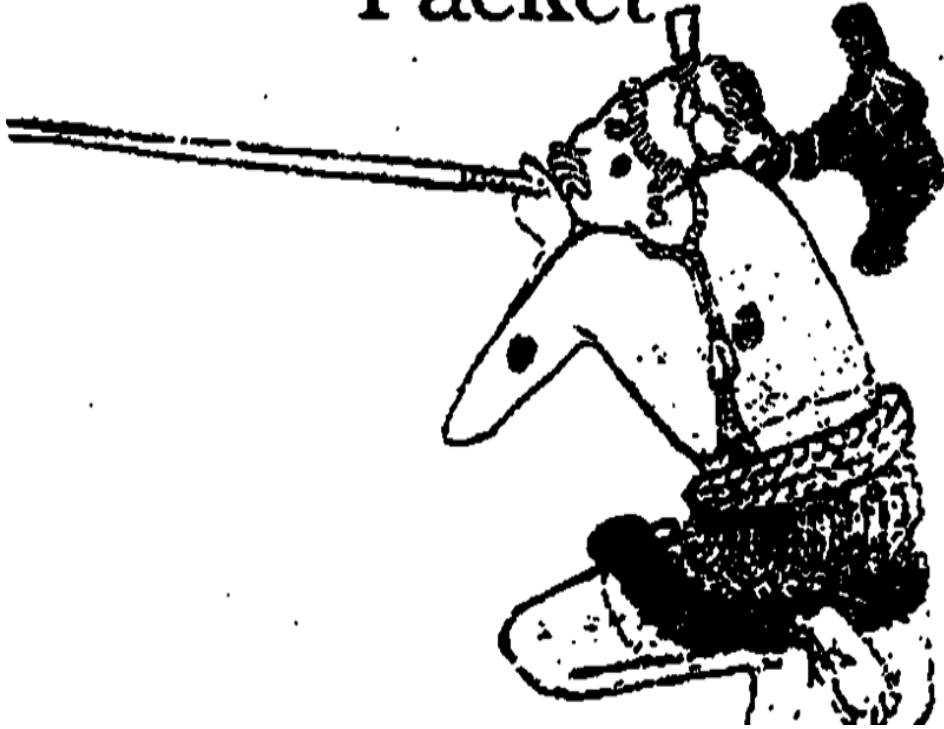


# Prep & Follow Up Packet



## *The Popol Vuh – A Mayan Hero's Journey*

*A Bilingual Show*

**Presented by**

**Boxtales Theatre Company**

PO Box 91521  
Santa Barbara, CA 93190  
805-962-1142

[www.boxtales.org](http://www.boxtales.org)



