

Achilles' Shield

This activity furthers literary and artistic knowledge, promotes teamwork, and provides an outlet for creativity.

Instructions:

- Print out the following templates, making sure to read the special instructions included on a few of the template pages.
- Read the following lesson about Homer's *Iliad* and Achilles' Shield to your class (or create your own).
- Split your class up into small groups.
- Distribute the templates and have the students cut out the shapes and then draw (in their groups) the scenes **written on the backs** of the pieces.
- Use tape to put together the shield together again on your wall and display as a piece of art. You now have your own Shield!

Brief Lesson:

Homer's *Iliad* is a long poem (which is called an *epic*) from ancient Greece about a historic war called the Trojan War. This poem, however, is more fictional than historic; it follows the deeds of the Greek gods and Greek, and even Trojan, heroes as they go through this war. The main hero is named Achilles, and he is the bravest of the Greek warriors. He is the son of an ocean goddess named Thetis. Because he is the son of a goddess, he has the special power of being unable to be wounded anywhere on his body — except at his heel.

Before her son goes into battle, Thetis (Achilles' mother), brings him a very special shield. It is a shield made by Hephaestus, the Greek god of metalworking and volcanoes.

Here is what the shield he makes Achilles looks like:

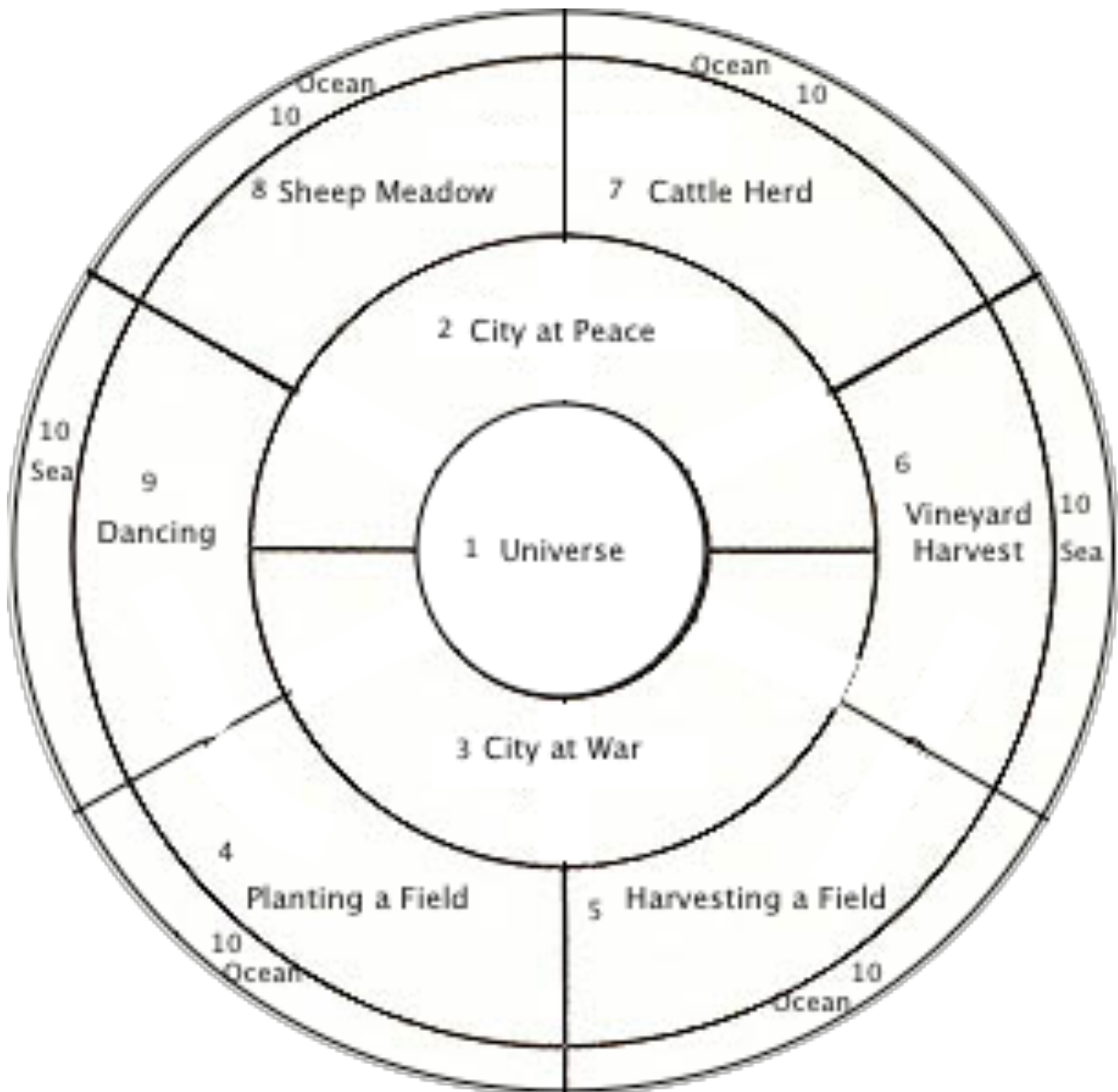
“First of all he forged a shield that was huge and heavy,
he elaborated many things in his skill and craftsmanship.
He made the whole universe upon it, the earth, sky, sea,
and the tireless sun, and the moon waxing into her fullness,
and on it all the constellations that garland the heavens.
On it he wrought in all their beauty two cities of mortal
men. In the first city there were marriages, and festivals.
They were leading the brides through the city with songs.
The young men followed the circles of the dance, and among them
musicians on flutes and lyres kept playing lively music.
But around the other city were lying two armies of armed men
