

# Wilfredo:

un niño de El Salvador



a boy from El Salvador



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Phone: 202-588-7204 Fax: 202-238-0109 Email: [info@teachingforchange.org](mailto:info@teachingforchange.org)  
[www.TeachingforChange.org](http://www.TeachingforChange.org)

Teaching for Change  
PO Box 73038  
Washington, DC 20056

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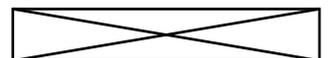
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## Introduction

We have published this second edition as an increasing number of students from El Salvador enter school systems across the United States. These students confront not only a new language and culture, but also school activities that very often ignore or undervalue their previous experience and knowledge. This can result in low self-esteem, feelings of isolation and a disinterest in school.

Reading and discussing the story of Wilfredo not only validates the students' previous experiences, but helps them to understand these experiences in a larger context. It also provides the context from which children can tell their own stories.

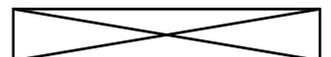
In addition, as stated by the LA Teachers Committee on Central America in the first edition, "*Wilfredo* will also help other students understand the background of some of our new immigrants; and hopefully it will enable them to welcome these newcomers into their classes and lives. We also hope that *Wilfredo* can serve as a springboard for dialogue and discussion about the role of our government's policy in the region and the desperate need for peace through a process of dialogue."

The story of Wilfredo was originally published in *Got Me A Story to Tell* edited by Lisa Kokin and Sylvia Yee in 1977. This book includes stories and photos about the lives of five

San Francisco children from different ethnic backgrounds.

The story was translated and lessons were added in 1986 by the Los Angeles Teachers' Committee on Central America. This current edition, published by the Network of Educators on Central America, includes new illustrations.

It has been designed for use with upper elementary and junior high school ESL students, upper elementary social studies and language arts and intermediate Spanish students. The activities have been designed to integrate language arts and social studies skills and concepts.

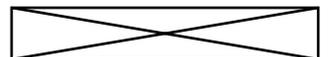


## Acknowledgements

This edition has been produced (except for the printing) by volunteers and NECA staff. Matilde Arciniegas, elementary ESL and SSL teacher in Washington, DC, coordinated the revision of this edition. Erik Nauman, currently completing his elementary student teaching in Washington, DC, contributed to the teachers' guide. Dan Farnham, an education student, wrote the history. Raquel Weber contributed the illustrations and consulted frequently on the design. Dave Edelstein and Edgardo Menvielle assisted with the proof reading. Pam Mathews assisted with the artwork. Steve Bruzgulis patiently desk-top published the entire book. Steve never complained when every new idea and addition for the book implied hours of computer work.

Those who volunteered their efforts on the first edition deserve much of the credit, including: Donald Diers, Dennis Duncanwood, Karen Duncanwood, Gail Draper, Iris Edinger, Mark Epstein, Herbert Hammer, Jane Horiuchi, Olga Palo, Marta Alicia Rivera, William Sparks, Tesi Treuenfels, Cricket Potash, Gary Zarnow, Shirlee Wolf, and the Central American Refugee Center (CARE-CEN.)

In addition, it is thanks to the support of the ARCA Foundation, the Peace Development Fund and a few generous individual contributors that NECA has both the staff and office required to coordinate materials production, promotion and distribution.



# Wilfredo's Story in Spanish





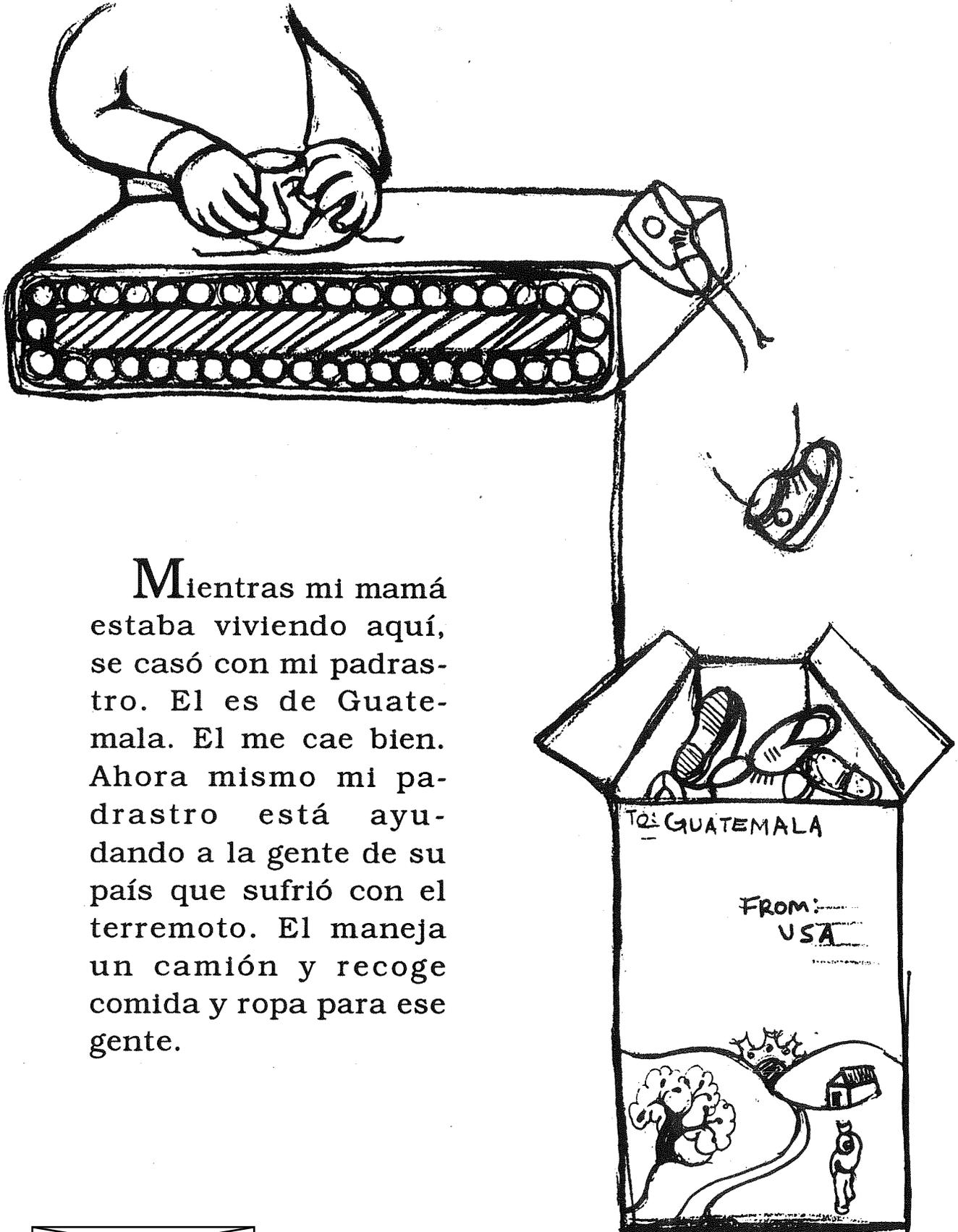
Soy Wilfredo Martínez Méndez. Tengo doce años. Vivo en San Francisco, California. He vivido casi toda mi vida en El Salvador, en América Central. Vine a los Estados Unidos cuando tenía diez años.





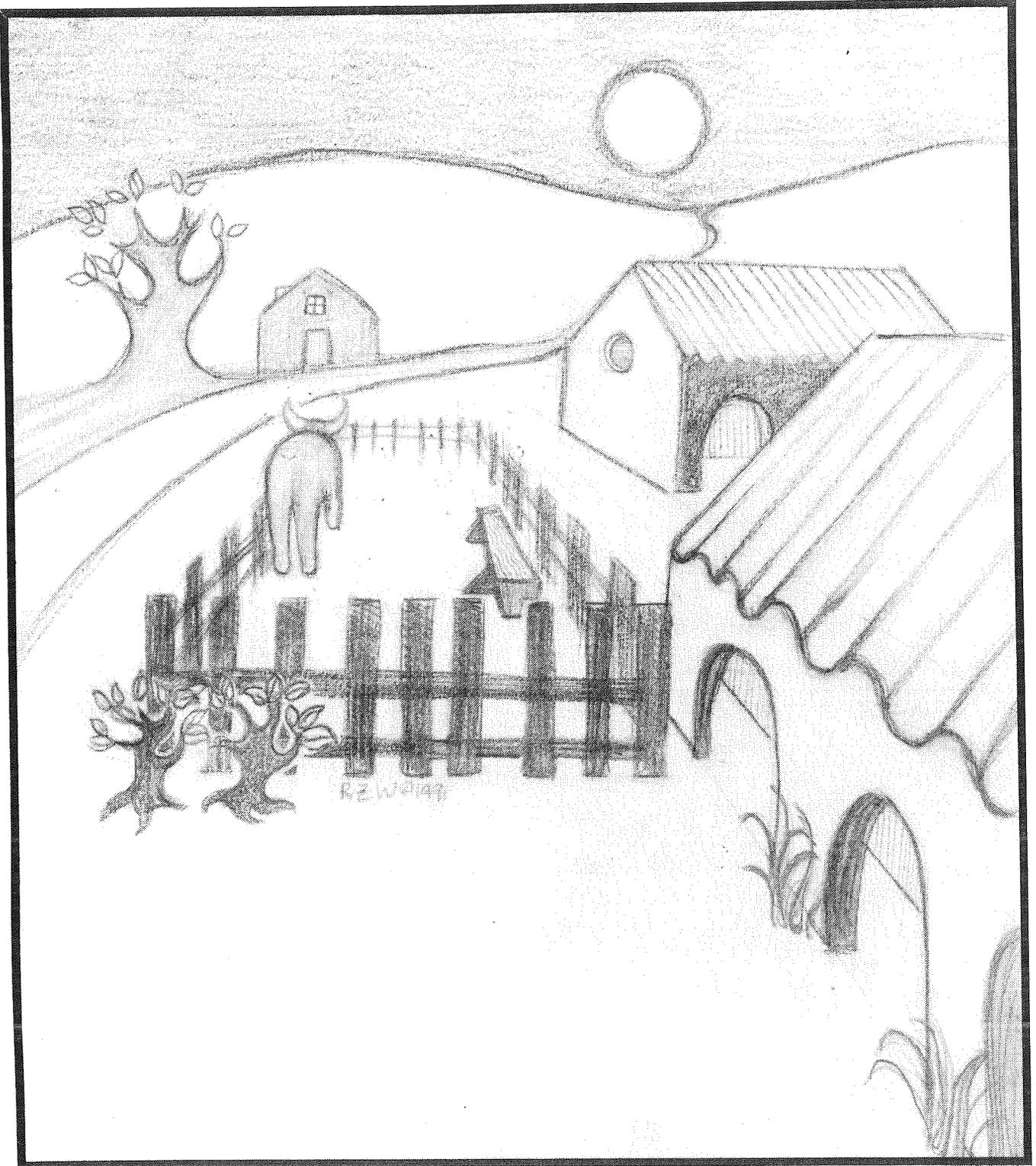
**M**i mamá trabaja en una fábrica de sobres. Después de que una máquina cuenta cierto número de sobres, ella los pone en una caja. Ella los revisa para ver que todos los sobres esten bien. Trabaja muy duro. Cuando llega a la casa está muy cansada.



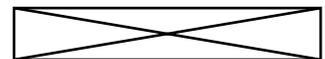


Mientras mi mamá estaba viviendo aquí, se casó con mi padrastro. El es de Guatemala. El me cae bien. Ahora mismo mi padrastro está ayudando a la gente de su país que sufrió con el terremoto. El maneja un camión y recoge comida y ropa para esa gente.

