

Cultural Squares

GROUP SIZE

The game is played in groups of five. When there are less than five to form an additional group, the extra participants can be assigned the role of OBSERVER/JUDGE. If there are four extra participants, you may form a new group requiring one of the participants to be responsible for two squares.

TIME

Approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

ROOM SET-UP

A room with enough tables to accommodate your group. Each table should have five or six chairs, depending on whether you have assigned OBSERVERS to each group. Groups should be far enough apart that any one group cannot see another group solving their problem.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this simulation is to sensitize participants to the problems involved in cross-cultural communications and problem solving. As in any simulation of reality, it has a degree of artificiality, but the purpose is to expose participants to the emotional dimensions of cross-cultural communication and problem solving.

The following issues are involved in this simulation:

- To understand the need for sharing and cooperating in a group;
- To become aware of the importance of each group member;
- To experience communication in a group on a non-verbal level.

PROCEDURE:

1. The large group is divided (see above), into smaller groups of five or six.
2. Before they go to their tables, the game leader leads the whole group in a discussion on cooperation. You may use the following questions to start the discussion:

What things are important in order for a group to work together?

(Possible answers: trust, cooperation, sharing, acceptance, encouragement...)

What exactly does "cooperation" mean?

How does cooperation expressed in the following situations happen?

- ◆ a construction worker building a house
- ◆ an athlete running a race
- ◆ a salesperson selling a product
- ◆ a quarterback playing in a football game

Discuss how each one requires the skills of other people, even if at first it doesn't seem so. (An athlete needs a coach, etc.)

3. The groups now go to their respective tables. Read the following instructions to them:

You are now going to play the game of Cultural Squares. In a way, you are entering the new society of Squares town. There are some rules that must be observed to function well in this new society. You may not like the rules very much, and you may find them difficult to adhere to, but if you are to make the appropriate "cultural" adjustment, you must be careful to observe the rules.