shining in their war gear. But the city's people were not giving way,
and prepared for an ambush. And Ares and Athena,
the god and goddess of War led them.
The god of Metalworking made upon the shield a soft field, the pride of the tilled land,
with many ploughmen who wheeled their teams of oxen as they planted seed.
The earth darkened behind them and looked like earth that has been ploughed
though it was gold. Such was the wonder of the shield's forging.
He made on it many laborers were harvesting grain, with sharp reaping hooks in their
hands. The cut grain fell along the lines of reaping, one after another,
which other laborers caught up and tied into bushes and sheaths.
The god made on it a great vineyard heavy with grape clusters,
lovely and in gold, but the grapes upon it were darkened
and the vines themselves stood out through poles of silver.
Young girls and young men, the grape-pickers,
carried the kind, sweet fruit away in their woven baskets amid song and dance.
The smith made upon it a herd of oxen. The cattle
were wrought of gold and of tin, and thronged in speed and with lowing
out of the dung of the farmyard to a pasturing place by a sounding
river, and beside the moving field of a reed bed.
The herdsman were of gold who went along with the cattle,
four of them, and nine dogs barking and following them.
But among the largest of the cattle two formidable lions prowled, looking for prey.
And the renowned smith of the strong arms made on it a meadow
large and in a lovely valley full of glimmering sheep folds.
And the god made elaborate on it a dancing floor, and there were handsome young
men and beautiful girls, holding hands and dancing in spinning circles.
And the girls wore fair garlands on their heads, while the young men
carried golden knives that hung from sword-belts of silver.
And around the lovely chorus of dancers stood a great audience
happily watching, while among the dancers two acrobats
led the measures of song and dance revolving among them.
Lastly, he made on it the great strength of the Ocean River
which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's strong structure.