## **BOXTALES'**

### ***The Popol Vuh – A Mayan Hero's Journey***

Teacher Guide K-6

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

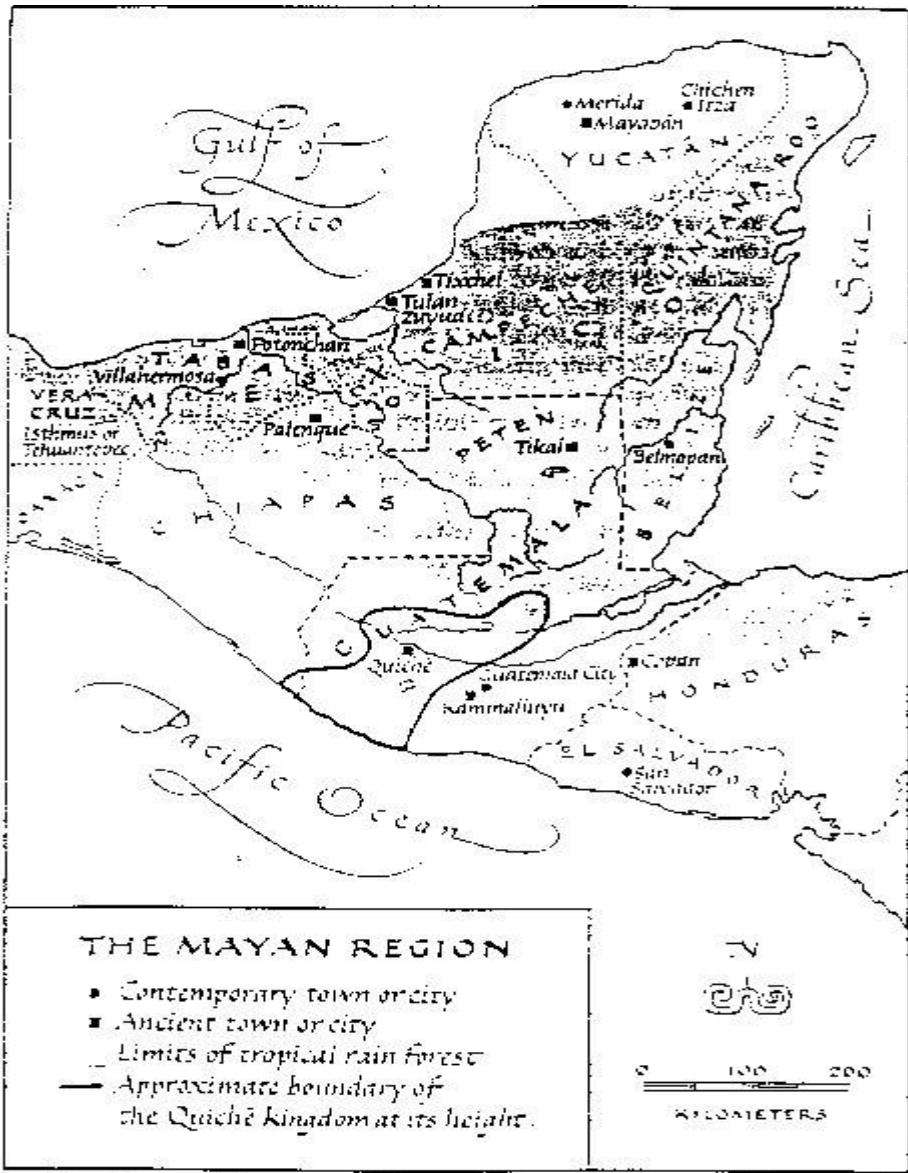
Boxtales is a theatre company which uses the artistic disciplines of movement, storytelling, live music, and mask work. Boxtales presents a high energy, highly interactive original storytelling experience, for young people, based in world mythology. This show features Matthew Tavianini, Marie Ponce, and Michael Andrews.

#### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

***The Popol Vuh – A Mayan Hero's Journey*** is a show based on the story of *The Hero Twins* story from the Quiche Mayan Book, the Popol Vuh.

