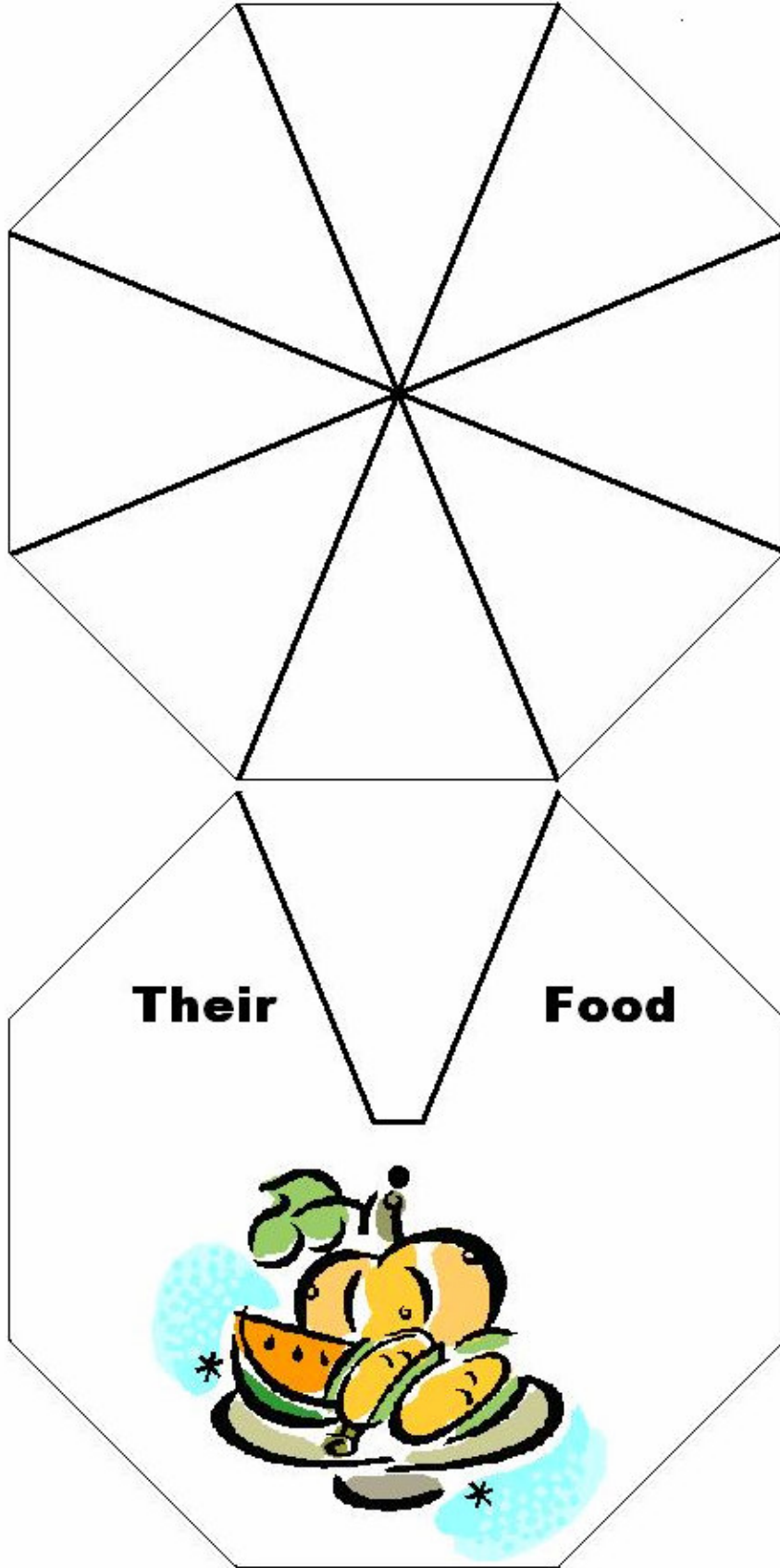
Glue the pocket along the bottom and two sides. Fold your book review sheet in half and store it in the pocket. Add any other notes you would like to store to this pocket too. Paste the book review pocket on the outside/back side of the second folder.

List the countries where the San live and shade those areas on the map of Africa.  
Staple the top flap over the bottom page along the top to make a lift-up booklet.