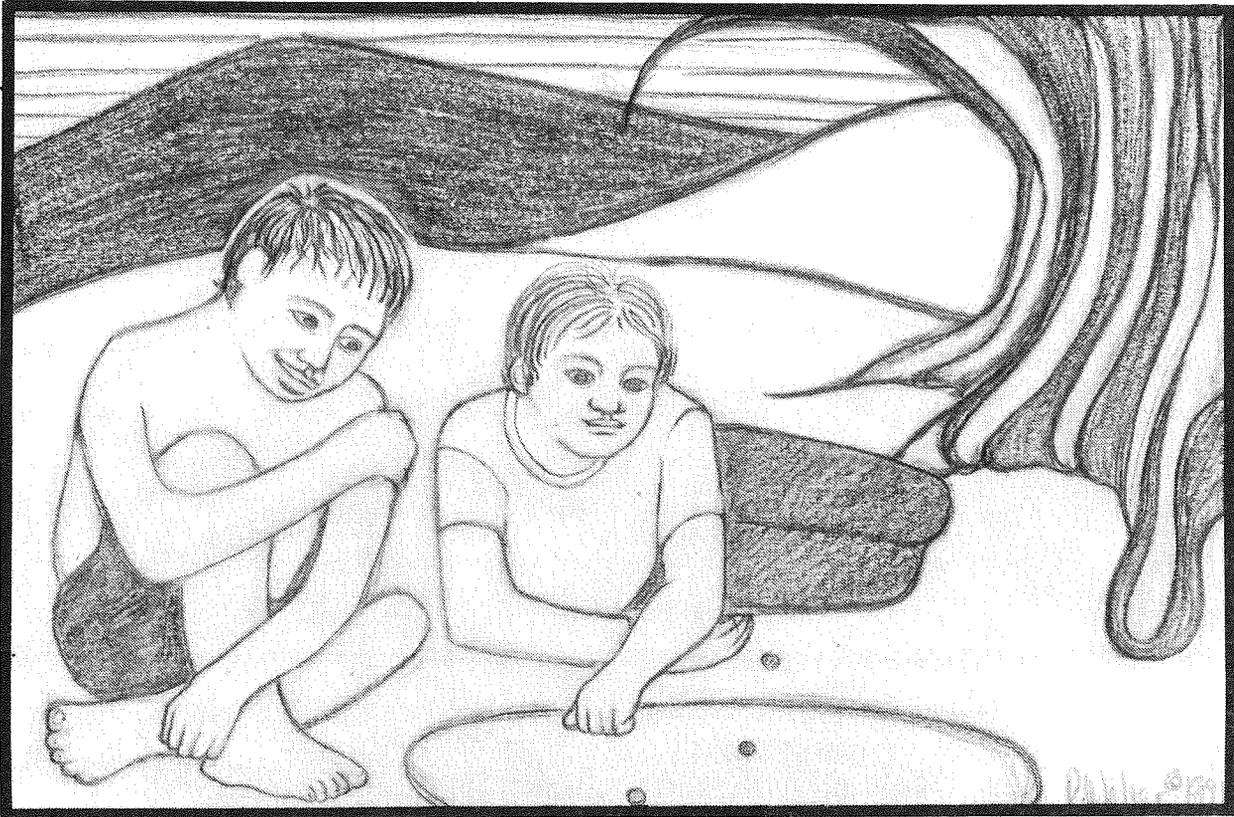




Quando era pequeño, vivíamos en San Ramón. Solo había cinco casas en todo el pueblo. ¡Había más árboles que casas!



**M**i mejor amigo era Víctor. Nosotros jugabamos a las canicas en la calle cerca de mi casa. Cuando nos cansabamos, cortabamos un carao. Lo rompíamos y hacíamos fresco de carao con las semillas. ¡Es sabroso!

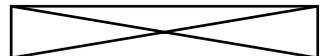


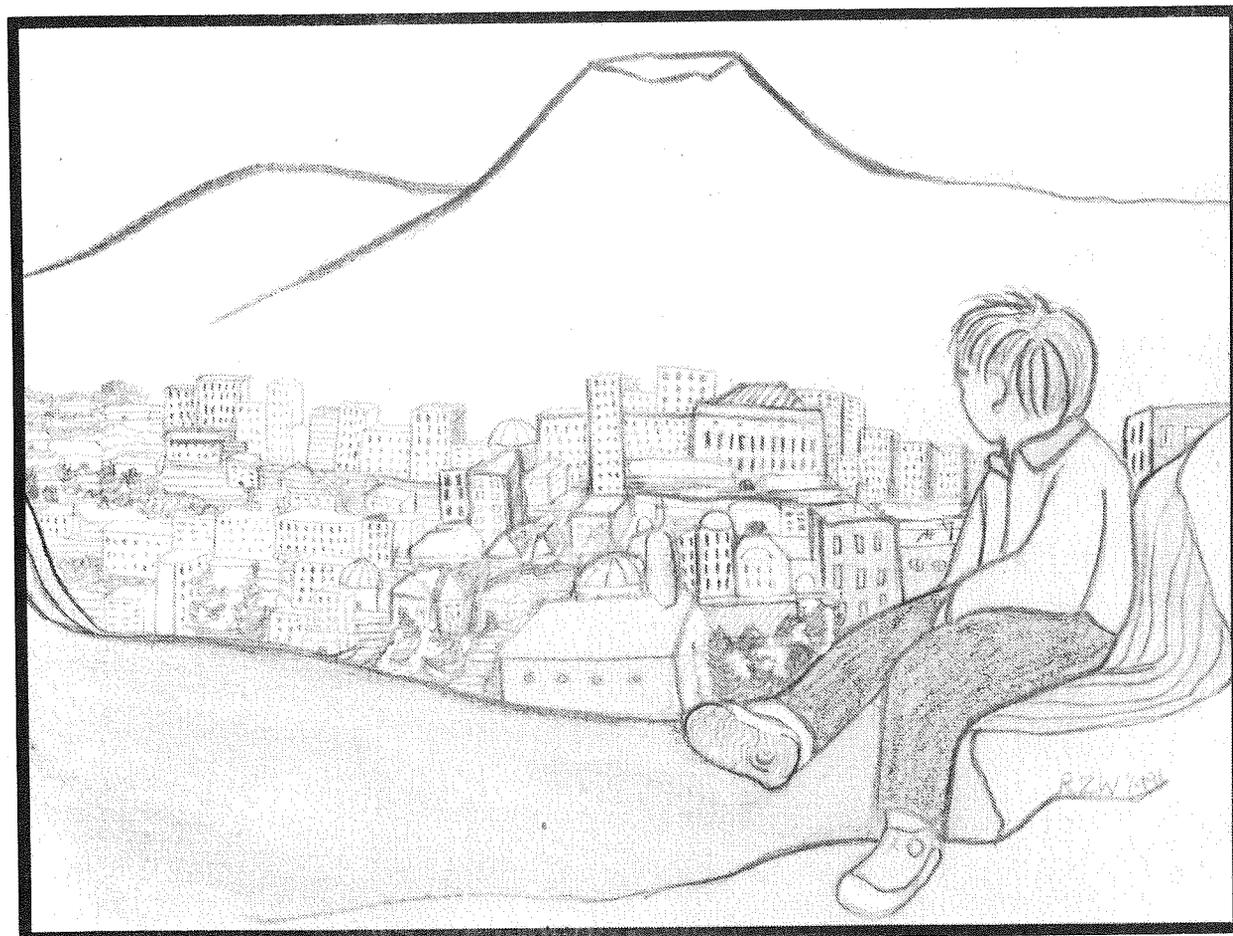
**C**uando tenía seis años, Víctor se fue a vivir a los Estados Unidos con su familia. Los Estados Unidos quedaba muy lejos, yo sabía que jamas lo volvería a ver. Luego mi mamá también se fue a los Estados Unidos. Yo no quería que ella se fuera, pero ella se preocupaba porque mi abuela no se quedara con poco dinero. Mi mamá pensaba que podía ganar más dinero en los Estados Unidos.





**M**e fui a vivir con mi abuelita en San Salvador, la capital de El Salvador. Aunque era una ciudad grande, había árboles y campos y montañas muy cerca. A veces me levantaba temprano para ir de paseo con mis compañeros.



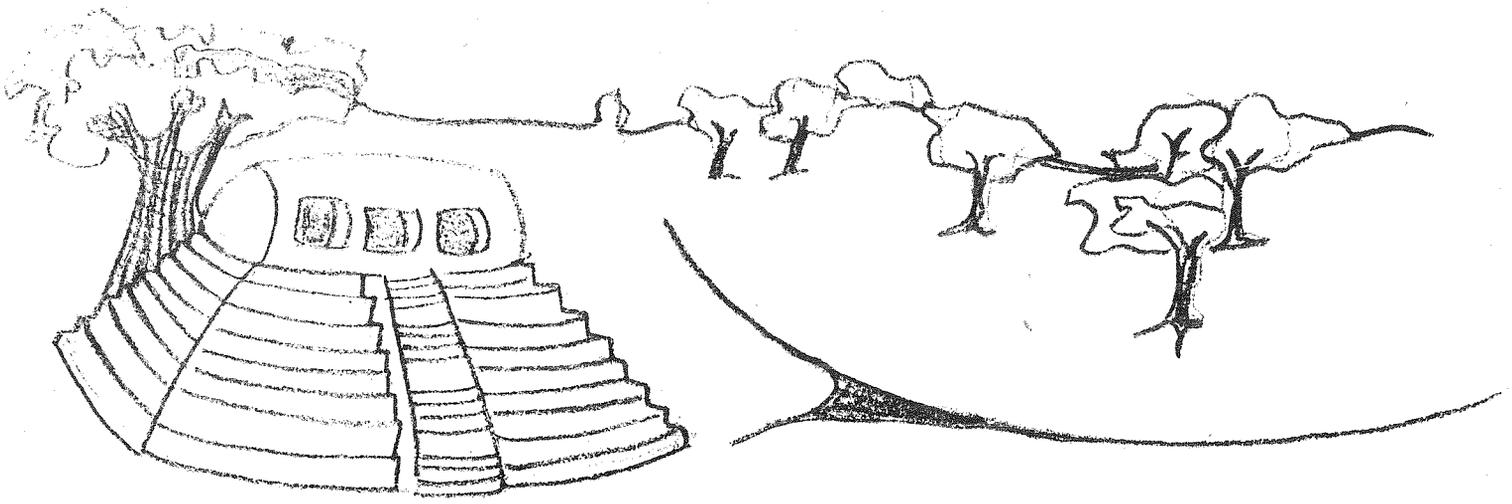


Una vez me subí a una montaña solo. Desde arriba podía ver todo lo que había abajo. Nadie me veía, pero yo los veía a todos. Era un gigante mirando a la tierra.

Las montañas no son como la ciudad, donde hay mucho humo en el aire. En la ciudad es difícil respirar. En las montañas el aire es limpio y puro. La montaña es más tranquila porque no hay carros ni gente.

Me gustan los campos y los cerros y los ríos de mi país.