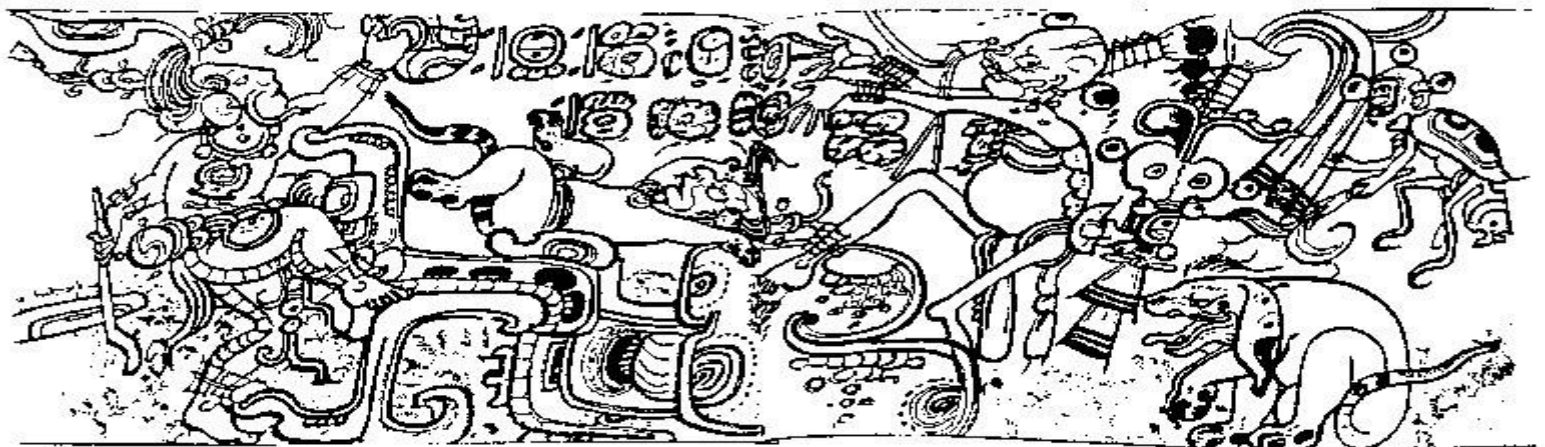
#### OBJECTIVES

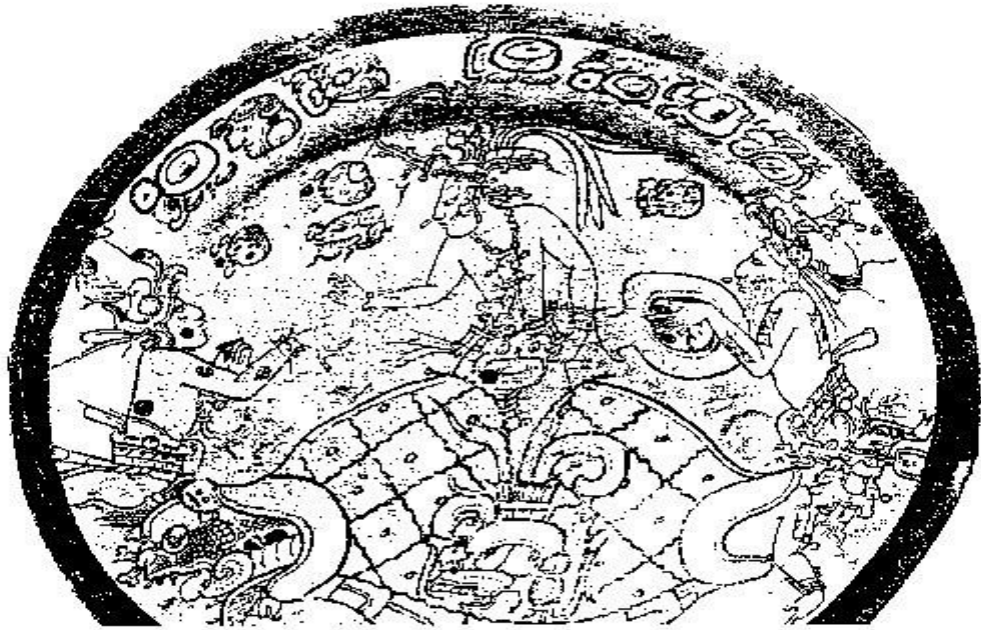
- To introduce students to a classic tale of the Quiche Mayan People
- To introduce students to bilingual Spanish-English storytelling.
- To encourage students to seek out and read other stories.
- To help develop creative imaginations.
- To introduce the importance of the oral tradition as an educational tool.
- To present stories that will help raise self-esteem and teach important lessons.