(adaptation of the translation by Richard Lattimore)

Division of Shield - (for you to help the students get started, see images below)

1. The Universe - the sun, the moon, the planets, and the constellations.
2. City at Peace - a marriage ceremony, festivals with singing and dancing,
3. City at War - two armies surrounding a city getting ready to attack a city
4. Planting of the Field - some farmers planting seeds in rows in a field, other farmers ploughing the field
5. Harvesting of the Field - farmers harvesting grain with sickles and tying the grain in bundles
6. Vineyard Harvest - people happily picking grapes from vines and collecting them in baskets
7. Cattle Herd - cows in a pasture, herdsman and their dogs, two lions that look like they might want to take a cow for dinner
8. Sheep Meadow - happy sheep grazing in a meadow filled with grass and bright with sunlight
9. Dance Floor - happy people dancing in a circle and wearing flower garlands on their heads, two acrobats doing tricks
- 10 (and on). The Great Ocean - the surface of the ocean with waves and fish underneath, maybe seaweed and crabs or maybe fishing boats floating on it

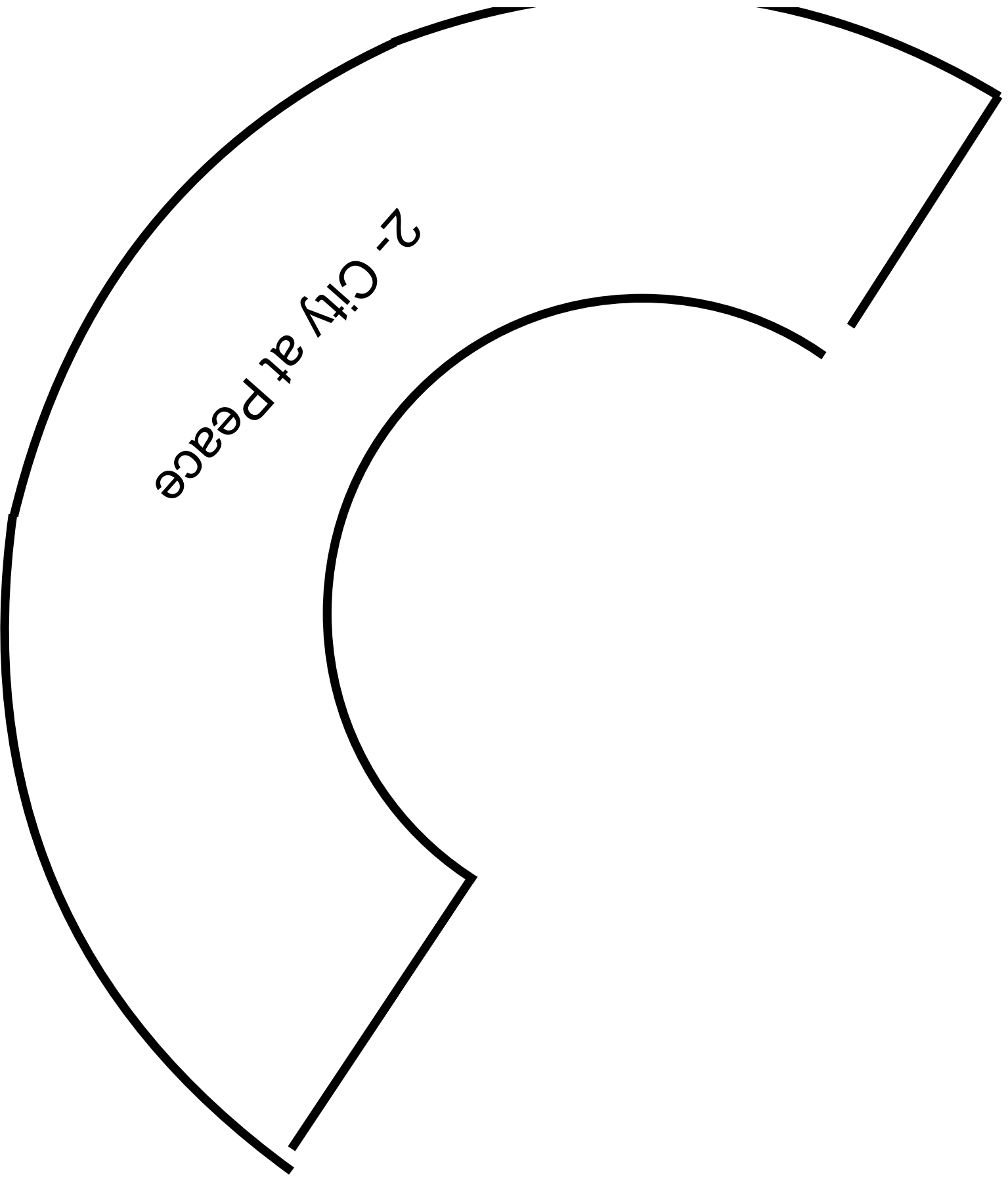
General Outline:
No need to print.