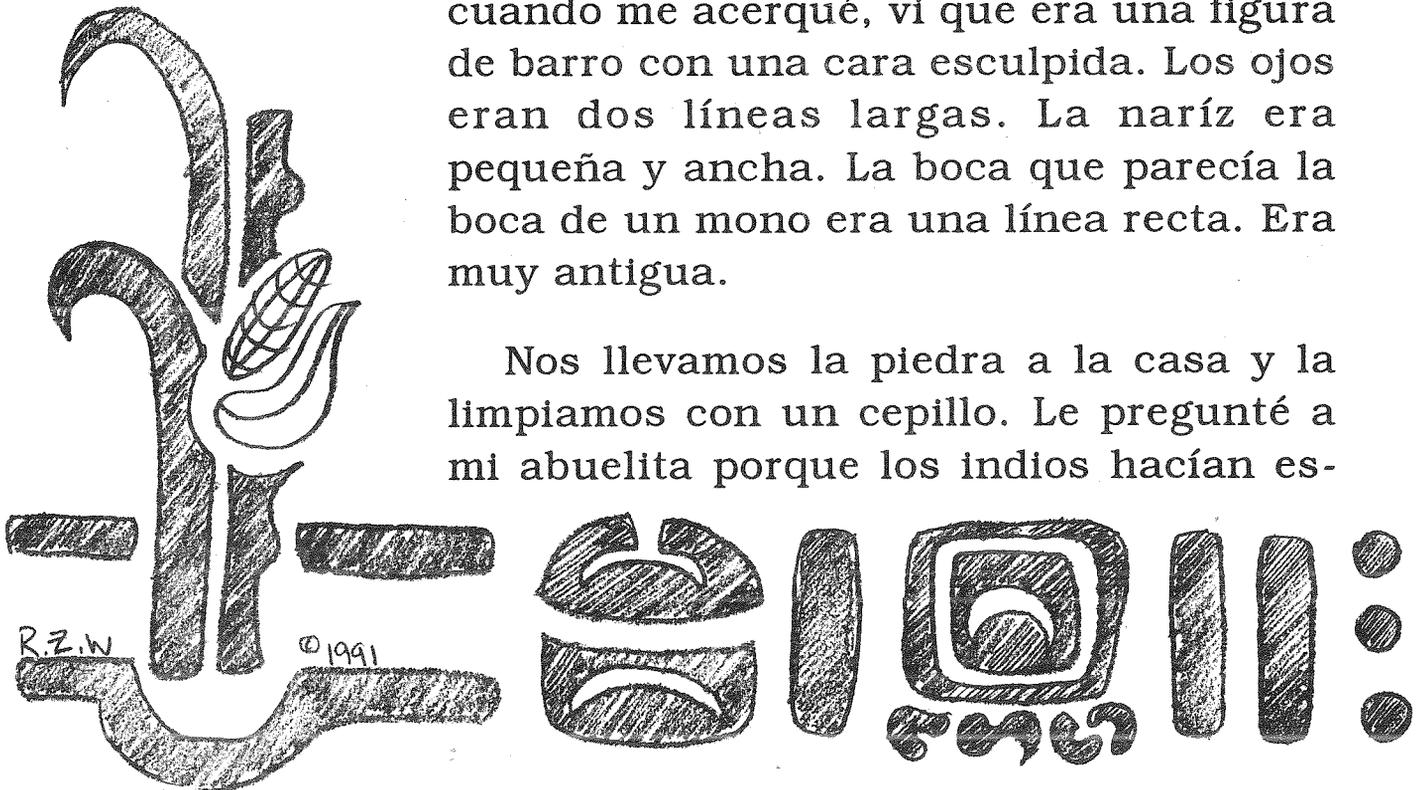


**E**n ese entonces yo jugaba con mi prima en el Tazumal. Es una ruina indígena con dos pirámides de piedra. Los indios (Los Pipiles) la construyeron hace miles de años.

Un día nos imaginamos que eramos piratas buscando un tesoro escondido. De pronto oí que mi prima gritó, “¡Wilfredo, ven rápido, mirá lo que encontré!”

Ella tenía en la mano algo pequeño de color café. Parecía una piedra sucia. Pero cuando me acerqué, vi que era una figura de barro con una cara esculpida. Los ojos eran dos líneas largas. La nariz era pequeña y ancha. La boca que parecía la boca de un mono era una línea recta. Era muy antigua.

Nos llevamos la piedra a la casa y la limpiamos con un cepillo. Le pregunté a mi abuelita porque los indios hacían es-



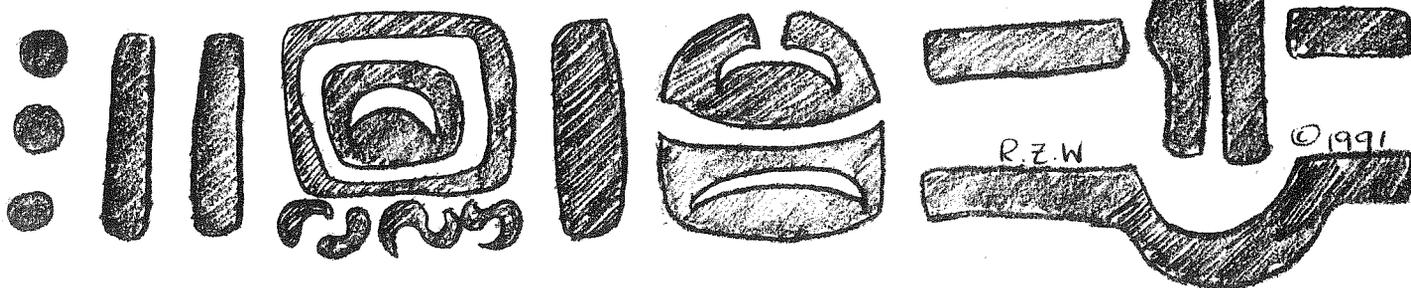
culturas. Ella me dijo que hace mucho tiempo, los indios que vivían en el Tazumal creían en varios dioses. Ellos hacían lindos dibujos y esculturas de sus dioses.

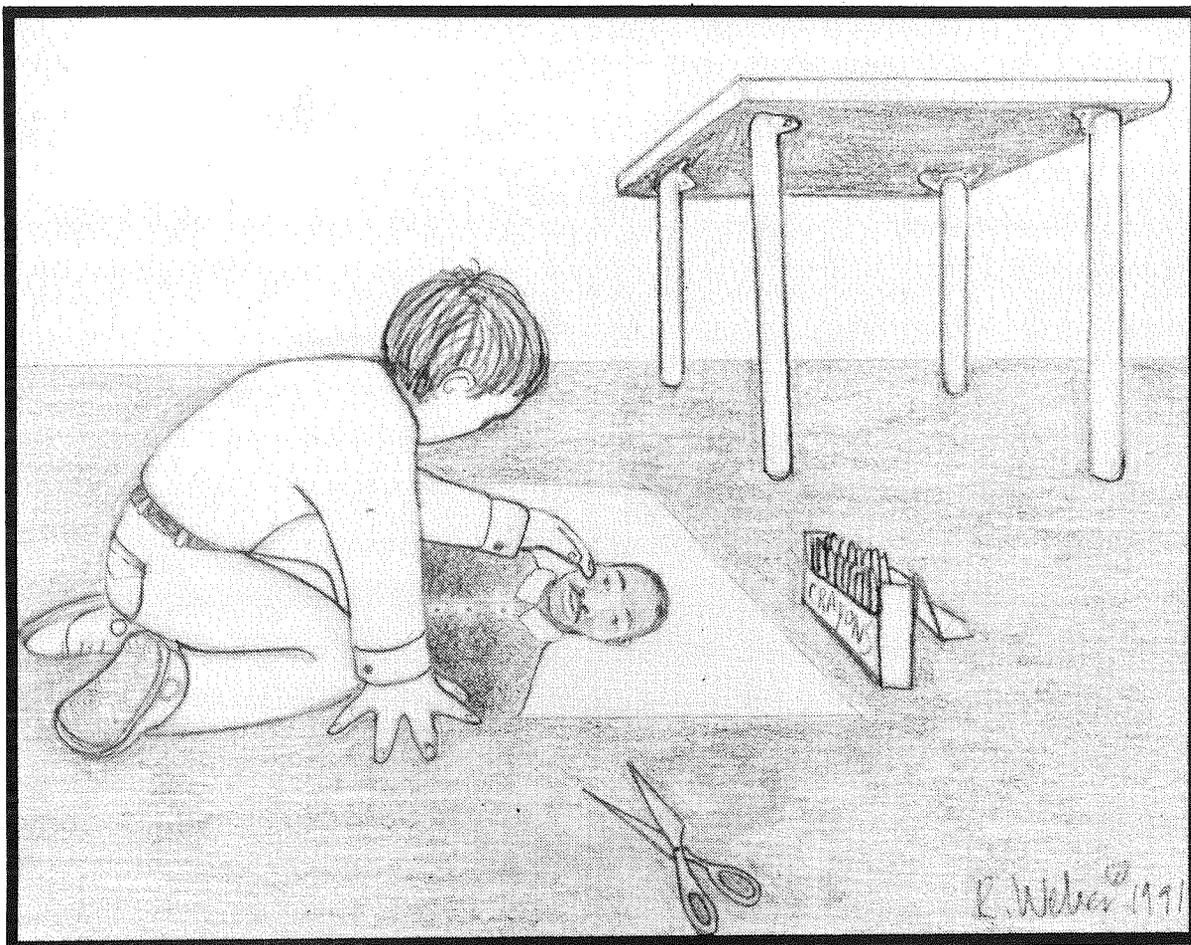
Un día recibí una carta de mi mamá. Me dijo que volvía a El Salvador de visita y que me llevaría a los Estados Unidos a vivir con ella.

No quería dejar a mi abuelita, mis compañeros y las montañas. Tenía miedo de sentirme solo. Pero a la vez quería estar con mi mamá.

Mamá dijo que no me sentiría solo en los Estados Unidos porque allí vivían mi tía, mi tío y mis primos.

Llegamos a San Francisco un poco antes del comienzo de las clases. El primer día de clases conocí a José. El es mejicano. El me presentó a mi maestra y a algunos de los alumnos de la clase. Me acompañó todo el día. Hablamos en español. ¡Me sentí tan contento que él estaba en mi clase!





**E**n enero, el director de nuestra escuela fue a todas las clases y preguntó si alguien podía hacer un dibujo de Martin Luther King. El fue un líder negro, muy famoso que ayudó a su gente a reclamar sus derechos. Cuando el director vino a mi clase, le dije que yo lo podía hacer porque yo me había enseñado a dibujar en El Salvador. Hice un bosquejo y Ramón y José me ayudaron a colorearlo con tiza.

Trabajamos dos días. Cuando al fin terminamos, lo miramos y nos sonreímos. ¡Qué lindo! Era bellissimo. Al director le gustó también y lo puso en el pasillo donde todos pudieran verlo. Me sentí muy orgulloso.





Un día llegó un niño nuevo a la clase. José me dijo que él lo conocía, y que el muchacho también era de El Salvador. Le dije: “¡Hola!” El me miró un largo rato. Entonces me dijo: “Creo que te conozco.”

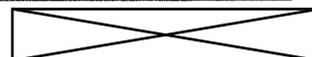
Le dije “Creo que no, porque acabo de llegar a San Francisco.”

“¿Cómo te llamás?” me preguntó.

“Wilfredo Martínez”, le dije.

Entonces sonrió. “¡Oye! ¡Ya sé! Tú eras mi amigo en San Ramón. ¿No te acordás de mi?”

Lo miré y entonces reímos. ¡Era Víctor! Nos estrechamos las manos. Me alegró tanto ver a mi mejor amigo de El Salvador en mi nuevo país.