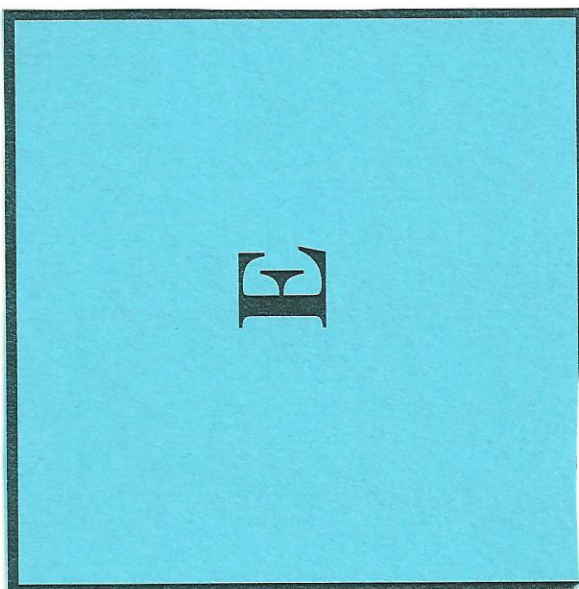
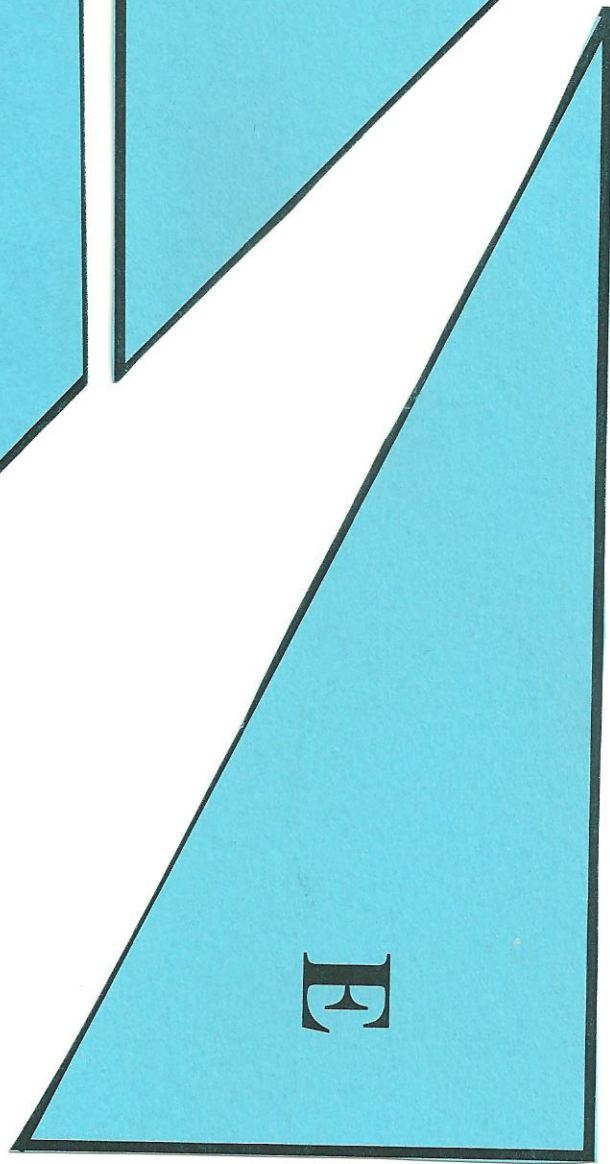
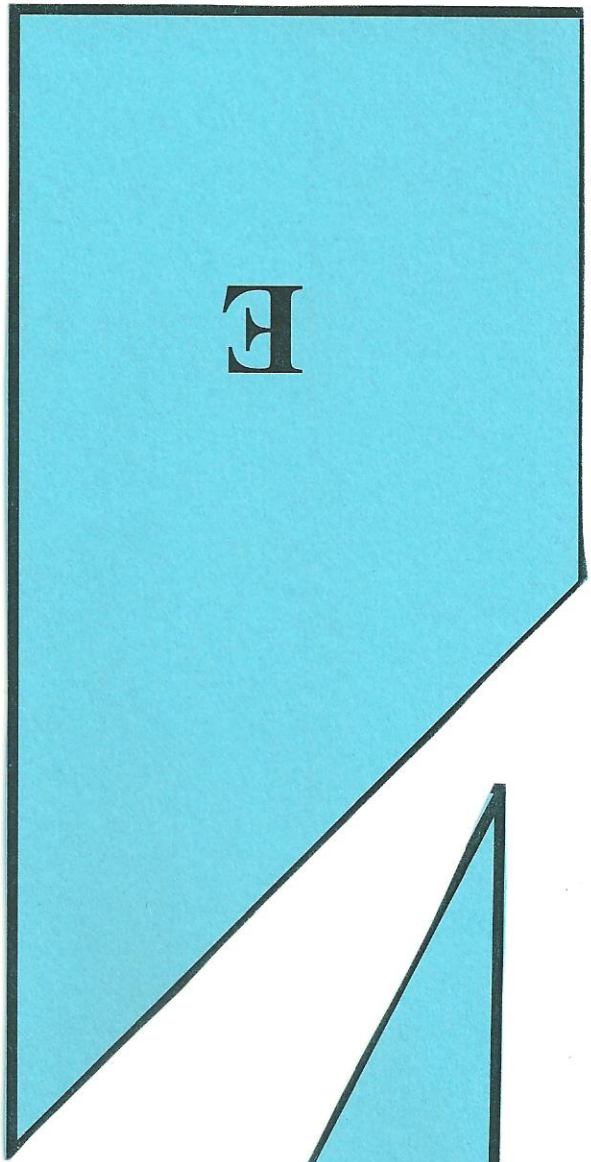
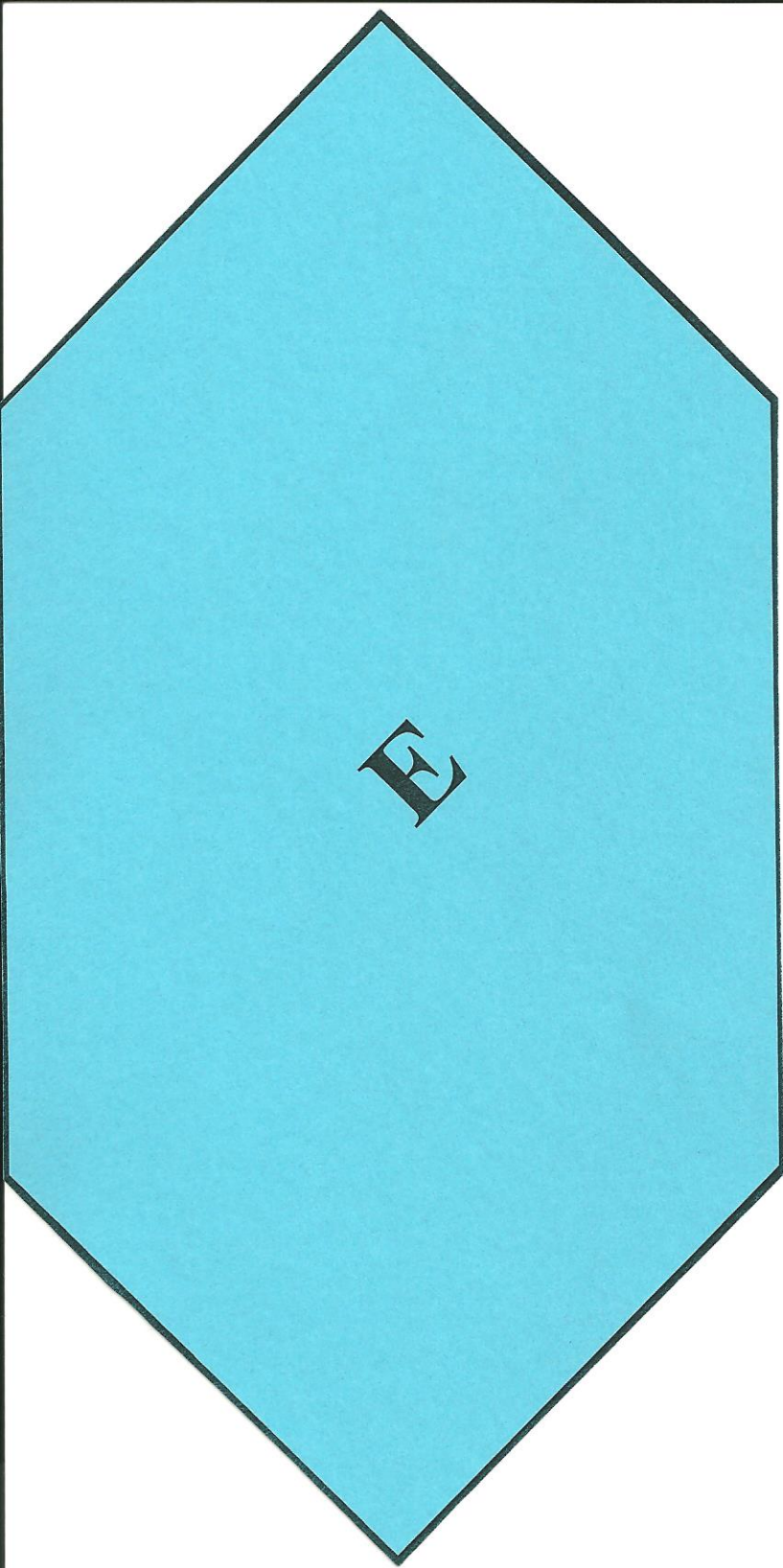
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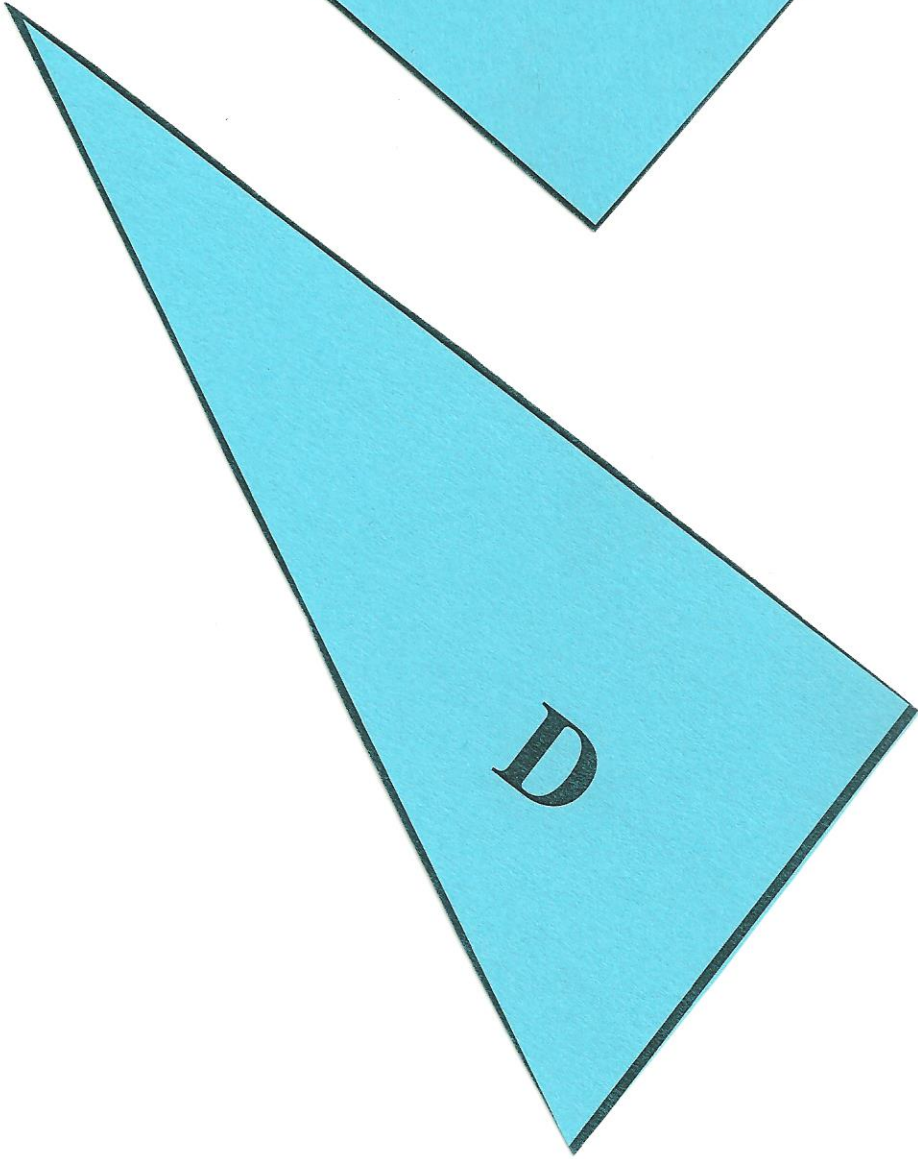