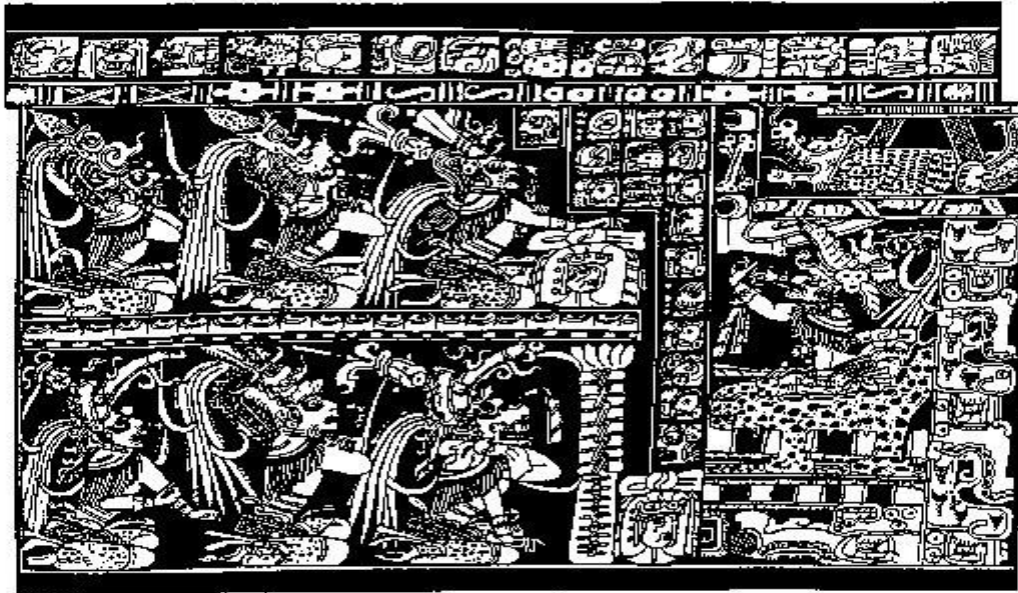
DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

Above are picture glyphs of the Hero Twins. To the left is a map of where the Maya lived and from where the Popol Vuh originated. Below is a drawing from a vase which tells the end of the Hero Twins story. This is the part where the Hero Twins come back and can bring things back to life. There is the dog who they brought back to life as well as the Lord of Xibaiba asking for the brothers to do it to them. Of course the Hero Twins do sacrifice the Lords, but don't bring them back to life. To the right in the picture is an insect which is probably the firefly who helps them in the house of darkness, which you can read about in written versions of the Popol Vuh.





Above are the Hero Twins painted on a plate. They are watering the corn. The corn god appears in the middle from a cracked turtle shell. Below are the Lords of Xibalba.



# “Popol Vuh – A Mayan Hero’s Journey”

**Popol Vuh – A Mayan Heores’ Journey** is a show comprised of the story of *The Hero Twins* from the Quiche Mayan book of the Popol Vuh..