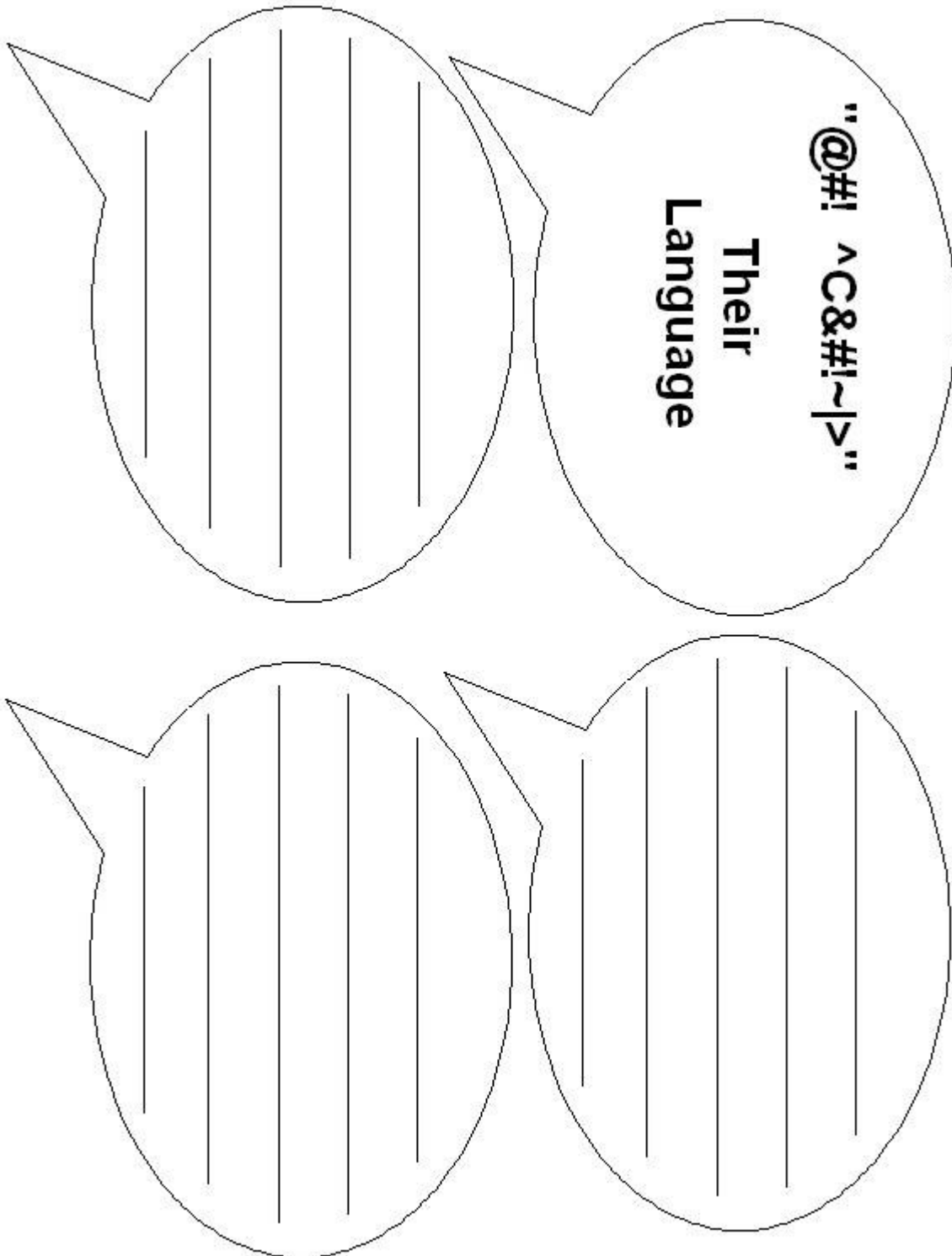
Draw or describe the homes of the San inside the booklet.





List or draw the foods that the San eat in the hexagon provided. Place a brad on the black dot to create a rotating wheel.

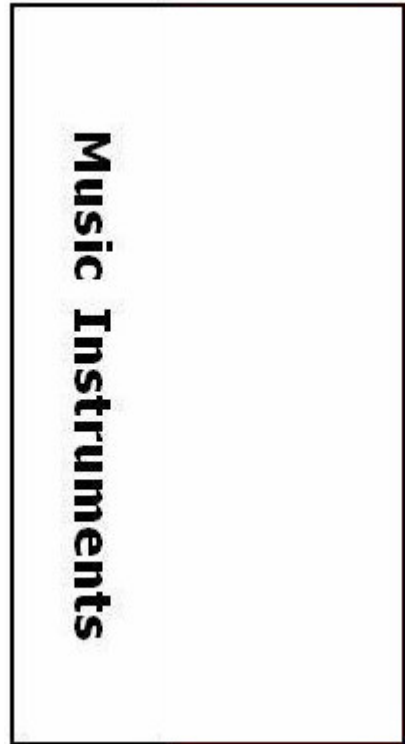
Describe the most significant features of the San language on the speech balloons provided. Cut out the speech balloons and staple them on top of each other to make a booklet.