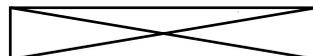


# Wilfredo's Story in English



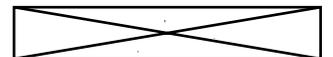


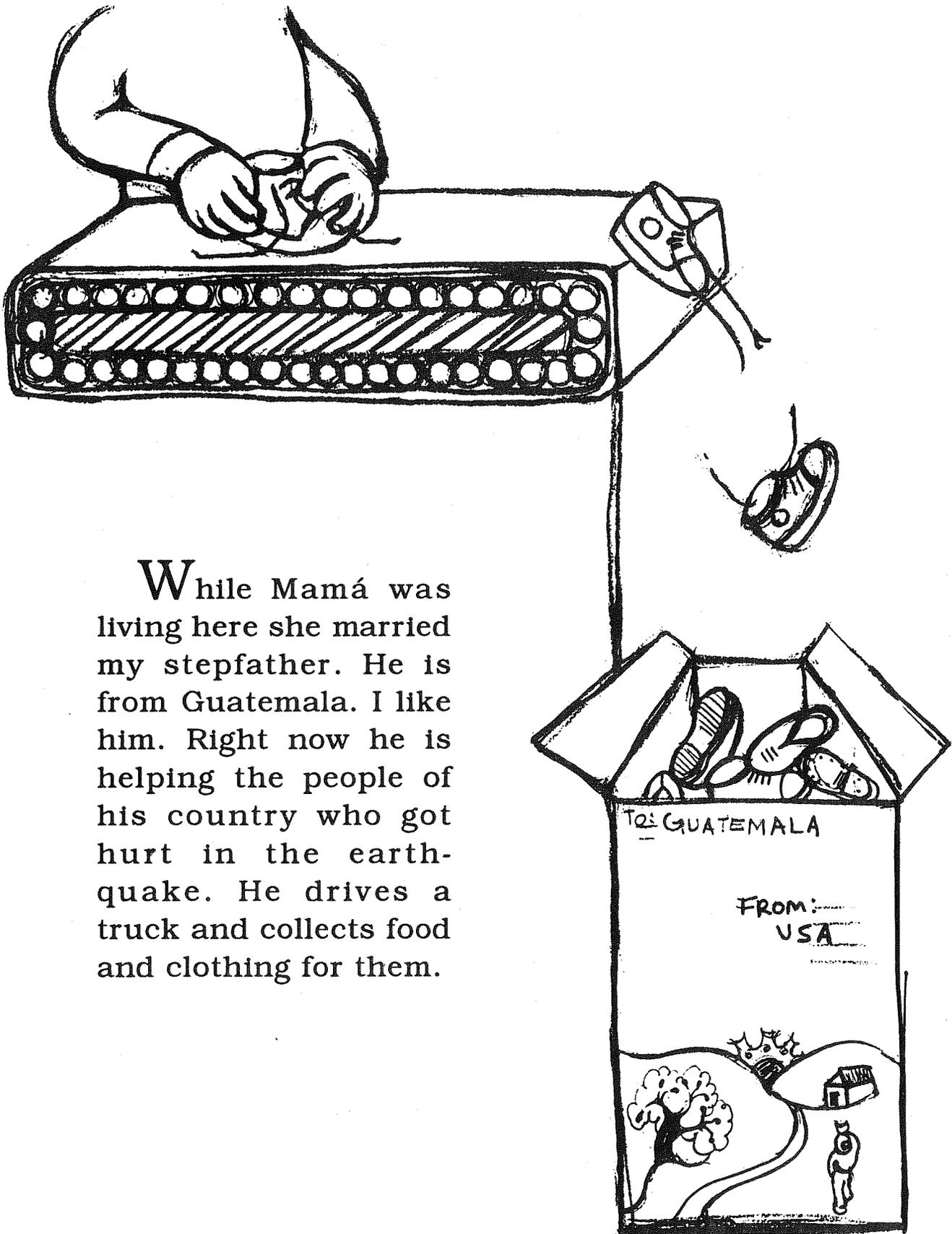
I am Wilfredo Martinez Mendez. I am twelve. I live in San Francisco, California. I lived most of my life in El Salvador, Central America. I came to the United States when I was ten.



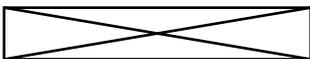


**M**amá works in an envelope factory. After a machine counts a group of envelopes, she packs them in a box. She checks them to see that they are all good. She works hard. When she gets home, she is very tired.

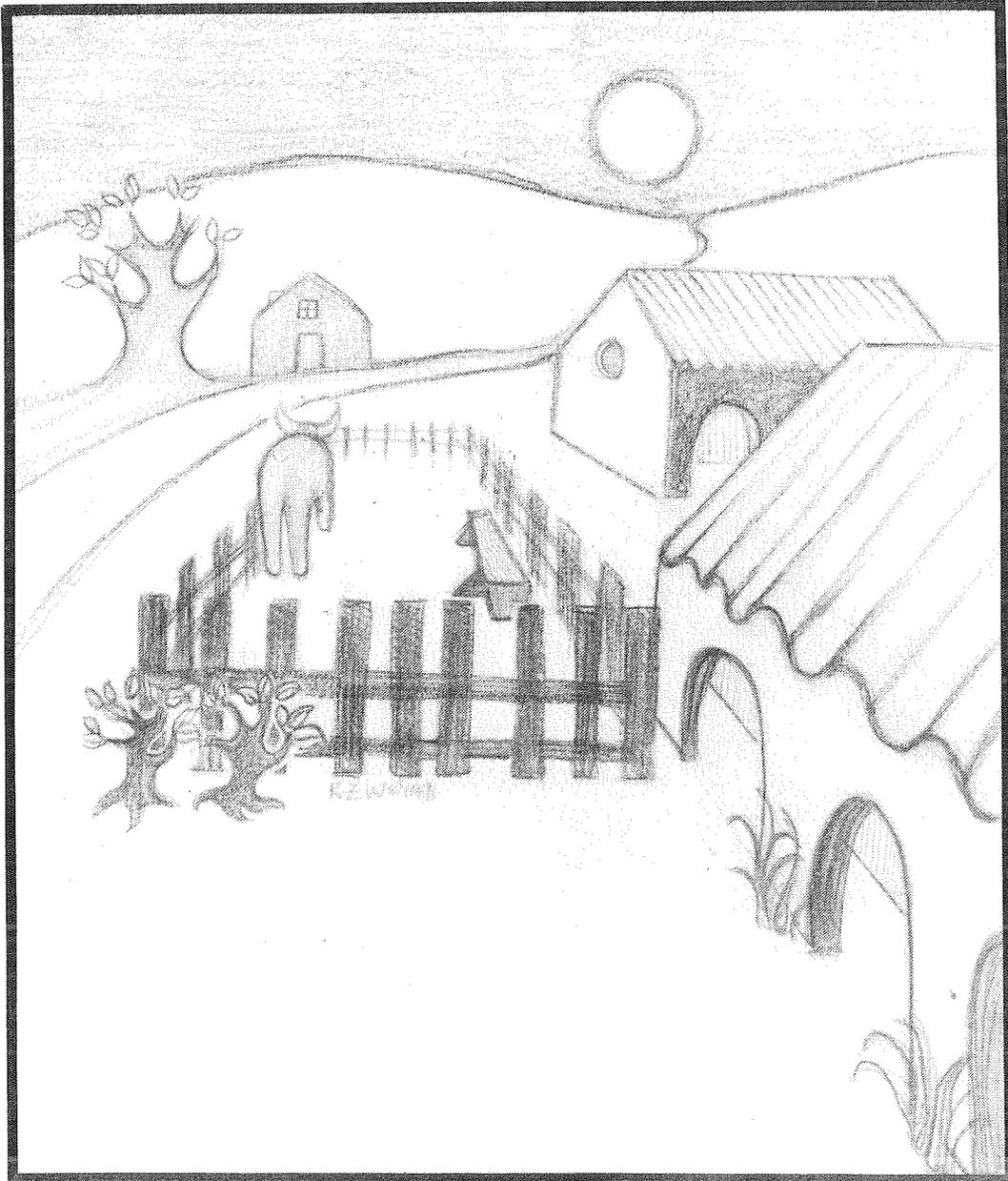




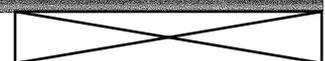
While Mamá was living here she married my stepfather. He is from Guatemala. I like him. Right now he is helping the people of his country who got hurt in the earthquake. He drives a truck and collects food and clothing for them.



R.Z.W. © 1991



When I was little, we lived in San Ramón. In the whole *pueblito* there were only five houses. It had more trees than houses!



**M**y best friend was Victor. We played marbles in the road near my house. When we got tired of that, we cut *carao*. We cracked it open and made a drink with the honey seeds. It is called *fresco de carao*. ¡Es sabroso!



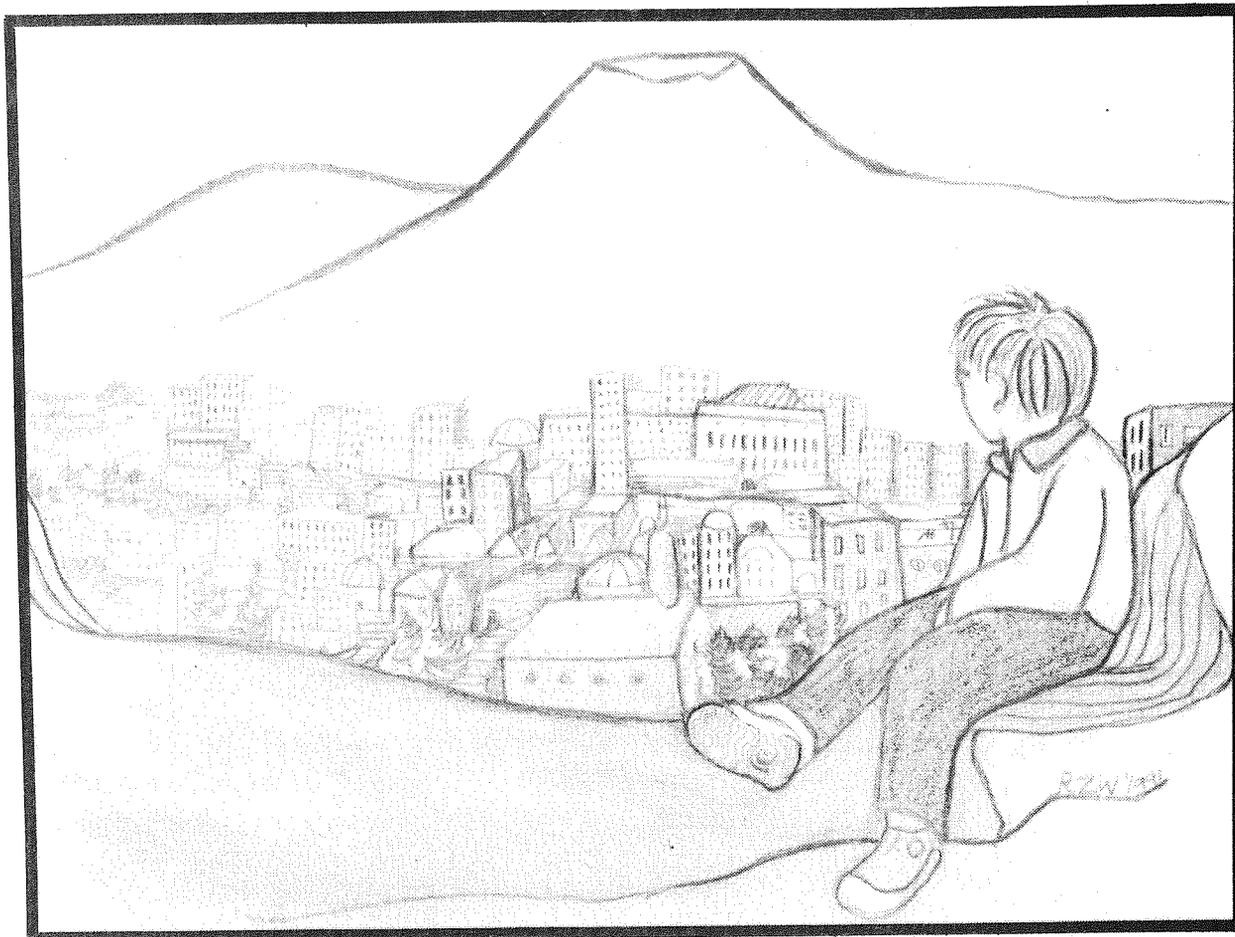
**W**hen I was six, Victor moved to the United States with his family. The United States was so far away that I knew I would never see him again. Then *Mamá* went there too. I didn't want her to leave, but she was worried that my grandmother would be left alone with only a little money. *Mamá* hoped she could make more money in the United States.





I went to live with my grandmother. I call her *abuelita*. She lived in the city of San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. Even though it was a big city, there were trees and fields and mountains close by. Sometimes I got up early to go hiking with *compañeros*.