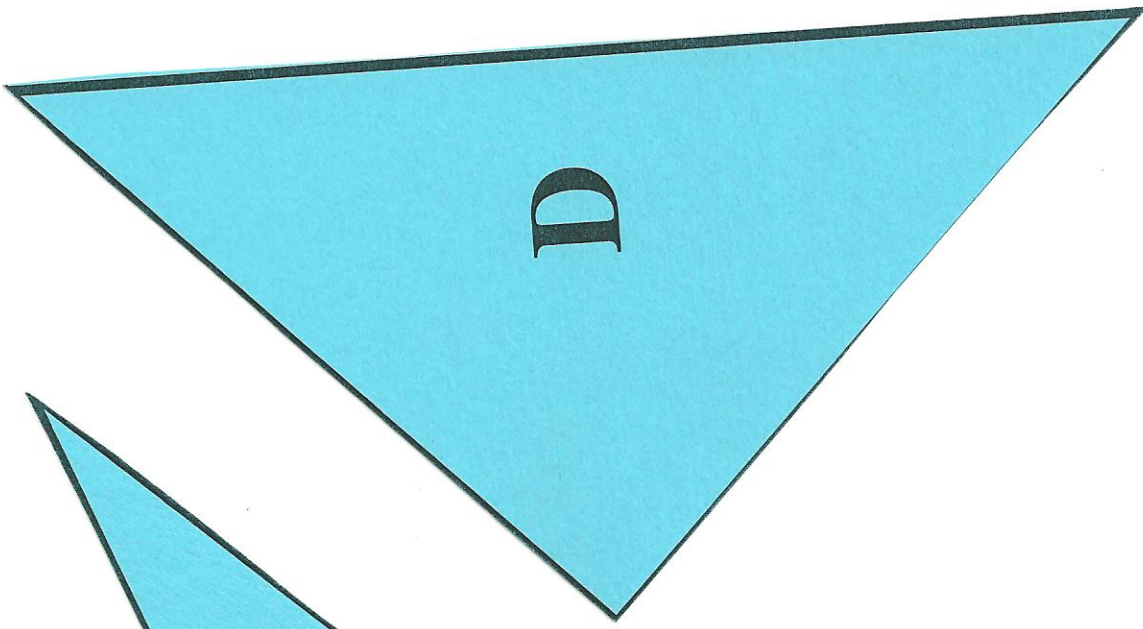
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- ◆ No one may ask for a puzzle piece.
- ◆ No one may gesture with his/her hands, eyes, or any other way to communicate with other members of the group.
- ◆ No one may place his/her pieces in the center of the table for others to take.
- ◆ No one may take a puzzle piece away from another group member.
- ◆ You may **only give away** the puzzle pieces of the square in front of you and you may take pieces offered to you.