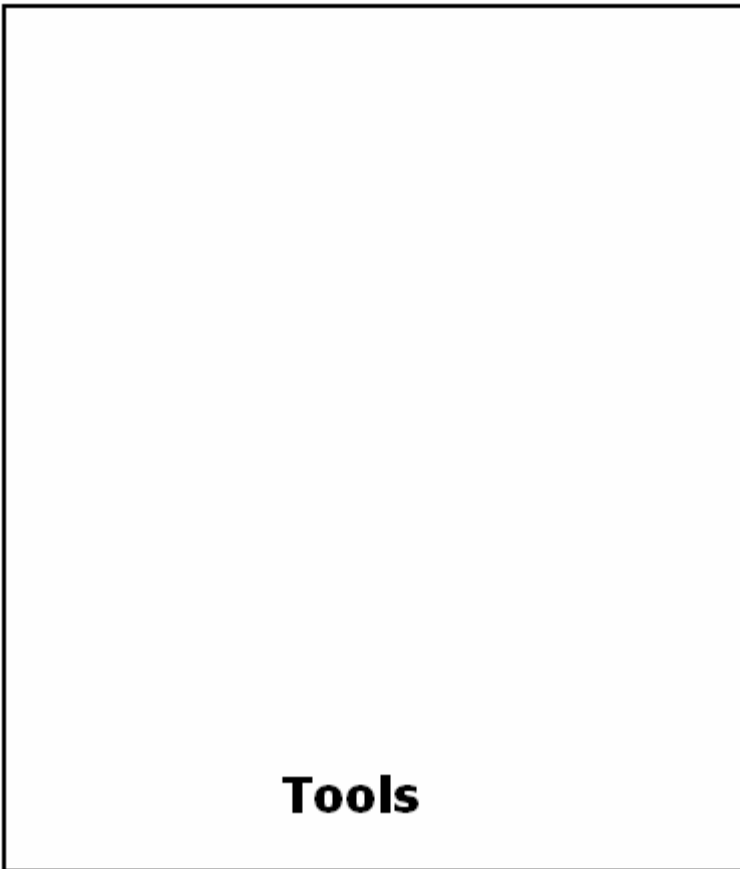
List or draw the following San possessions and then arrange them in a layer book.



**Clothing**



**Music Instruments**



**Tools**

**Utensils**

**Jewellery**



**Weapons**

**San Possessions**

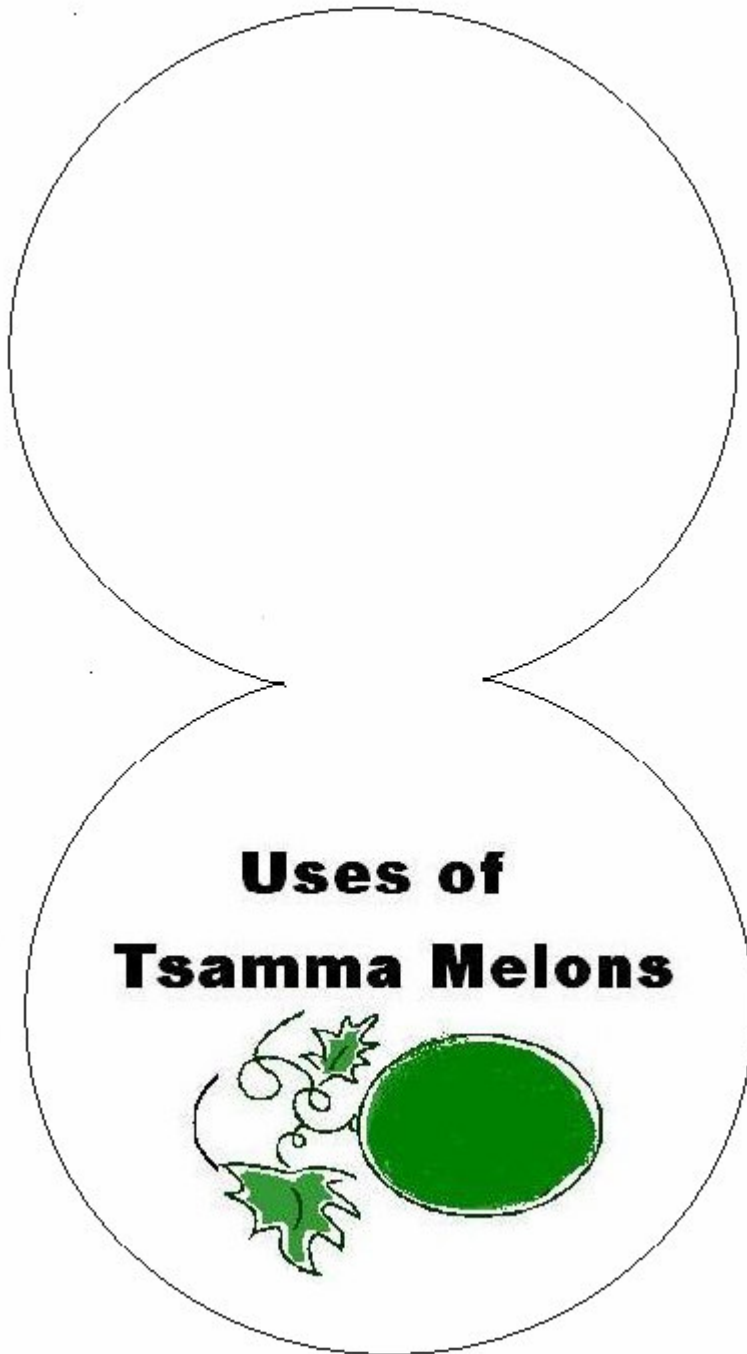
Cut out the eggs and make a fan booklet by inserting a brad through all four pages as indicated on the cover page by the O. Describe and/or draw the various ways that ostrich eggs were used by the San.