## The Hero Twins

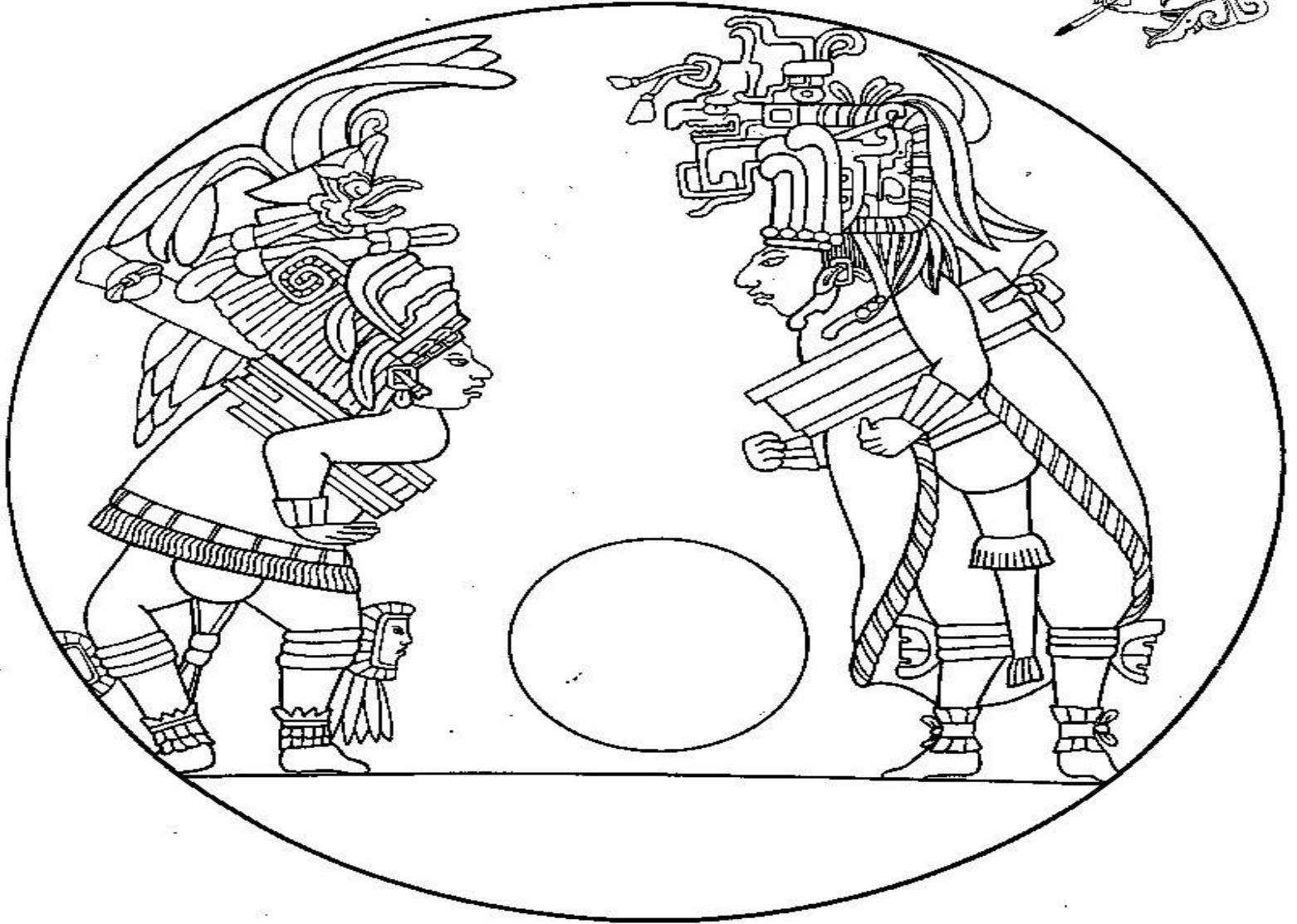
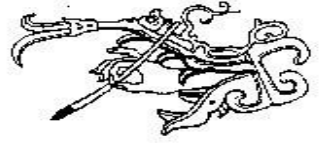
The Popol Vuh (The Book of the People) comes from the Quiche Mayan people of Southern Mexico and parts of Central America. The Mayan presence in Mexico dates back at least 2,000 years ago. Their cultural achievements included advance mathematics (ex. the concept of zero), monumental architecture, splendid art, city states, sophisticated scriptures and observations of the stars, and a calendar considered to be more accurate than the one used by us today. Their religious system was based on the cosmos and nature, which required honoring the gods of the natural forces. Agriculture, especially corn, was vital to the Mayan culture. The word milpa(s), which means a maize (corn) field, comes from the Mayan language. In fact, according to Mayan myth, human beings were made out of corn.

The story of the Popol Vuh involves the creation of all life on Earth for the Maya. It told the Maya about their history as well their future. The story was first told amongst the Maya, and then later pictures of it were drawn on folded, bark- paper books with jaguar- skin covers. These pictures were also carved on stone, and painted on pottery. These illustrations created a codex, which was later translated. It wasn’t until the 1500’s that it was finally translated to a “western language”.

In the show *Popol Vuh – A Mayan Heores’ Journey*, BOXTALES performs the story of *The Hero Twins* from the Popol Vuh. *The Hero Twins* story deals with the twin brothers who clear the path for human beings to arrive on Earth. Thus, the Hero Twins are actually heavenly beings, not human beings. In the Popol Vuh, there is first the story of the Hero Twins’ father. The father was a twin as well, and he went on a journey down to the Underworld where the Lords of Xibalba live. The Lords put forward several tests to the father and his brother, all of which they failed, and consequently sacrificed.

*The Hero Twins* story is the story of two twin brothers setting off on their journey to avenge the death of their father and the meaningful discoveries they make on the way. The story is filled with magic and a close connection to the animal world. In the story, the Hero Twins are challenged by tests put to them by the Lords of Xibalba. Now even though the Lords of Xibalba seem like “enemies” or would be considered “evil”, the Mayans had no word for evil. What the Lords of Xibalba represented was the struggle between life and death, what we all face in our journey as human beings.