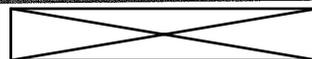


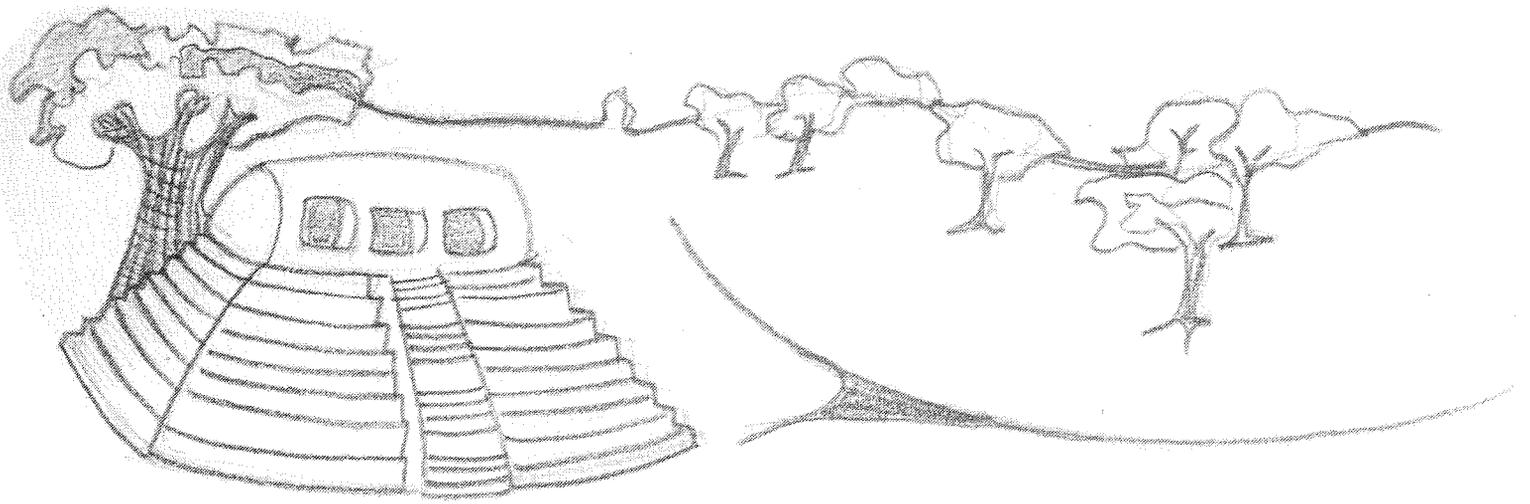


One time I climbed the mountain by myself. From the top I could see everything below me. Nobody could see me, but I could see them. I was a giant looking over the world.

The mountains are not like the city, where there is a lot of smoke in the air. In the city it is hard for people to breathe. In the mountains the air is clean and pure. It is more peaceful in the mountains because there are no cars or people.

I love the fields and hills and rivers of my country.



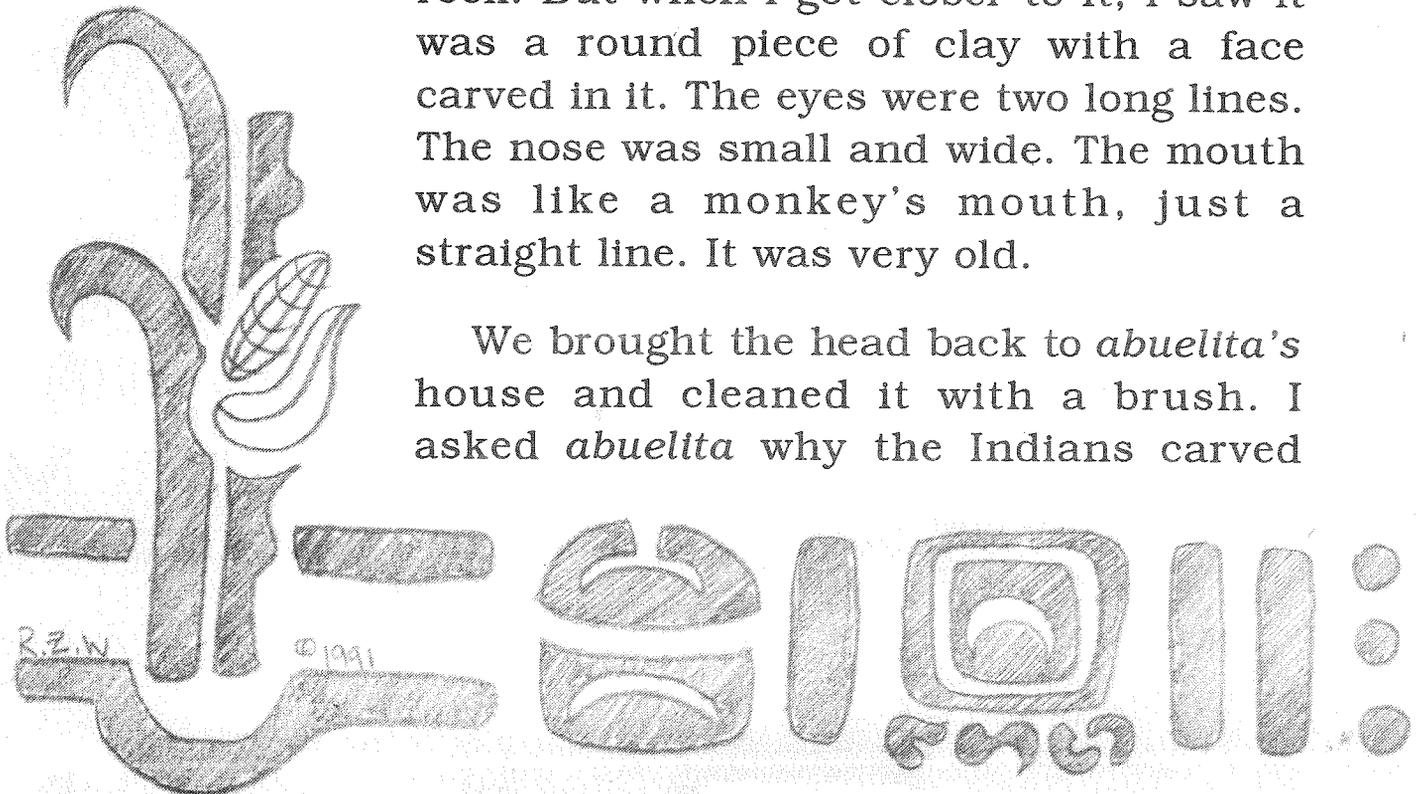


I used to play with my cousin at Tazumal. It is an Indian ruin with two big stone pyramids. The Pipil Indians built them thousands of years ago.

One day we pretended we were pirates digging for secret treasure. Suddenly I heard my cousin yell, "Wilfredo, come quick and look what I found!"

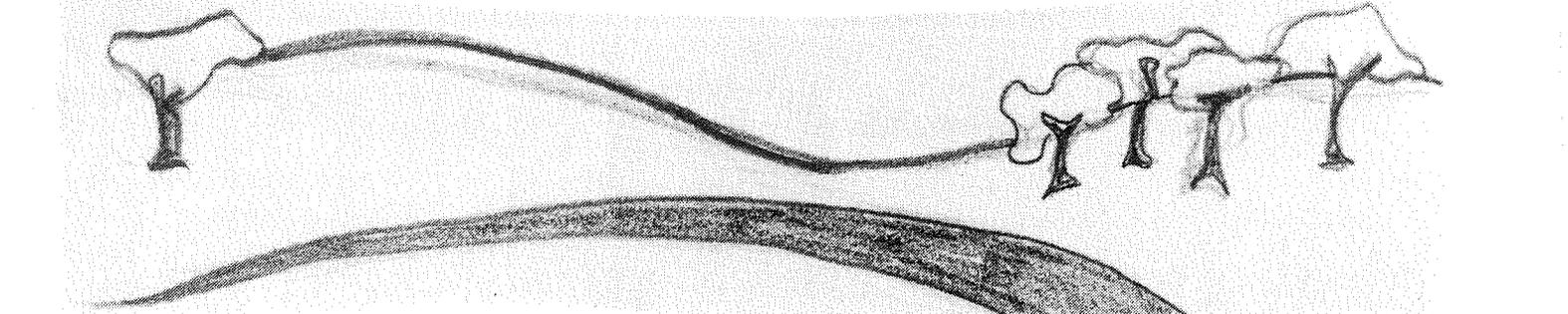
She was holding something small and brown in her hand. It looked like a dirty rock. But when I got closer to it, I saw it was a round piece of clay with a face carved in it. The eyes were two long lines. The nose was small and wide. The mouth was like a monkey's mouth, just a straight line. It was very old.

We brought the head back to *abuelita's* house and cleaned it with a brush. I asked *abuelita* why the Indians carved



R.Z.W.

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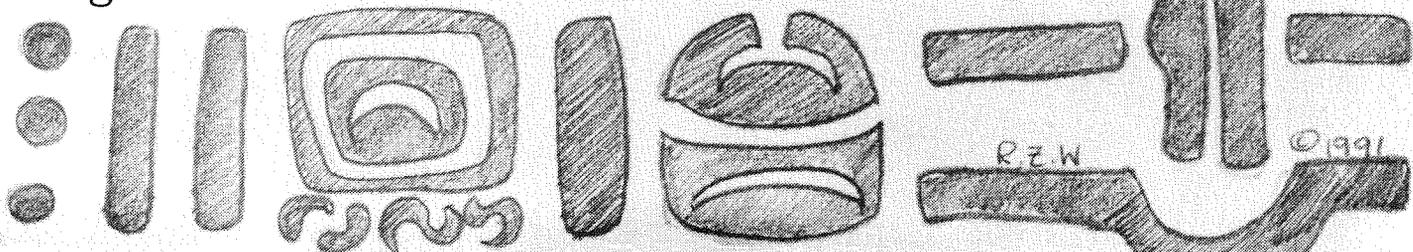
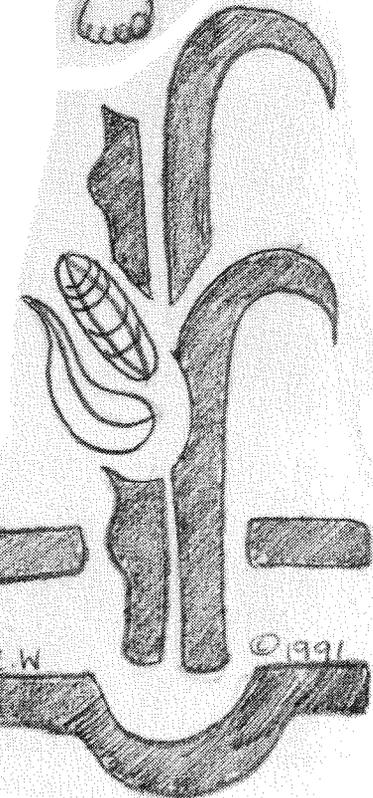
things. She told me that a long time ago, the Indians who lived at Tazumal believed in many different gods. They made beautiful pictures and sculptures of their gods.