o

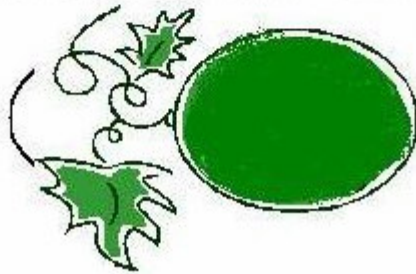
# Uses of Ostrich Eggs



List the uses of tsamma melons inside the booklet.

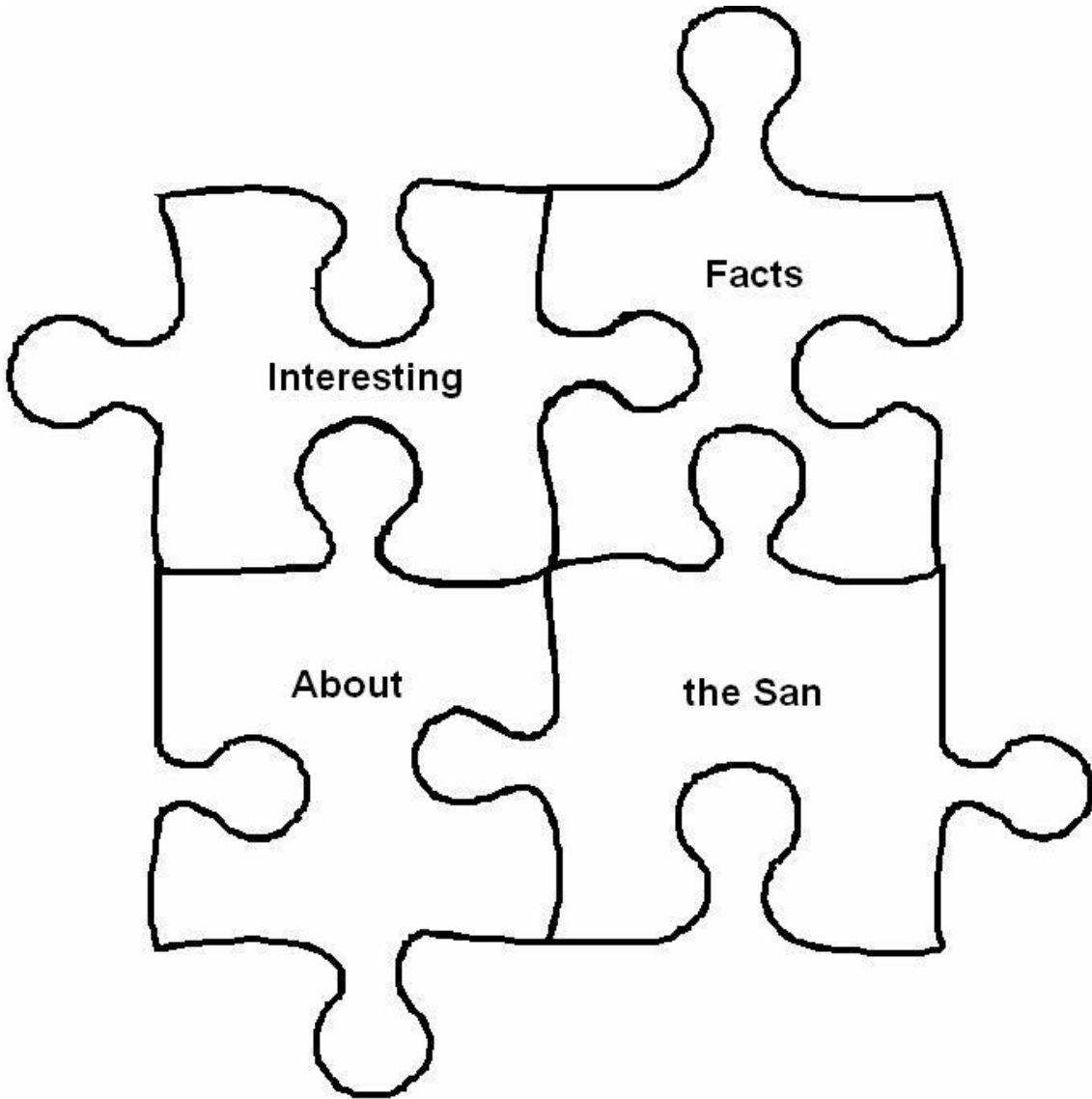


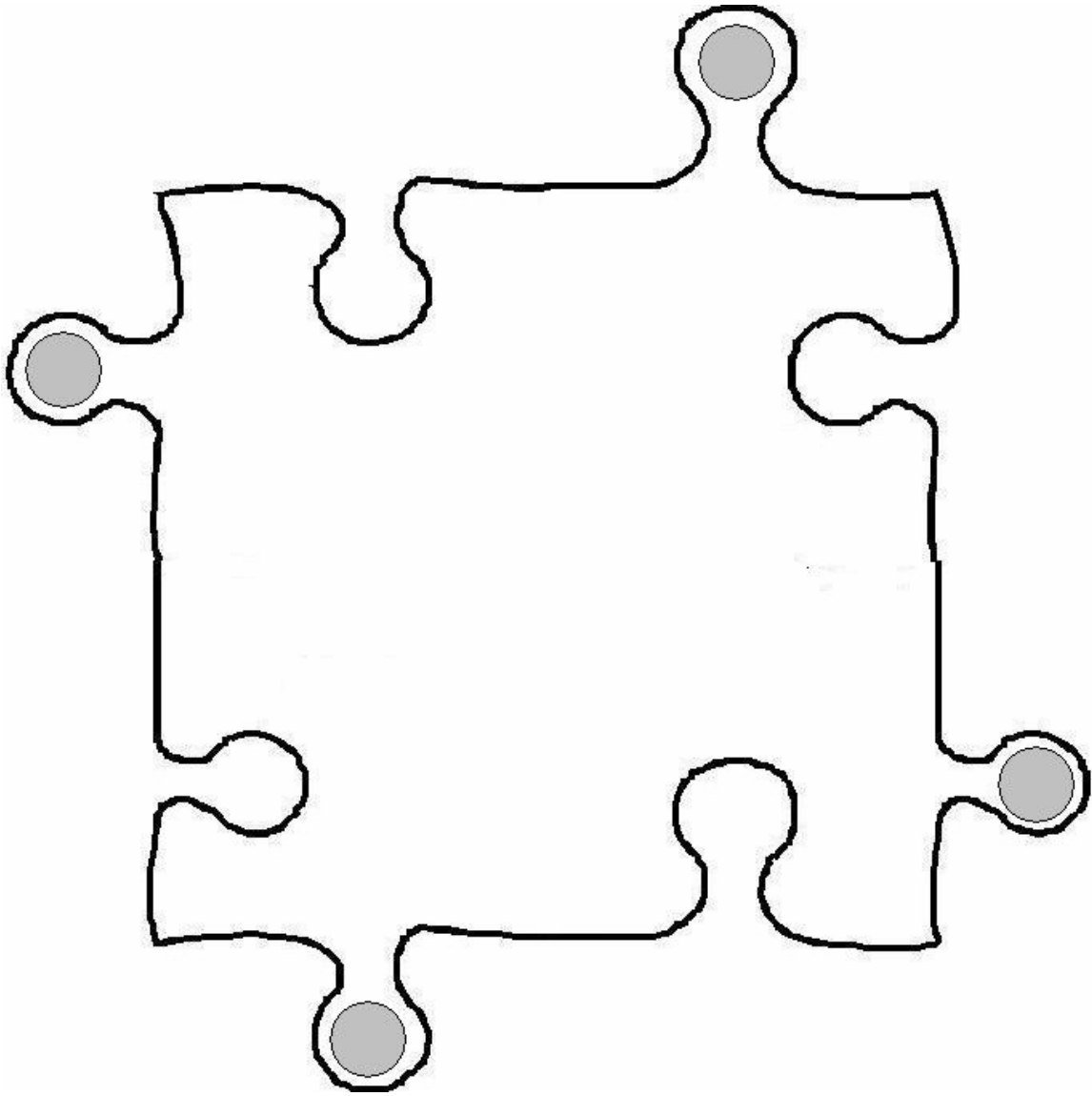
## **Uses of Tsamma Melons**



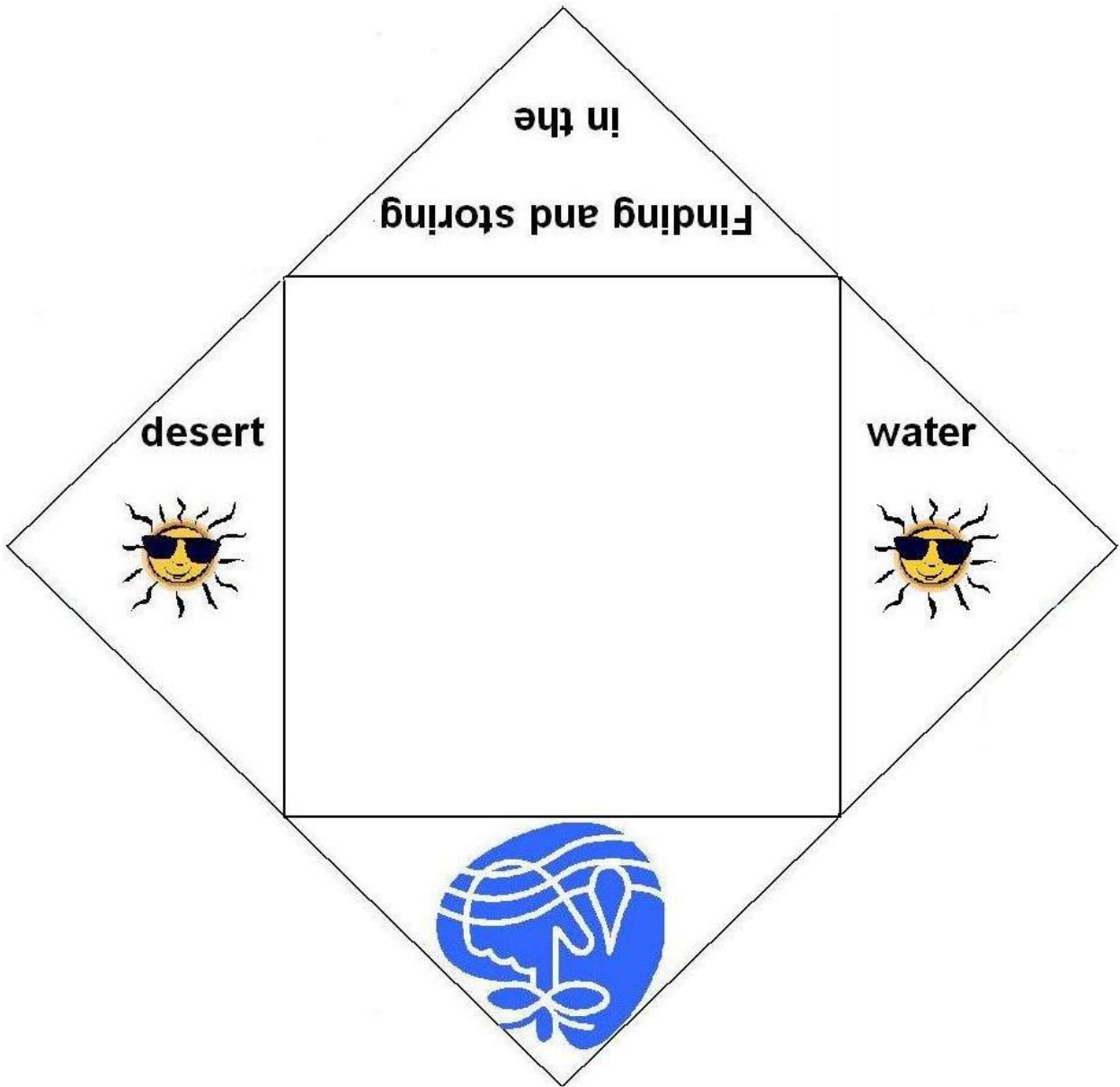
\* Cut out the puzzle pieces. Place glue on the grey dots on the shape that follows and glue the puzzle pieces to the corresponding pieces.

Bend the 'necks' of each of the pieces so that they can be lifted individually.  
Write facts that you found interesting on the underneath shape.




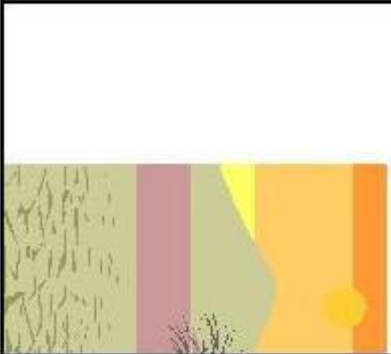


List the places the San find water and describe how they get it and store it.



Fold along the black lines so that the pictures meet in the middle on the outside of the shutterfold.

Write your definition of a desert on the inside.

	<p><b>of a Desert</b></p>
	<p><b>The Definition</b></p>




Cross fold booklet:

Make a list of people or animals that the San believed had supernatural powers.