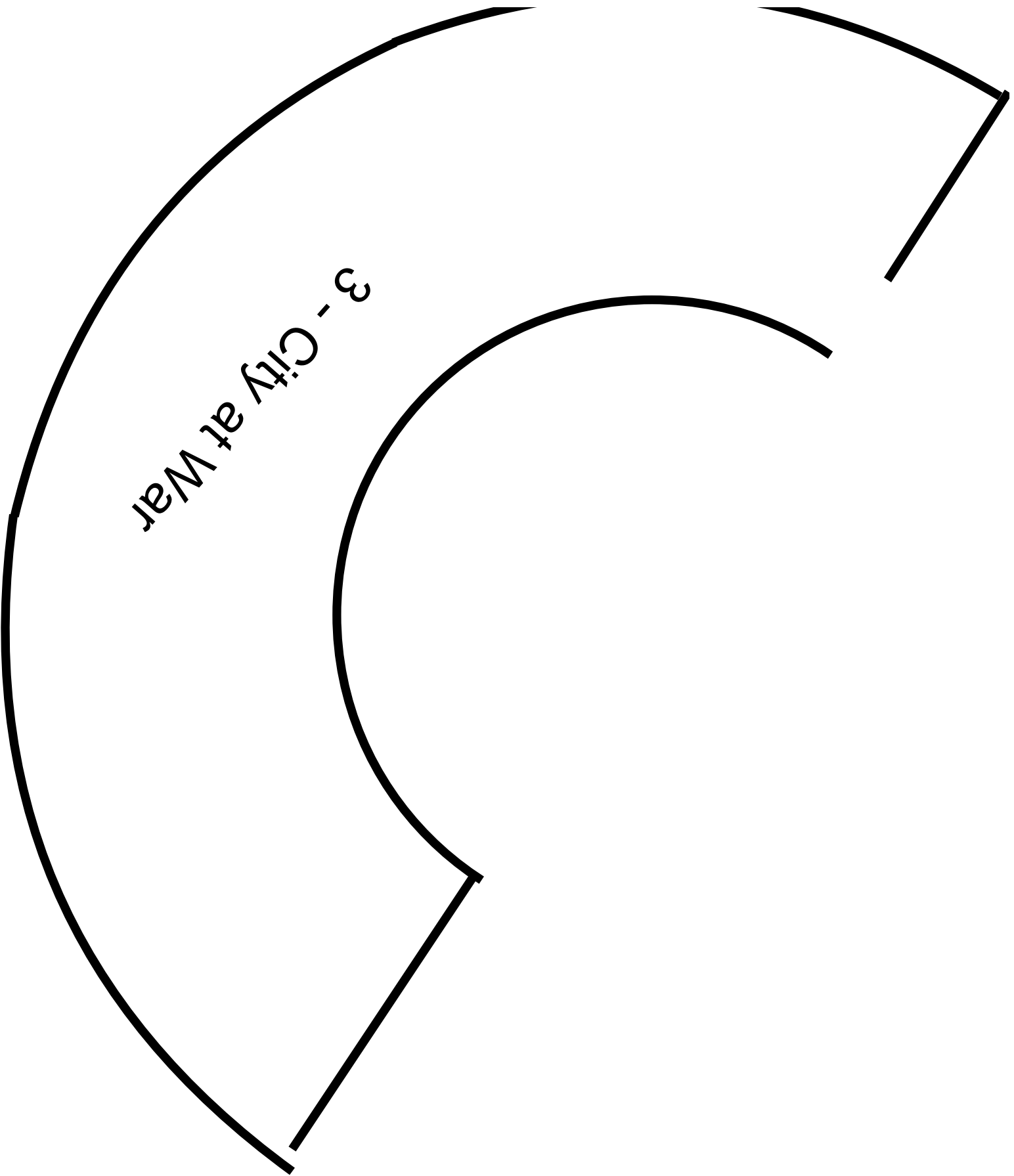


1 - Universe

2- City at Peace



3 - City at War



Print 6 and circle **one** of the following scenes on **each** for each of 6 groups draw. You should have one of each scene.