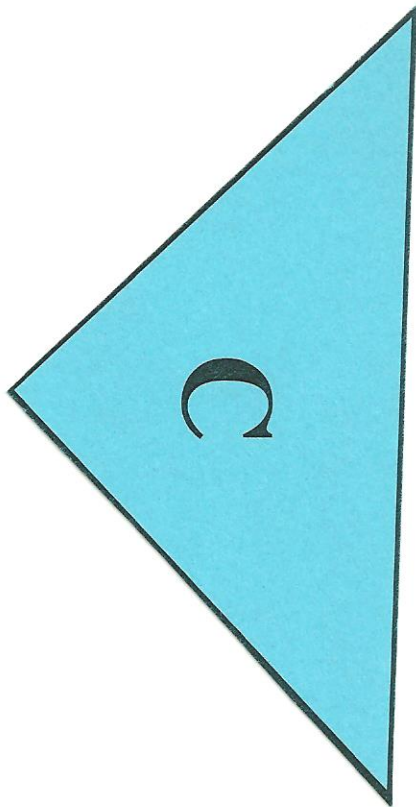
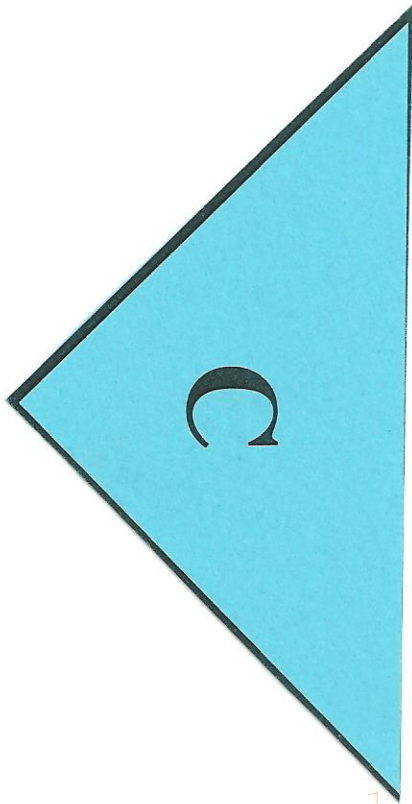
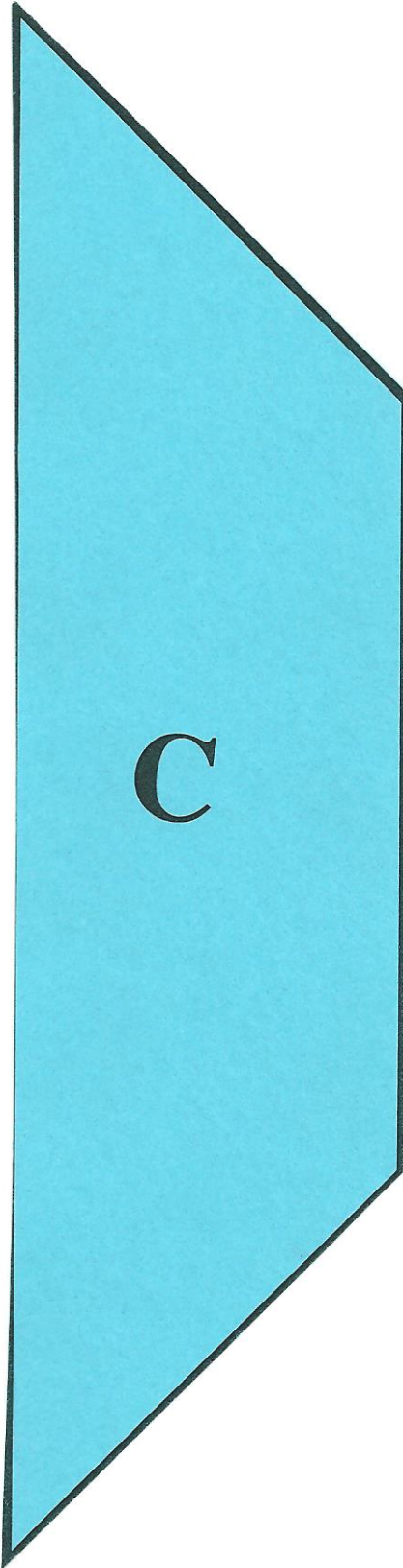
In order to accomplish the goal of the game - a completed square in front of each participant - the only thing you can do is give away your pieces.