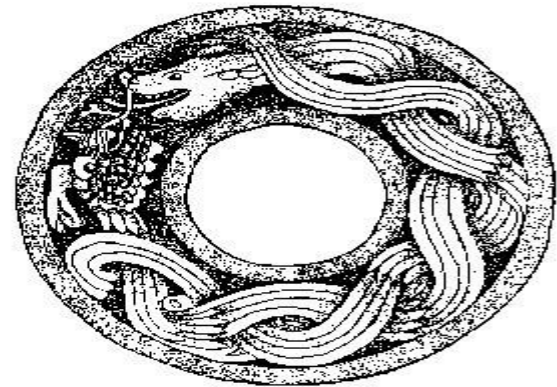
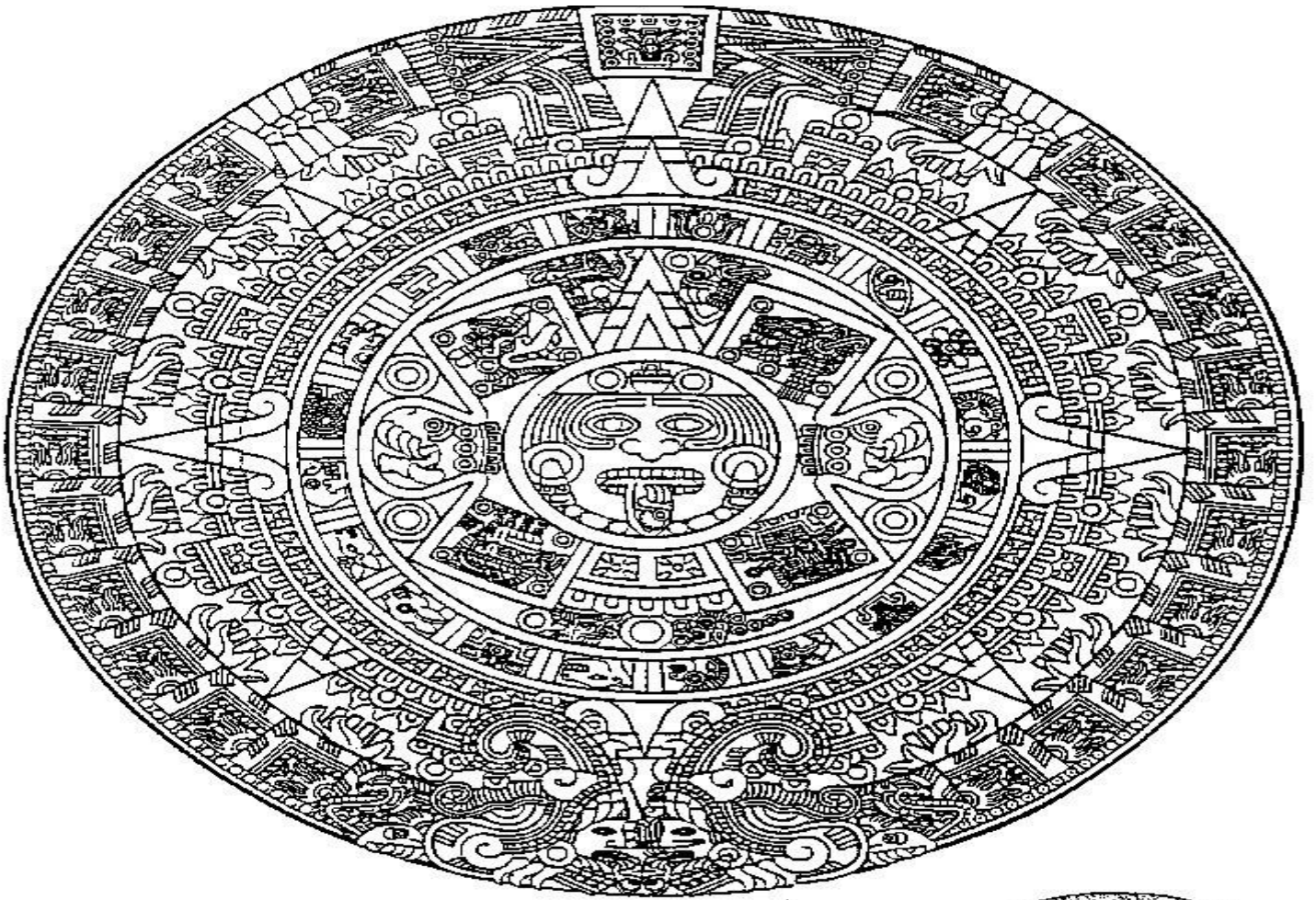
From a Maya stone marker from a ball court, from Cancuén, Guatemala lowlands; Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Guatemala. Late Classic period, c. A.D. 795.