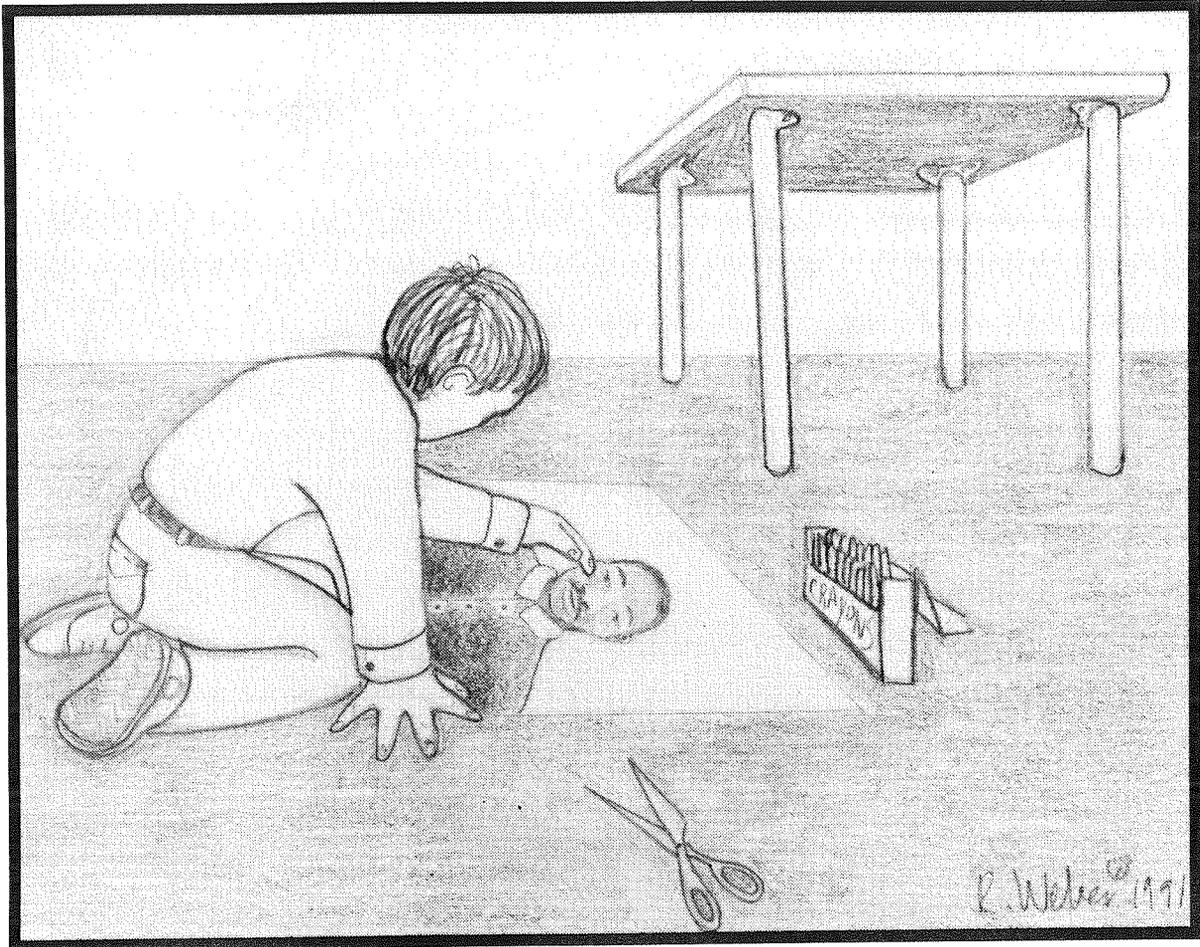
One day I got a letter from *Mamá*. She wrote that she was coming to El Salvador for a visit, and then she would bring me back to the United States with her.

I didn't want to leave *abuelita*, my *compañeros* and the mountains. I was afraid I would be lonely. But I wanted to be with *Mamá* again.

*Mamá* said I wouldn't be lonely in the United States because my aunt, my uncle, and my cousins lived there.

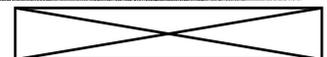
We came to San Francisco right before school started. On the first day of school, I met José. He is *mejicano*. He introduced me to my teacher and some of the other kids in the class. He stayed with me the whole day. We talked in Spanish. I was so glad he was there!





In January, the principal of our school went to all the classes and asked if anyone could draw a picture of Martin Luther King. He was a famous Black leader who helped his people demand their rights. When the principal came to my class, I told him that I could do it, because I taught myself how to draw in El Salvador. I sketched the lines and Ramón and José helped me color it in with chalk.

We worked on it for two days. When it was finally finished we all looked at it and smiled. ¡Que lindo! It was beautiful! The principal liked it too, and he put it up in the hallway where everyone could see it. I was proud.





One day a new boy came to our class. José told me that he knew him. He said the boy was from El Salvador, too. I said hello to him. He looked at me for a long time. Then he said, "I think I know you."

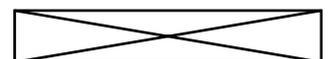
I said, "I don't think you know me because I just came to San Francisco."

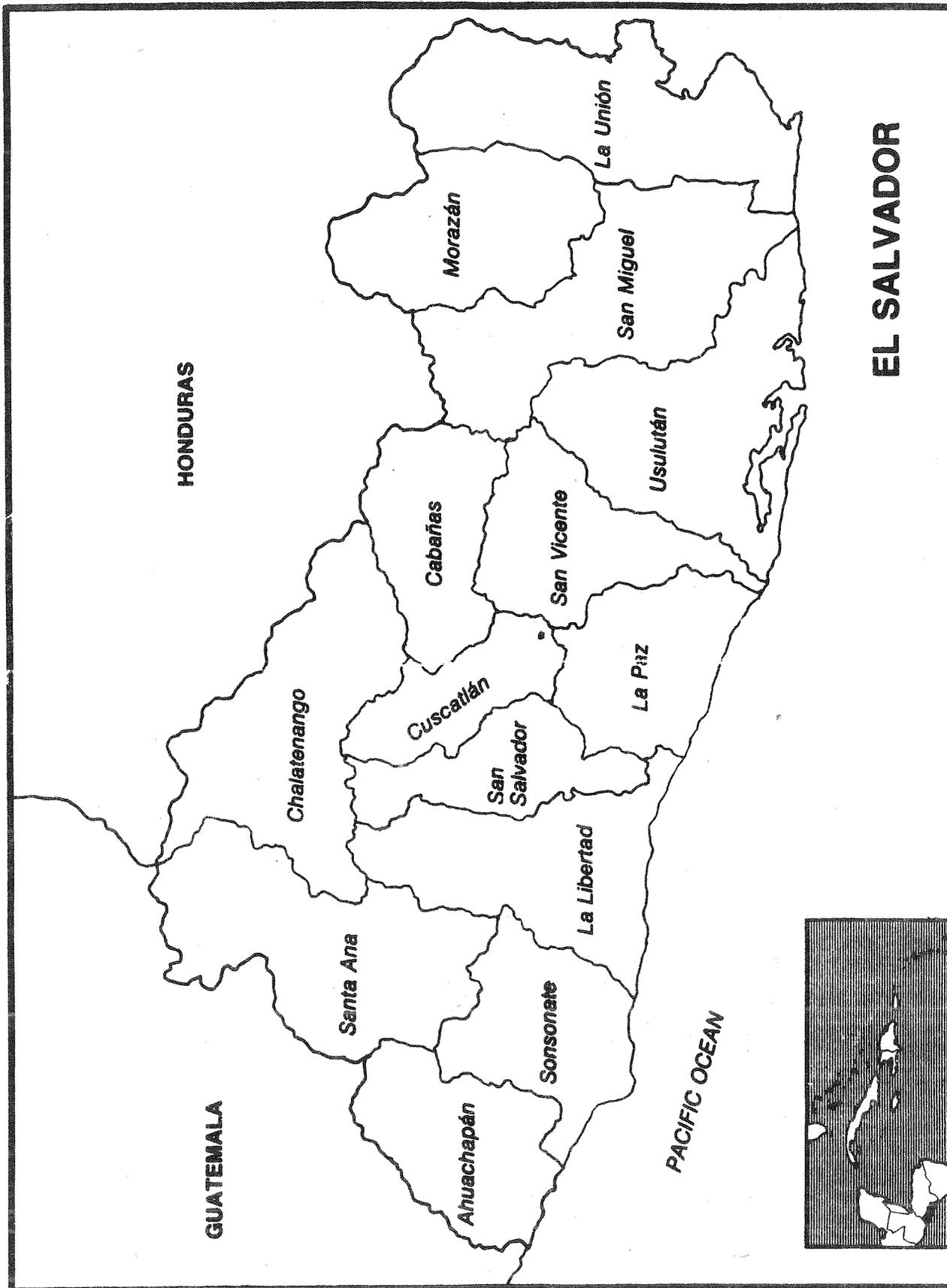
"What's your name?" he asked.

"Wilfredo Martínez," I said.

Then he smiled "*¡Oye!* I remember now. You were my friend in San Ramón. Do you remember me?"

I looked at him then we laughed. It was Victor! We shook hands. I was so happy to see my oldest friend from El Salvador in my new country!





# Student Activity Sheets





## Activity Sheet #1

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Peasant**

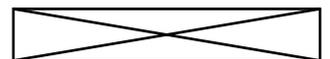
Income:	
family picks coffee only half of the year during peak season .....	\$24.80/wk
Expenses:	
corn, beans, rice and oil at the market .....	\$25.40/wk
firewood .....	\$2.50/wk
candles for light at night .....	\$.50/wk
Total .....	

**2. Tenant farmer**

Income:	
father mends fences, prunes, weeds, plants and harvests coffee year round on the plantation .....	\$10.00/wk
mother does wash for the plantation owners .....	\$2.50/wk
ten-year-old child sells firewood after school .....	\$1.00/wk
Total Income .....	
Expenses:	
cooking oil, food .....	\$10.50/wk
school supplies .....	\$1.00/wk
new clothes .....	\$.93/wk
Total Expenses .....	

**3. Plantation owner**

Income:	
net profit from coffee beans sold to processing plant .....	\$1,847.72/wk
Expenses:	
house .....	\$72.72/wk
cars .....	\$96.00/wk
education for children .....	\$226.31/wk
vacation and travel .....	\$70.17/wk
Total Expenses .....	



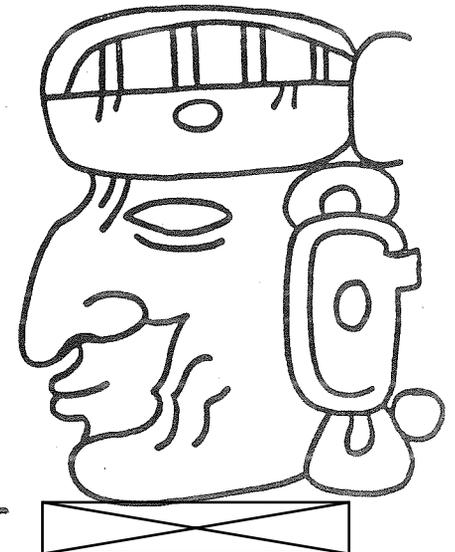
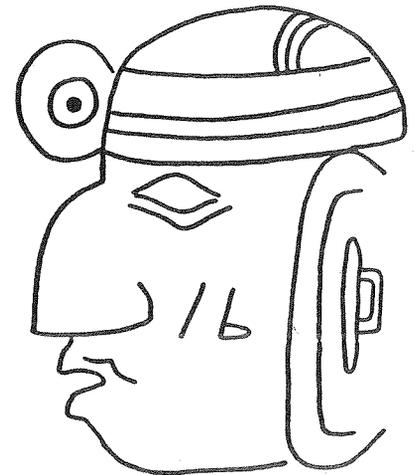
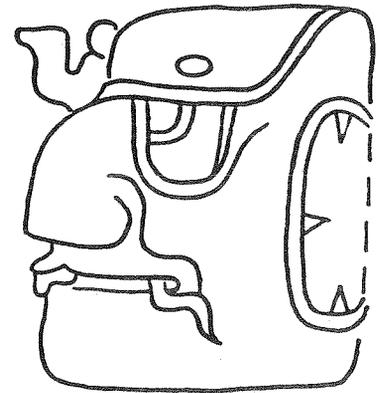
# THE MAYAN PEOPLE

The ancient Maya have a highly advanced civilization which has existed for more than 2000 years. They are renowned for their accomplishments in astronomy, architecture, mathematics, and art. Their knowledge of astronomy allowed them to plot the movement of the stars, to predict eclipses, and to develop a calendar more perfect than any in existence at the time, and as accurate as ours is today.