If there are OBSERVER/JUDGES in the groups, please read the instructions that you will be given shortly and act accordingly.

4. Distribute a set of envelopes to each group. Each group member takes an envelope and waits for the game leader's next instructions. If there is an OBSERVER/JUDGE in the group, distribute an instruction sheet to him/her. He/she may read the instruction while waiting for the game leader to proceed. The groups wait until all the envelopes are distributed. The game leader then gives the







CULTURAL SQUARES

Cultural Squares is a game that helps participants become sensitive to the problems involved in cross-cultural communications and problem-solving. It helps participants understand the need for sharing and cooperating in a group; to become aware of the importance of each group member; to experience communicating non-verbally and verbally in a group.

Groups are instructed to form squares out of several geometric shapes, following three simple rules:

- ◆ They may not talk
- ◆ They may not ask for pieces
- ◆ They may only give away of their pieces

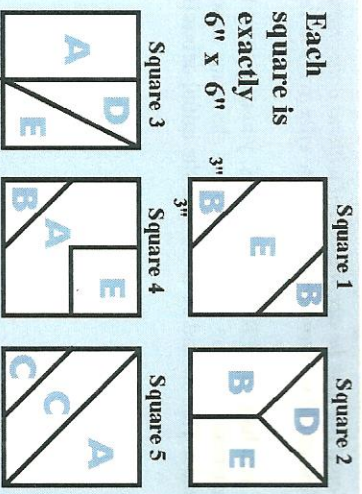
MATERIALS

Each group is given a complete set of squares. The set consists of five envelopes with cardboard puzzle pieces in each, which, when properly arranged, will form five squares of equal size. There is also an instruction sheet for the OBSERVER/JUDGE.

One set is included for you. To prepare more sets, cut out five cardboard squares, each exactly 6" x 6". Place the squares in a row and mark them as below, placing the letters on the pieces so they can be placed in the appropriately marked envelopes.

The lines should be so drawn that the small triangles in squares 1, 4 and 5 will be exactly the same size; pieces marked B and E in square 2 will be the same size, etc. Several combinations are possible that will form one or two squares, but only one combination will form all five squares. Cut each square along the lines indicated in the diagram below into the smaller pieces to make the parts of the puzzle.

Label the five envelopes A, B, C, D, and E. Place the matching pieces in each envelope. The following pieces should be in each envelope: A - 3 pieces; B - 4 pieces; C - 2 pieces; D - 2 pieces and E - 4 pieces.