Color in the above illustration.

#### TWO BALL PLAYERS

The game of Tlachtli was played with a six inch rubber ball and was based on the movements of the moon and stars. The game represented the struggle between Xolotl, the god of twilight and the setting sun, and Quetzalcoatl, the god of the morning star and the rising sun. It represented the struggle between light and darkness and the changes of fate. The ball court had a temple at each end and there were stone rings along the walled sides through which the ball was meant to pass. Jewelry was piled at each end of the court and wagers were made. The players could bounce the ball only with their hips, which were padded, often with stone yokes. Whichever side put the ball through the ring first won the game and the jewelry. Omens were read by the movements of the ball.



Above is an example of the Aztec Calendar and to the right is an example of the ring through which the ball players would hit the ball in the ancient ball game called tlachtli.

## Bibliography

### Popol Vuh

Popol Vuh, Ralph Nelson, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1976

Popol Vuh, Dennis Tedlock, Touchstone Book, New York, 1985.

Popol Vuh (Video) Patricia Amlin

Fantastic, but unfortunately very hard to find in hard copy. We checked it out from the LA. library, you may try through inter-library loans or at a local university. It is now on YouTube!

Warriors Gods and Spirits from Central and South American Mythology, Douglas Gifford, Schocken Books 1983. (Very good basic Source)

## Other Related Readings

The Wonderful Chirriónera and Other Tales from Mexican Folklore (Great collection, read Sandal Leather), David L Lindsey Heidelberg Publishers Inc., 1974.

The Hummingbird King (Guatemala), Argentina Palacios, Troll Associates, 1993. *Guatemalan legend. A young chief, protected by a hummingbird, is killed and then transformed into a quetzal bird, the symbol of freedom*

Eyes that See Do Not Grow Old, Guy A. Zona, Touchstone/Simon and Schuster 1996. *Proverbs of Mexico, Central and South America*

How We Came to the Fifth World, Harriet Rohmer & Mary Anchondo Children's Book Press, 1988. *A Creation Myth from Ancient Mexico.*

The Mouse Bride A Mayan Folktale, Judith Dupre, Umbrella Book, 1993

The Making of Human Beings, in the book called *In the Beginning*, Virginia Hamilton, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1988 (*Part of the Popol Vuh*)

How Music Game to the World, Hal Ober, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994 (*Aztec*)

Incas, Aztecs and Mayas (Coloring Book) Bellerophon Books, 122 Helena Ave. Santa Barbara, CA. 93101

## Possible Follow-Up Projects

1. Ask students to paint or sketch their versions of one part of the Popol Vuh.
2. Have students write the story as they remember it.
3. Ask the students why the scene of the twins clearing the planting fields is important to

the Maya.

4. Imagine you are a character in one of the stories. Which one would you like to be? What would you do differently than what that character did?
5. Read some of the stories from the bibliography.
6. Get a version of the Popol Vuh and read about the other sections of the story.
7. Here are some modern Mexican proverbs, what do they mean to you?

He, who conquers his anger, conquers his enemy.

Todo el mundo sonrie en el mismo idioma.

All the world smiles in the same language.

The rat who knows one hole, is soon caught by the cat.