The pyramids which the Maya constructed in what is now southern Mexico and Guatemala were based on precise astronomical and mathematical calculations. For example, the Pyramid of Kukulcan at Chichen Itza, Mexico was constructed with 91 steps on each side. With the addition of the platform at the top, the sum equals the number of days in the year--365. It was built in such a way that on the days of the equinox, September 21 and March 21, the light of the sun shines through a window at the top of the pyramid. The sun casts the shadows of seven isosceles triangles along the side of the pyramid, forming the body of the serpent whose head lies in stone at the bottom of the stairs.

The Maya also invented the concept of zero, and developed a place value system of arithmetic based on the number 20 which allowed them to calculate immense sums with facility. And the Maya developed a hieroglyphic system of writing, the first in the western hemisphere.

Contrary to popular myth, the Maya did not mysteriously disappear. Their civilization was in transition before the arrival of the Spanish in the 1500s. The effects of war and disease brought by the Spanish greatly reduced the Mayan population, but from the colonial period on to this day the Maya have survived and have preserved many of their ancient traditions. The 'Indians' in Central America today (60 percent of the population of Guatemala, for example), are the direct descendents of the ancient Maya. They struggle to survive and protect their culture in the face of poverty, malnutrition, discrimination, exploitation, and government repression. Hopefully the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchú, a Maya from Guatemala, will bring recognition and support to all the indigenous people of Central America.



## MAYAN NUMBERS

	0		5		10		15
	1		6		11		16
	2		7		12		17
	3		8		13		18
	4		9		14		19
			20				

Name (nombre) \_\_\_\_\_

## Addition with Mayan Numbers

1.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc + \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 7.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc + \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

2.  $\bigcirc + \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 8.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc + \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

3.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc + \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 9.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} + \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

4.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} + \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 10.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} + \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

5.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc + \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 11.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc\bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} + \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

6.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc + \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 12.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} + \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

## Subtraction with Mayan Numbers

1.  $\square - \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 7.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc - \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

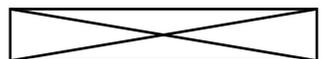
2.  $\square - \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 8.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc - \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

3.  $\square - \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 9.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} - \bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

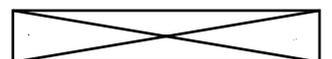
4.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} - \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 10.  $\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc - \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

5.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} - \square =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 11.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} - \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_

6.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc\bigcirc\bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} - \begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} =$  \_\_\_\_\_ 12.  $\begin{array}{c} \bigcirc \\ \square \end{array} - \bigcirc\bigcirc =$  \_\_\_\_\_



# Teacher's Guide



### Activity #1 Work on a Coffee Plantation

Begin by asking students why Wilfredo's mother moved to the United States. Accept all answers saying you will return to this question at the end of the following activity.

Ask students if they know where coffee comes from. Briefly describe a coffee plantation (*fincas*). Explain that coffee comes from a plant that must be cared for like other plants. Ask what kinds of things are done to take care of plants (water, get rid of weeds, protect from insects and other animals). Explain that in El Salvador coffee beans are picked by hand when they are ripe and that this is difficult work. There is a great deal of work involved in growing coffee and that the work is done by peasants and tenant farmers. Peasants pick the coffee during the harvest. Tenant farmers take care of the plantation. (They farm the land in exchange for a small plot of land where they can grow food for their families.)

1. Reproduce Activity Sheet #1 and cut it into 3 parts so that the roles are separated. (The activity sheet is included in both English and Spanish.)

2. Distribute the roles to the students in the following proportions:

Peasant family: 80% of the class  
Tenant Farmer/Colono: 15% of the class  
Plantation owner: 5% of the class

Explain that they have each been

assigned their role on the coffee plantation. They are to add up their earnings and expenses. When they have finished they must find other people in the class who have a similar role on the coffee plantation and compare their results.

3. Ask each group of students if their results correspond.

4. Have students answer the following questions:

a. Can a peasant family and a tenant farmer family earn enough money to support their families? What choices do they have? (move to another country, try to find other kinds of work)

b. Is this situation fair? If not, how could it be changed?

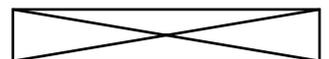
c. Why do you think Wilfredo's mother moved to the United States? (Have students compare these answers with what they said at the beginning.)

### Activity #2 Salt Maps of El Salvador

The following activity will help students become familiar with the geography of El Salvador. In cooperative groups, pairs or individually students can make salt maps of El Salvador. This activity takes two or three days to complete.

#### Materials:

1 piece of cardboard per map (8 1/2 x 11)  
blue paint and paint brushes  
2/3 cup of salt per 5 maps



1/2 cup of flour per 5 maps  
 1/2 cup of water per 5 maps  
 food coloring  
 pencils  
 map of El Salvador to be traced onto cardboard  
 map showing the different elevations of El Salvador (Encyclopedia, atlas) or a map showing the different regions.

**Recipe:**

The salt mixture needs to be made no more than one hour before it will be used.

1. Heat salt until it makes a soft snapping sound (5 minutes in a microwave)
2. Mix the salt with flour and stir well.
3. Add desired color to water and mix with salt and flour. Add slowly while you stir.

**Directions:**

1. Students paint the cardboard blue to represent the ocean. Let this dry.
2. Place maps on the painted cardboard and trace the country. Mark off areas that will be covered with colored mixture.
3. Students cover map with with colored mixture using their fingers.
4. Let the mixture dry and have students label the map.
5. Use the salt maps to explain to your students the difference between a physical and political map.

**Activity #3****The Departments of El Salvador**

Make a copy of the map of El Salvador and delete the names for a number of the departments.

Have students work in pairs to complete the map. Give one student a completed map and the other a copy of the incomplete map. The second student tries to complete the map by asking her or his partner: "What department is south of \_\_\_\_\_?", etc.". The partners then change roles and repeat the activity using additional copies of the incomplete map.

**Activity #4****Addition and Subtraction with Mayan Numbers**

Explain to the students that the Mayans were great inventors and that they invented both a written language and a number system. The Mayas developed a number system which included the concept of zero and place value. The concept of place value, which is quite abstract in our base 10 system, is quite visual in the Mayan system.



## History of El Salvador

### Indigenous Population

Historians debate the origins of the first inhabitants of El Salvador. Some say they were Mayan, other Aztec. However it is known that the Olmecs lived and traded in the western provinces in about 2000 BC, as evidenced by the archaeological sites which include stepped-pyramid temples, ball courts and paved plazas.

In the eleventh century A.D. the nomadic Pipil Indians migrated into El Salvador from Mexico and began an agrarian lifestyle similar to the Mayans. They called their new home Cuscatlan or Land of the Jewels. The Pipiles were an eclectic people who learned to use both Aztec and Mayan calendars for agriculture and rituals, and performed complex mathematical computations in a base 20 number system which included the concept of "zero", a concept unknown to ancient Greeks and Romans. Pipil Indians were particularly skilled at crafts such as pottery, weaving, stone carving, and working with gold and silver. They farmed the land cooperatively, growing beans, pumpkins, chiles, avocados, elderberries, guavas, papayas, tomatoes, cocoa, cotton, tobacco, henequen, indigo, maguey, and corn.

The Pipil culture was influenced by the Maya. The Mayans developed a highly advanced culture organized around their agrarian way of life. They shared a profound re-

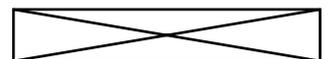
spect for nature and sought to live harmoniously with their surroundings. Their gods embodied natural forces and phenomena, the most important of these being the life-giving Maize God.

The Pipiles had laws to protect agriculture, social divisions, religion and the family. The death penalty was imposed on those who did not respect the gods, men who cheated on their wife, and thieves.

To help them in their farming and in their religious practice, the Mayans invented a highly accurate calendar which had a year of 365 days, broken down into 18 months of 20 days each, with 5 "hollow" or ill-omened days left over. The Mayans were also accomplished mathematicians and astronomers, who tracked planetary motion with great precision despite having no telescopes or clocks. Mayans also communicated and traded with many other cultures, their merchants traveling to South America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and even Florida to exchange goods.

Perhaps the most obvious mark the Mayans made on the region is their great pyramids and planned cities, like the one Wilfredo visits.

The Pipiles divided the territory into "cacicazgos" or kingdoms such as Izalco, Apanecatl, Apastepl, Ixtepetl and Guacotecti. (Ask students how many of these they can find on a current map of El Salvador.)



## The Invasion

The Pipiles had been living in Cuzcatlan for over four hundred years when Pedro de Alvarado and his brother Diego invaded in 1524, close to the area which is now called La Hachadura. The Spanish invasion brought a fundamental change to the Indians' life. Shortly after their

iards, the Pipiles resisted the conquistadors for fifteen years. Historians estimate that in the first fifty years of Spanish conquest, the Indian population of El Salvador declined from as many as 500,000 to about 75,000 people. In addition to the massacres during the conquest, many died as a result of an illness which resulted from indigo cultiva-

## CATALINA'S STORY

*"Catalina was a victim of indigo. She suffocated to death. After she gave birth. Her lungs couldn't stand the stress; they had been weakened by indigo effluvia. The dye had slowly poisoned her.*

*At one time their fabrics had been so colorful! The indigo had gone to other worlds. Their land was gone too. They survived on what the mill gave them, they earned their daily wage; but the mill was severe and the ships' hold greedy for more. Hundreds of children were employed to pack the tanks, submerging the plant to the level necessary for extracting the highest quality dye. The landowners exempted neither childhood nor old age in their efforts to secure the manual labor required to meet their exportation needs. That's why their shirts, pants, skirts, blouses, and underwear were white, made of cheap white cotton. The natives had lost their color. As well as their land.*

*....Poverty is worse without land. Then all you've got to rely on are your hands and the willingness of employers to hire you in the haciendas and mills. This gives you the opportunity to earn a few centavos to spend on small things like salt, corn, cheap cotton for your clothes, a hand mirror, a comb, a machete, and some sandals.*

*He [Catalina's husband] kept his red handkerchief, the one he used to dry his tears, in his back pocket. He swore he'd never go back to work at the mill. And his baby daughter would never work in the mills either."*

*(from Manlio Argueta's novel, Cuzcatlán, which recreates the history of 1936 to 1981 through the life of one family, dramatizing the folklore of the Salvadoran people, their relation to land and nature, their near-feudal poverty and their perseverance in the face of brutal military authority. See Appendix on additional resources for full citation.)*

arrival, the Spanish began taking the Pipiles' land. They massacred the Pipiles, destroyed their temples and gods, forced many into slavery and raped many women to provide pleasure and children for the invaders. As the Spanish intentions became clear, the Pipiles quickly adjusted from openly welcoming these strange and mysterious white people to actively trying to drive them away. Though they lacked the guns, cannons and horses of the Span-

tion. (See Catalina's Story)

A major historical theme had emerged in the life of the region which is still played out today: violent appropriation of large amounts of land by a heavily armed minority, and the continuing resistance of the dispossessed. Today in El Salvador, 4% of the people own 60% of the land, and 40% of people living in rural areas own no land at all.



## Las Catorce

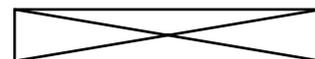
By the late 1800s, Las Catorce (fourteen families) controlled half the land in El Salvador. This is when the "privatization" of the communal land of the Indians occurred. This was the basis of the coffee growing "oligarchy." In search of the greater profits to be made by exporting goods rather than by growing food for their fellow Salvadorans, the landowners focused production almost exclusively on coffee, sugar cane, and cotton. Where the Pipiles had once harvested over 15 different crops to feed and clothe their own people, most of the land in El Salvador was now producing goods for people in other countries and for the profit of the oligarchy.