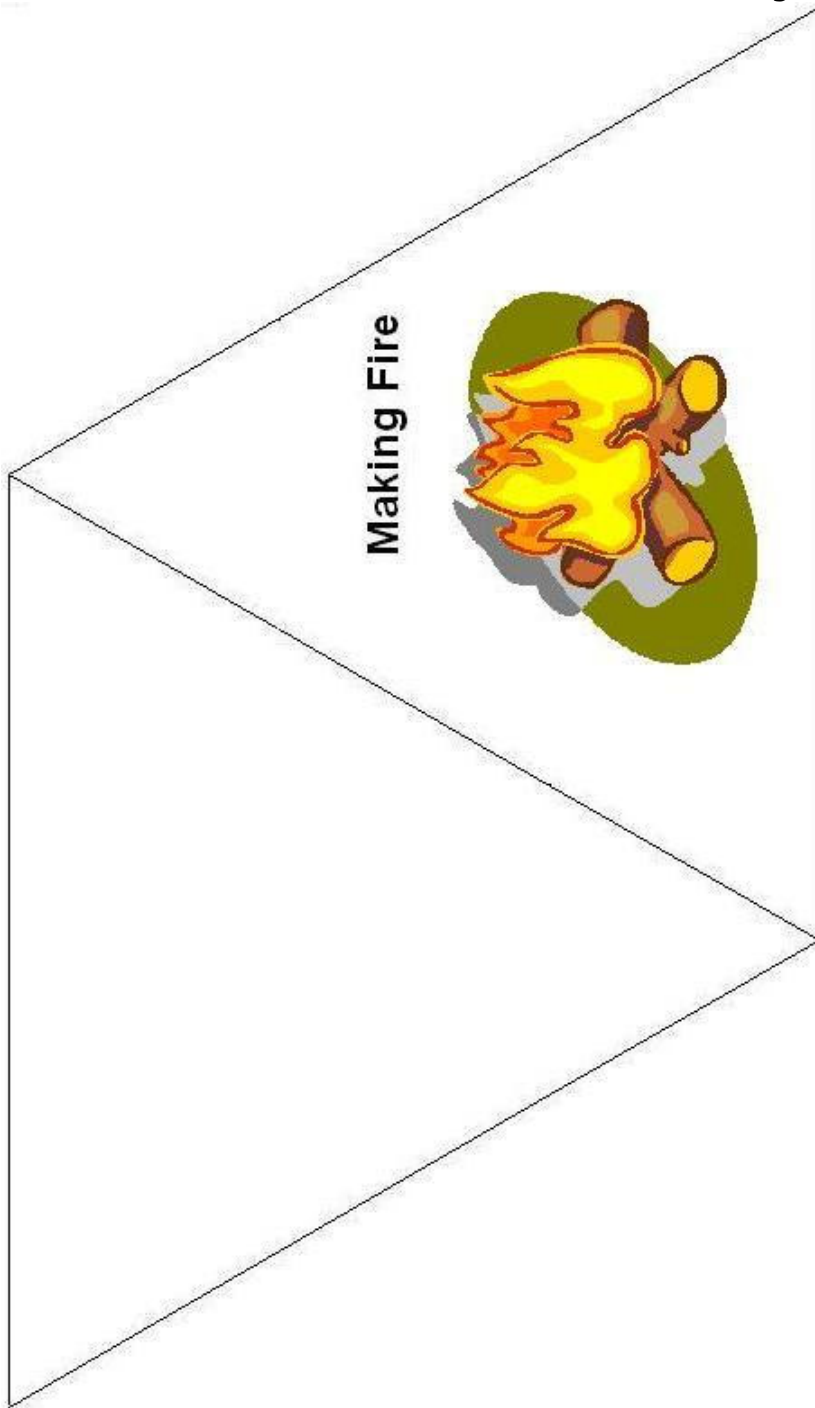
Glue down the centre block of the booklet and fold the other flaps down.



	<p><b>Rock Art</b></p>  <p><b>by the San</b></p>
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Describe the materials the San used to do rock art and the significance of their paintings. Add any other interesting facts or information that you have discovered about San paintings.

Describe how the San make fire inside the triangle flap book.



Complete the word search and look up the meaning of any new words in a dictionary.