4 - Planting a Field

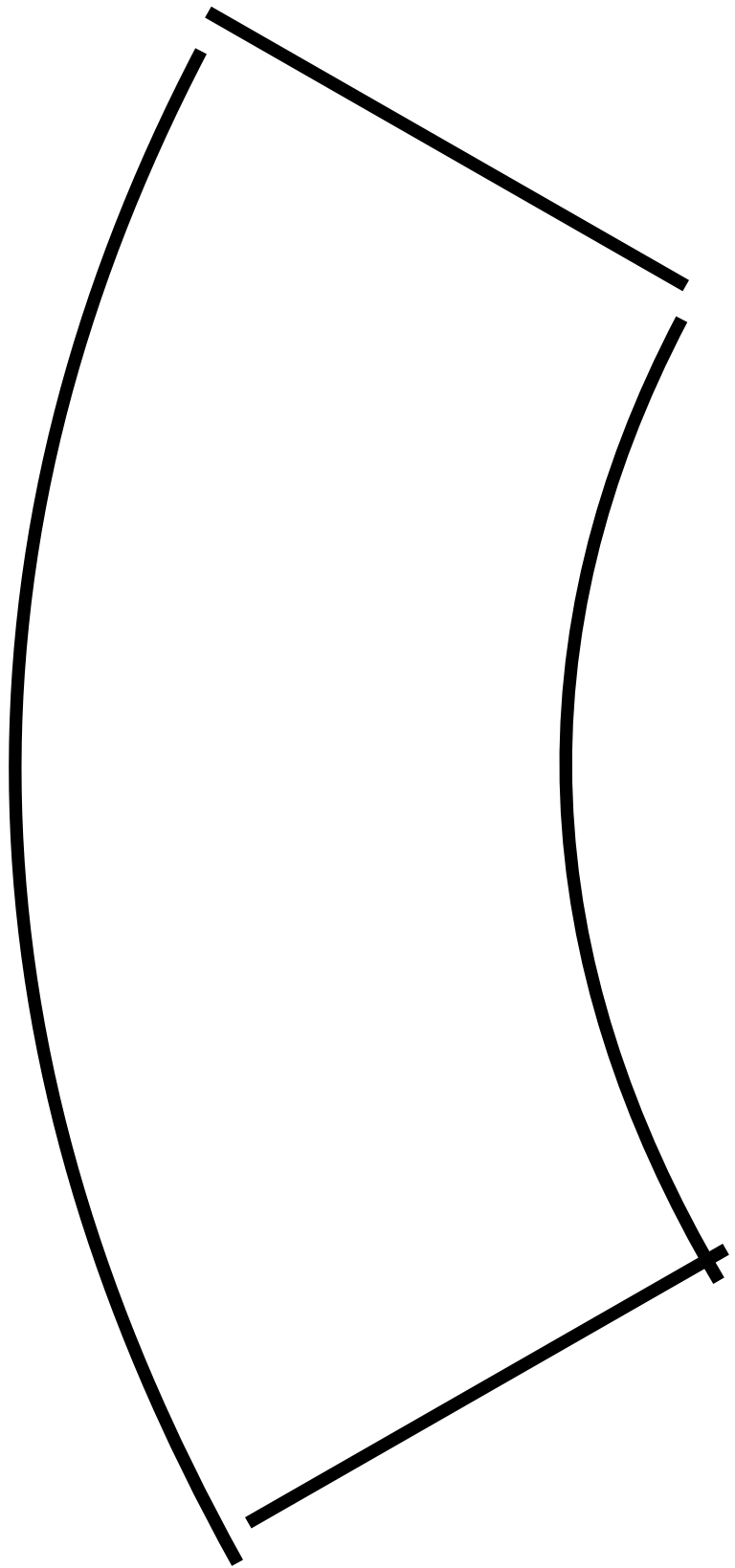
5 - Harvesting a Field

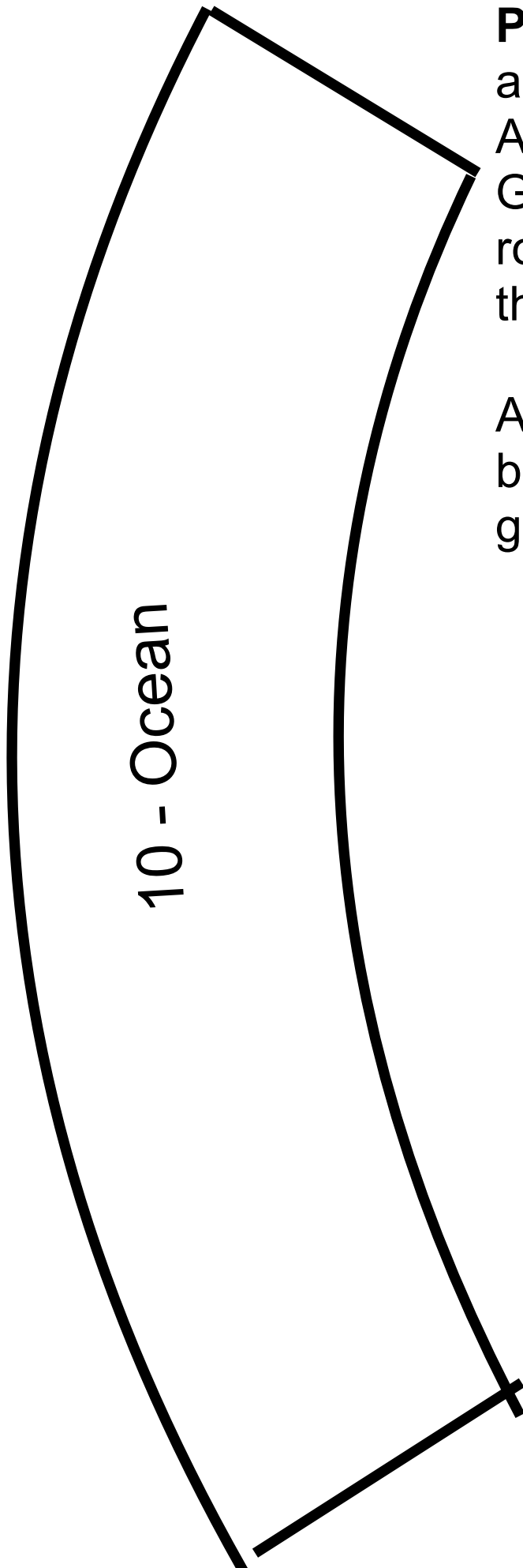
6 - Vineyard Harvest

7 - Cattle Herd

8 - Sheep Meadow

9 - Dancing





10 - Ocean

Print 6 and decorate
as Ocean on all.
All will be of the
Great Ocean sur-
rounding the rest of
the shield

All 6 can be one can
be given to one
group.