Cultural Squares

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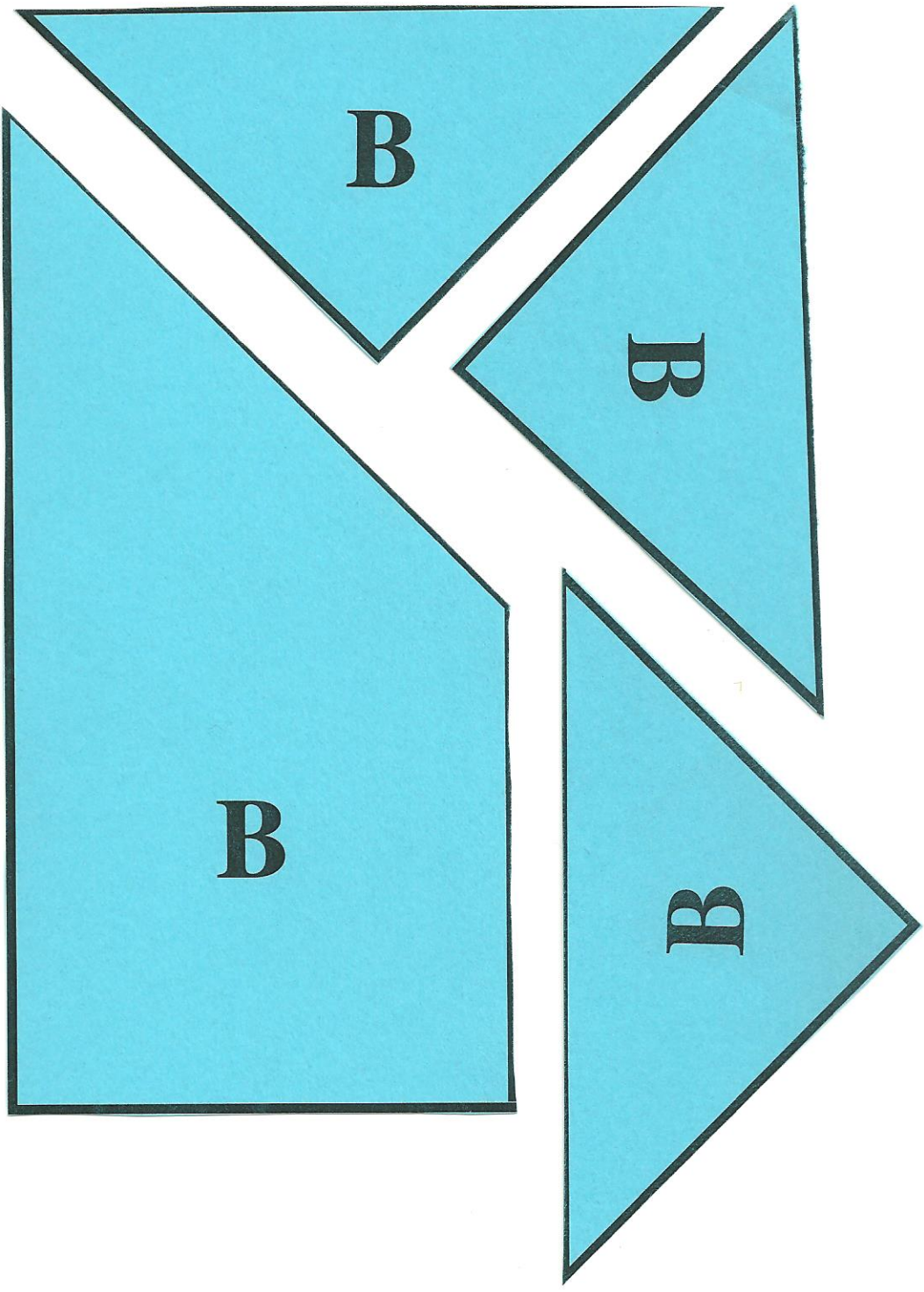
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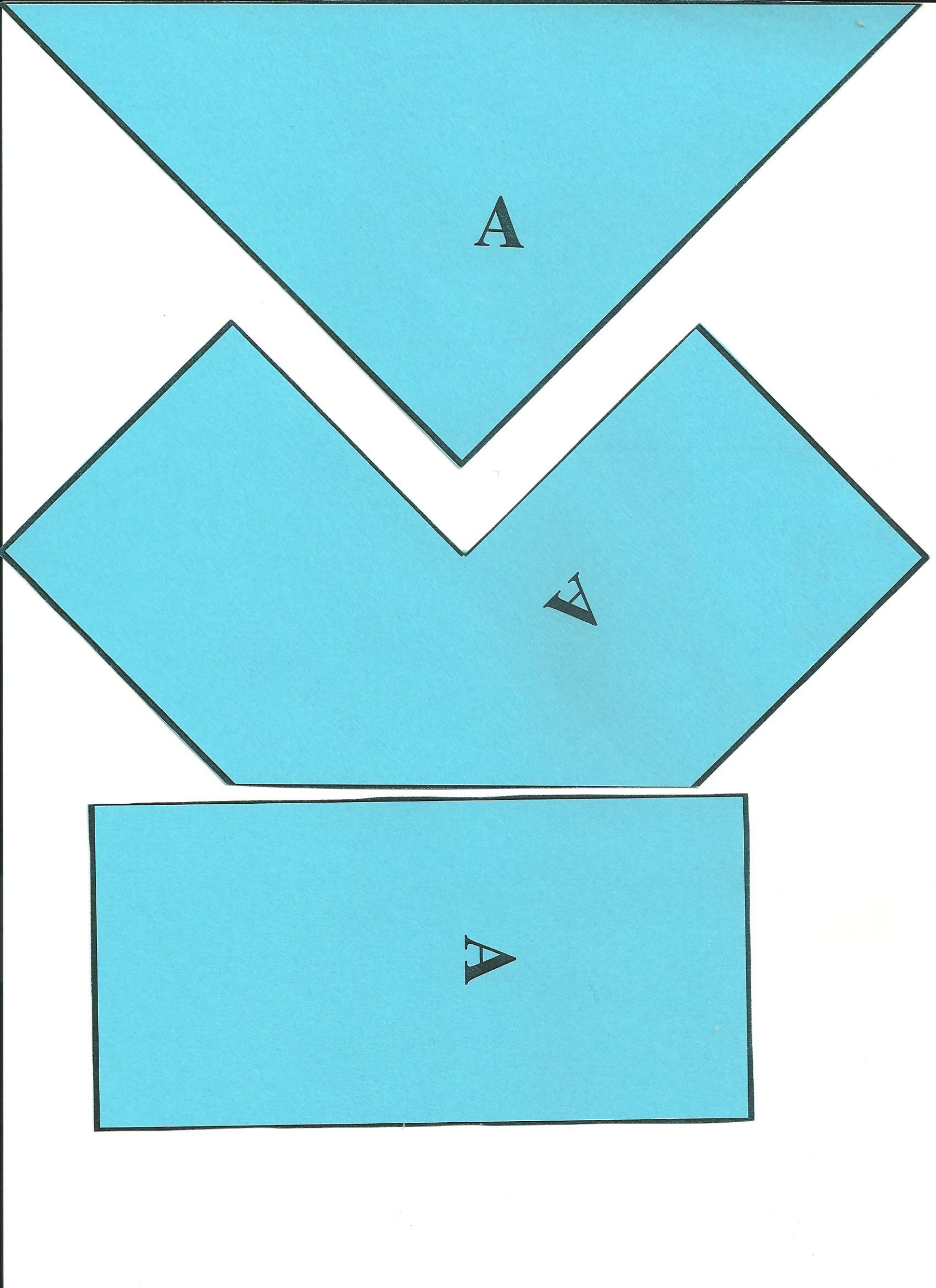
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Cultural Squares