### VOCABULARY

D I T I S R O T S E C N A C A  
P S P T S U O N E G I D N I C  
O S T R S T C A F I T R A I I  
P L S N I E V R E S E R P M D  
U I G S A M E D D E P I C T A  
L K N E L T I L E T H A L R M  
A I I T I R A T C L A N S A O  
T N L A A A O T I O T C I D N  
I S L M I A N N I V R M I I L  
O M E I R E T I I B E M T T E  
N E W L I W A R M H A D S I G  
I N D C E D I P S A N H M O E  
C O L O N I S T S D T R N N N  
T E R O L K L O F F E S S I D  
E T E C O F R I E N D L Y L R

### WORD LIST

ARID	CLIMATE	NOMADIC
KINSMEN	LETHAL	STAMINA
PRIMITIVE	ECOFRIENDLY	POPULATION
PRESERVE	INHABITANTS	COLONISTS
FOLKLORE	DEPICT	INDIGENOUS
ANCESTORS	DWELLINGS	ARTIFACTS
CLANS	TRADITION	LEGEND

# Book Review

**Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author** \_\_\_\_\_

**Publisher** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of publication** \_\_\_\_\_

**Overview of contents** \_\_\_\_\_

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**My opinion of this book** \_\_\_\_\_

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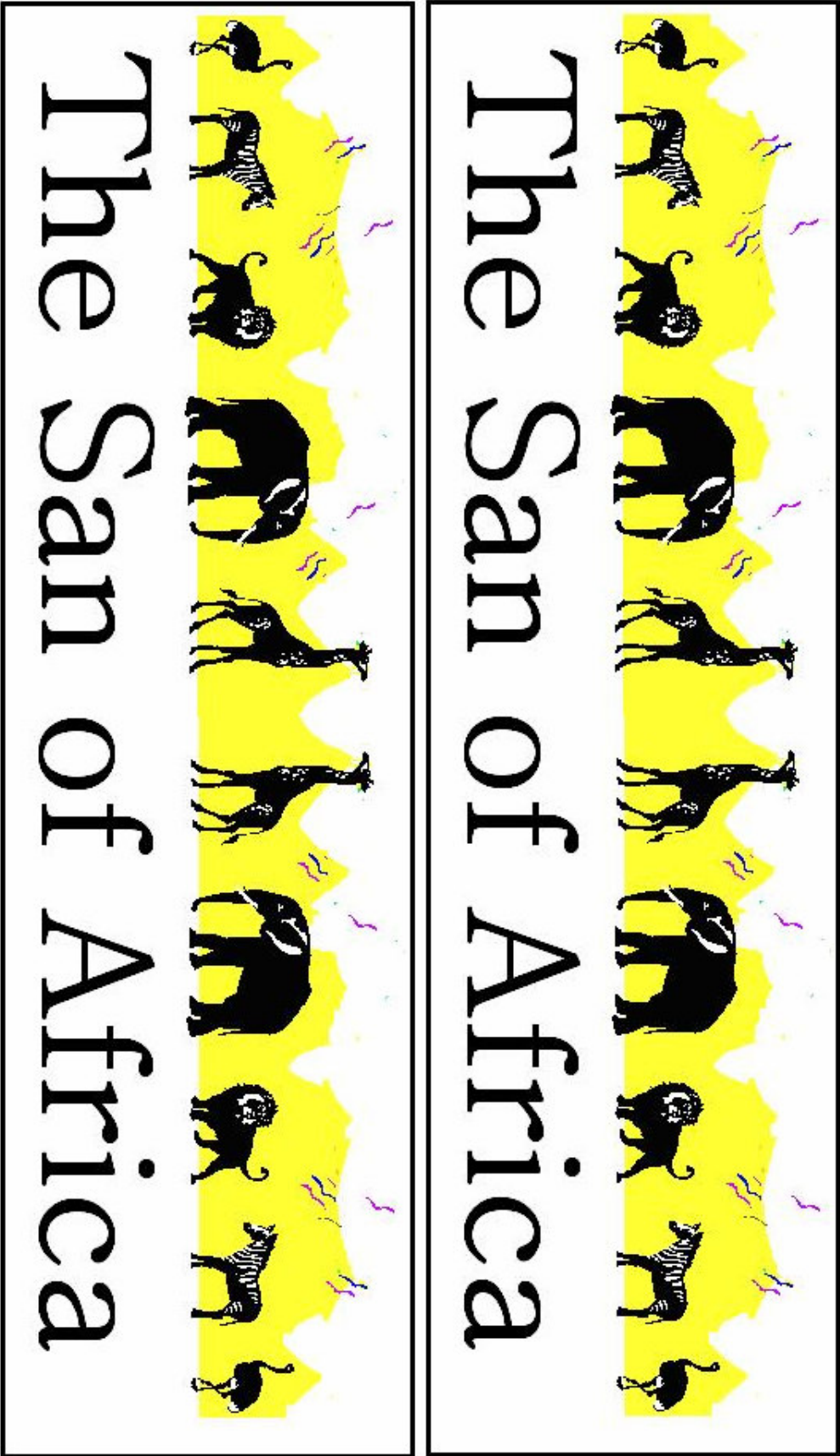
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## **Book Review**



Apply glue along the edges of the bottom and two sides. Fold your book review sheet in half and store it in the pocket. Add any other notes you would like to store to this pocket too.



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