

Lesson Plans for ***The Well of Sacrifice*** **by Chris Eboch**

Group Debate Project using *The Well of Sacrifice* by Chris Eboch

Adapted from a project created by teachers at Seattle's COHO*NOMS school.

Have the students take on the roles of different characters in the book. They will then debate what should be done with Eveningstar. (Sacrifice her? Banish her? Reward her?) Each "character" should only use arguments based on what that character knew in the book (for example, what they personally witnessed or may have heard rumors about). Students should stay in character, debating from the point of view of the fictional character, not from their own feelings.

Possible characters include:

Feather Dawn (Eveningstar's sister)
Blue Quetzal (Eveningstar's mother)
Eighteen Rabbit (Eveningstar's father)
Small (the slave, later named Shield)
Great Skull Zero (the high priest)
Smoking Squirrel (the good priest)
Double Bird (Eveningstar's sister-in-law)

The following characters die partway through the book. They can be used if the debate is taking place earlier in the story, or they can be used later as "ghosts."

Smoke Shell (Eveningstar's brother)
King Flint Sky God

Persuasive Letter Project using *The Well of Sacrifice* by Chris Eboch

Adapted from a project created by teachers at Seattle's COHO*NOMS school.

Take on the role of one character from the book. Write a persuasive letter in the voice of that character. You can write the letter to either another character from the book, or to a new character you invent. The letter should try to persuade the recipient to take a specific action either for or against Eveningstar. You can choose to write from any time over the course of the story. (For example, you can pretend you are Feather Dawn writing a letter before Smoke Shell's death.)

Possible characters include:

Feather Dawn (Eveningstar's sister)
Blue Quetzal (Eveningstar's mother)
Eighteen Rabbit (Eveningstar's father)
Smoke Shell (Eveningstar's brother)
Small (the slave, later named Shield)
Great Skull Zero (the high priest)
Smoking Squirrel (the good priest)
Double Bird (Eveningstar's sister-in-law)
King Flint Sky God

Art Projects using *The Well of Sacrifice* by Chris Eboch

Some items adapted from material prepared by Marilyn Meyer at COHO*NOMS school.

1. Using watercolors or colored pencils, paint the jungle as it is described in Chapter 1. (see also pp. 82-83)

2. Different cultures have different mythologies of creation. Draw a creation story based on Mayan mythology.

3. Draw the costumes of Mayan warriors (see p. 25), the king (see p. 31), or a rich noblewoman (see p. 18-22)

4. Study the description of a market on page 78. Find pictures of some of the items mentioned (try the encyclopedia or books on the Maya). Design a mail order catalog that features Mayan trade goods. Draw pictures of the items and write descriptions of them to tempt people to buy.

5. Design a comic strip for *The Hero Twins Defeat the Lords of Death*. (see p. 39-43)

6. Draw a comic based on a scene from *The Well of Sacrifice*.

7. Review the description of the monument to the victory over the savages on p. 73. Choose an important event in your life or your family. Design a monument to that event. You can change the details to make the monument more impressive.

8. Design a Mayan pectoral (large pendant) for you to wear. Cut the pieces out of colored paper and hand them on yarn. See the pictures 53, 88 and 225.

Discussion Questions using *The Well of Sacrifice* by Chris Eboch

Some items adapted from material prepared by Marilyn Meyer at COHO*NOMS school.

Social Roles (see chapters 2 and 9):

What was the role of women in 9th century Mayan society?

What was the role of men?

What was childhood like for girls?

For boys?

Review the rituals children went through to become adults (see chapter 9). Does your own culture have anything like a coming-of-age ceremony? What things mark the passage from childhood to adulthood in American society? How long does childhood last in each culture?

Discuss the Mayan attitudes toward death (see Chapters 4, 5, 13 and 14).

Discuss the Mayan funeral customs for the death of royalty (see Chapter 13 and 14). Compare to the customs of other ancient cultures (Egyptians? Greek? Roman? Chinese?) Compare to modern funeral practices.

How did the war with the savages in the jungle affect life in the Mayan city? How would a war happening away from your home today affect you and your city?

Compare and contrast Eveningstar and Feather Dawn. Which of them would fit best into our culture today?

Discuss the Mayan social divisions (royalty, nobility, merchants, artisans, peasants, slaves). Do you think these divisions are fair? Why or why not?

Critique *The Well of Sacrifice*. What did you like about it? What did you dislike? What would you have changed? Who were your favorite characters? Which parts did you like best? Which parts were boring or confusing? How could those have been changed to be better?

“Those who do not study history are condemned to repeat it.” What does this mean? What can we learn from the Maya that are important lessons today?

What is historical fiction? Is it a useful way to learn history? Why or why not? Which parts of the book are most likely true, and which parts are made up? How can you tell?

Team Projects using *The Well of Sacrifice* by Chris Eboch

Some items adapted from material prepared by Marilyn Meyer at COHO*NOMS school.

1. Work in small groups. You are anthropologists, looking for data about the Mayan world. First brainstorm a list of topics. Then make lists for each topic, using *The Well of Sacrifice* or other books about the Maya.

Sample list of topics:

Foods and food preparation

Local animals and birds

Mayan names

Art and decorative items

Clothing and jewelry

Rain forest products

Religious rituals

Funeral customs

Rules of war

Mayan social divisions (royalty, nobility, merchants, artisans, peasants)

Trade items and practices

2. Work in small groups on this research project. Compare the science and education of the Mayan nobility with the same period of time (9th century) in:

Western Europe

China

Japan

Islamic North Africa

3. Work in small groups on this research project. Compare and contrast the Mayan ball game with modern basketball.

Journal Questions using *The Well of Sacrifice* by Chris Eboch

Adapted from material prepared by Marilyn Meyer at COHO*NOMS school.

Why do you think Small did not reveal Eveningstar when they first met in the jungle? Did he betray his people? Were his actions based on good or bad intentions? Were the results good or bad?

Using color photographs of a Central American jungle or city, be a tour guide or travel writer and describe the jungle or city.

Is human sacrifice different from murder? Why or why not?

Review the coming-of-age ceremony on p. 85-89. Create a rite of passage ritual for our times. Describe the preparations, dress, location, the ceremony itself, and any celebration afterward.

Pretend you are reviewing *The Well of Sacrifice* for your local newspaper. Write a description of the book, and explain why people should or should not read the book.

Read a few short stories or picture books about the Maya. Then write a short story set in Mayan times. Choose one simple event to write about. If you wish, you can take a modern story or a folktale, and rewrite it set in Mayan times.