OBSERVER/JUDGE INSTRUCTIONS

Your job is to be both an observer and a judge. As a judge it is your responsibility to insure that the participants keep the rules.

- ◆ There is to be no talking, pointing, etc.
- ◆ There is to be no placing of pieces in another person's square or taking of pieces which have not been directly given.
- ◆ It is permissible for a person to give away an entire square. It is NOT necessary to give only one piece at a time

As an observer, look for the following:

- ◆ Who has difficulty in keeping the rules?
- ◆ When does the 'frustration' level rise and what helps to resolve it?
- ◆ Who was willing to give away pieces?
- ◆ To what extent do the people for a solution in other people's pieces as opposed to concentrating only on their own pieces?
- ◆ Who develops a way of communication which is within the rules?
- ◆ Who drops out of the game? Does it create problems?

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instruction to them to begin. They may open the envelopes and proceed to construct their squares.

Allow 10 minutes for groups to finish the assigned task. Move among the tables and monitor the groups to ensure that the rules are adhered to. You may choose to stop the game after a specified time, or allow all groups to finish their tasks. You may also choose to instruct an OBSERVER/JUDGE at some point towards the end to assist a group if they are having serious difficulties. You may decide to have an inter-group competition with appropriate recognition to the group that solves the problem first.

5. After the allotted time has finished, debrief the game. The following are suggested questions:

Communication:

What happened in your group?

Was it easy or difficult communicating non-verbally?

Did some of you feel a sense of frustration? Why?

If the frustration was caused by an inability to communicate, how did you solve the problem?

How many feel that you can communicate in the game without breaking the rules?

What messages are sent in the willingness to give or not give away pieces?

What might have happened if communication was verbal?

Problem Solving:

How did your group cooperate?

What were the difficulties you experienced in your group?

Did every person do his/her part?

Did one person become boss?

Were some people more willing to give away pieces than other?

Did any one feel that they had completed the task when they finished their own square?

Why did we hear the instructions individualistically when they are clearly stated in group terms?

Could the task be accomplished without cooperation?

How could we work together more effectively to reach our goals?

If you had OBSERVER/JUDGES, you may want them to read their instructions to the whole group and share any observations they have made. This should be done after the initial debriefing.