The intensive labor needed to grow and harvest these crops was supplied by peasants who no longer had enough land to support themselves, and thus needed the minuscule wage paid by large farms to help feed their families. (In El Salvador, it is still common for children to begin working when they are six or seven years old.) In addition, vagrancy laws made it a criminal offense not to work a portion of the year as a wage laborer. Thus, both economic and legal pressures were exerted to force peasants off their own land and under control of the ruling families.

In the 1920s, the price of coffee dropped steeply, threatening the oligarchs' export business. To make

up for their loss of profits, the ruling families took over even more land from peasants and cut their workers' wages in half. Following elections in 1932 in which the government refused to seat elected members of the Communist Party, peasants organized a popular insurrection to demand better living and working conditions. Most of these peasants were part of the indigenous population. The government responded to the strike by massacring an estimated 30,000 people, or 4% of the population, in one week. This event became known as "La Matanza", or "The Massacre". The military government established following La Matanza went on to ban every vestige of indigenous culture, including language, traditional clothing, and music. To avoid further persecution and murder by government troops, the indigenous people began to hide all outward signs of their identity.

La Matanza and the military rule which followed set the political tone of the next several decades in El Salvador, as military dictators followed one another into the 1970s. During this period, many U.S. corporations including General Foods, Procter and Gamble, ESSO, Westinghouse, Kimberly-Clark, and Texas Instruments established operations in El Salvador to take advantage of the low wages and lack of labor protection laws. Besides the fact that profits were now flowing directly out of the country, these companies' interests often coincided with those of the oligarchs, serving to deepen the disparity of wealth. The U.S. government even got into the picture, pro-



viding the Salvadoran government aid directed towards export production.

More than 30 years after La Matanza, the plight of the typical peasant in El Salvador had not improved, and in fact had grown worse, with even greater disparities of wealth and land distribution. In the 1960s there was a diversification of agriculture and increased industrialization. However the income of the majority remained below poverty level and there was very limited access to potable water, education, health care and full employment for a majority of the population.

### The Popular Movement

In the 1970s, students, labor groups (among them, teachers were one of the strongest forces), community members and religious leaders organized to demand reforms to create a more equitable society. Twice progressive candidates were elected president (1972, 1977), yet due to fraudulent election procedures they were not installed in government.

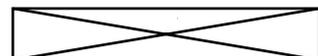
Marches were organized, such as in 1975 when university students protested the \$1.5 million spent on a Miss Universe pageant. The protesters were fired upon by the police, dozens were killed and "disappeared." Right-wing death squads (who many consider to be military personnel following assignments out of uniform) began to target religious leaders, teachers and community organizers. One of their slogans was, "Be a Patriot, Kill a Priest." Stu-

dents, teachers, ex-government officials, factory and farm workers, began establishing rural communities and engaging in armed resistance to the Salvadoran military. They call themselves the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN), after the militant attorney who organized Salvadoran workers and peasants during the 1920s and was executed in La Matanza.

The FMLN seeks a democratic government that includes all sectors of society. Before this can happen, political repression by police and military forces must stop. Therefore, one of their central demands is that people responsible for kidnappings and killings are prosecuted and convicted. Until this requirement is fulfilled, they refuse to lay down their arms and leave themselves defenseless. On a broader scale, the FMLN supports programs for land reform and a mixed economy, and cooperates with many other political groups to try to influence the government to change.

The organizing of the FMLN meant that what were once just considered police matters now became a full-fledged civil war. Increased resistance was answered by intensified repression.

While death squad activity continued, all-out war tactics were initiated. Between 1982 and 1987, the focus of the Salvadoran military's war effort was the elimination of FMLN "zones of control", mostly through large-scale aerial bombardment. U.S. military advisors have stated that the residents of these



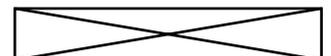
zones are not civilians, but should be considered part of the guerilla opposition. In other words, you could be shot for living in the wrong neighborhood. The independent human rights group Americas Watch reported in 1985 that thousands of civilians were being killed in these attacks, which seemed designed to force people to leave their homes. Over a million Salvadorans have fled to the United States, Honduras, and Mexico to escape the war, and up to half a million have been forced to move within the country. In all, one quarter of the people of El Salvador have been forced to move for their safety.

Throughout the course of the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush Administrations' policies have been to support the government of El Salvador and the military, in hopes that the "communist" FMLN will be defeated. Archbishop Romero wrote a letter to President Carter begging that aid be withheld. He stated that "the United States should understand that the Armed Forces' position is in favor of the oligarchy; it is brutally repressive." Romero also spoke to the soldiers imploring that "In the name of God, stop the repression." A week later, on March 24, 1980, he was killed while saying mass. In December of that same year, three North American nuns and one lay woman were raped, tortured and killed. But the aid has continued. Since 1981, the U.S. has given El Salvador over \$3 billion in economic aid, and over \$1 billion in military aid. Despite all this assistance, El Salvador in the 1980s has actually "developed backward".

The real wage has dropped to 92 cents a day for urban workers, and 52 cents a day for rural workers. Less than one-third of Salvadoran workers have a regular income. Ninety-six percent of rural workers live at or below the absolute poverty line. The U.S. government's political hope in the centrist Christian Democratic Party has been dashed as the far-right ARENA party, led by death-squad commander Roberto D'Aubuisson, came to power in the 1989 elections. Militarily, the FMLN has proven that it cannot be defeated, and the government, with its failure to obtain a conviction in the November 1989 army murder of the six Jesuit priests and their co-workers, has proven that it will not prosecute the military for human rights abuses.

The Jesuits and their co-workers are only a few of over 80,000 Salvadorans who have been murdered since 1979. Both the U.S. Embassy and Amnesty International blame death squads within the Salvadoran military for the great majority of these murders. Death squads have especially targeted people working in organizations which demand land reform, increased educational services and better working conditions.

In 1981, after the assassination of El Salvador's Catholic Archbishop Oscar Romero, mothers of disappeared persons formed a committee in his name called the "Committee of Mothers and Families of the Political Prisoners, the Disappeared, and the Assassinated" (COMADRES). Many of them met while searching for their children and loved ones.



They brought their stories to the media, the U.S. Embassy, and to local and international human rights groups. They documented the numbers of disappearances and demanded an accounting of their family members, trials for those responsible, and an end to government complicity with the military. Many people here in the United States try to influence Congress to stop aid to El Salvador until the disappearances stop.

Although death squad kidnappings, torture, and killings are no longer at the levels of the early 1980s, they continue unabated. Kidnappings in San Salvador have become more selective, targeting popular leaders, particularly labor officials. In June 1986, the *Los Angeles Times* reported the kidnapping and beating of 11 different leaders of COMADRES and other human rights organizations by Salvadoran security forces. The six Jesuit priests murdered by the army in late 1989 were advocates of a dialogue between the government and the FMLN, and a negotiated solution to the war.

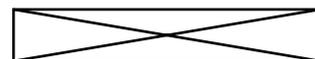
Arrests continue month after month, and many times the survival of those arrested depends upon timely pressure from people in this and other countries. Many Latin and North Americans work together to inform people of human rights violations in Central America and try to build pressure on the governments to prosecute the violators and change the military.

## Refugees in the U.S.

Salvadorans who have moved to the U.S. to escape the war face many hardships even after they arrive here. Memories of the war, of loved ones who have been killed, and the experience of moving to a new country with a new language make adjusting to their new life difficult. For children, this can be especially hard. A number of Salvadoran and Guatemalan students suffer from stressors related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). People who suffer PTSD, re-experience traumatic events in their lives in the form of memories and nightmares. PTSD was first noticed in the 1970s in Vietnam Veterans who had returned from the war.

Whether or not children have PTSD, they generally confront a combination of stressors including: reuniting with parents who may be unfamiliar to them, separation from grandparents and friends who may have stayed in their home country, memories of exposure to violence or abuse in their home country or during immigration, fear of deportation, health hazards, economic pressures, and discrimination. Often due to economic pressures children have to cope with these stresses alone. Family, friends or the children themselves may be working in the evening, so rather than having an opportunity to debrief and rebuild their strength for the next day at school, the frustrations just build up inside.

Wilfredo was fortunate to meet up with people who would help him



adjust to his new life in San Francisco. Peer assistance and teachers who find activities in which the immigrant student can share their strengths and knowledge are critical.

There are many opportunities for teachers and students to get involved in efforts to both improve the life of refugees here in the U.S. and to end the conditions which force people to choose between their home and safety in the first place.

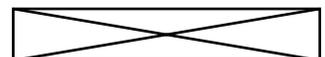
This history was adapted, by Dan Farnham and Deborah Menkart, from the original publication of *Wilfredo* and the following sources:

Armstrong, Robert, and Janet Shenk, *El Salvador: The Face of Revolution*, Boston: South End Press, 1982.

Barry, Tom, *El Salvador: A Country Guide* Albuquerque: Interhemispheric Education Resource Center, 1990.

Burgos, Alfredo *Historia de El Salvador* San Salvador: Equipo Maiz, 1990.

Miles, Sara and Bob Ostertag *The U.S. and El Salvador: A Decade of Disaster* San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1989.



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**DATA ON EL SALVADOR**


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**Area:** 21,041 sq. km. (includes 247 sq. km. of inland lakes)

Republic is divided into 14 departments.

**Population:** est. (1991) 5,376,000 (44.4% urban)

**Climate:** Despite its proximity to the equator, the climate is warm rather than hot and nights are cool inland. Light rains occur in the dry season from November to April while the rest of the year has heavy rains, especially on the coastal plain.

**Currency:** The monetary unit is the *colón* (name after Columbus)(SVC) of 100 *centavos*.

**National Flag:** blue, white, blue (horizontal): white stripe has the arms of the republic.

**Literacy:** 65%

**Religion:** Catholic (1987) 81% Protestant (1988) 18%

**Vital Statistics** (rates per 1000) Birth 36.5, Death 8.5

**Infant mortality** (per 1000) 59

**Life expectancy** (1990) 66 years

**Economy:**

**Income Distribution (1980):**

Poorest 20% of population = 2.0% of income

30% below the mean = 10.0% of income

30% above the mean = 22.0% of income

Richest 20% = 66% of income

**Rural Population in Absolute Poverty:** 70% Absolute poverty is the inability to afford food providing minimum nutritional requirements.

**Land Distribution:**

1% of farms comprise 71% of farmland

41% of farms comprise 10% of farmland

**Unemployment (1988)** Urban = 50% Rural = 71%

**Top Agricultural Products (1988)**

Coffee = 90.2%

Shrimp = 5.1%

Sugar = 4.4%

Cotton = 0.2%

**U.S. Economic Aid(In millions)**

1980-87: 2,014.80 1988: 320.1 1989: 302.0

**U.S. Military Aid**

1980-87: 770.7 1988: 81.5 1989: 81.4

**Please note:** These statistics do not tell the whole story. For example, although the measure of unemployment is 50%, "underemployment" is much higher. The underemployed are working, but do not earn enough to survive. In addition, the funds sent to El Salvador by family members living in the United States and other countries is not reflected here. Regarding the U.S. aid, there are many ways to interpret these figures. Many would argue that much of the "economic aid" should be classified as military aid. For example, road construction is considered economic aid, yet when the roads are built primarily for use by tanks and jeeps, they directly benefit the military.

**Sources:** Major sources: Barry, Tom. (1990) *El Salvador: A Country Guide*. NM: Interhemispheric Education Resource Center and Hunter, Brian (Ed.) (1992.) *Statesman Yearbook 129th Edition Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year of 1992-93*. New York: St. Martins Press. These sources drew their statistics from: IA World Factbook 1988; Encyclopedia of the Third World; Directory and Analysis: Private Organizations with U.S. Connections- El Salvador, Resource Center, 1988; CEPAL Review, April 1984; Tom Barry, *Roots of Rebellion: Land of Hunger in Central America*, Resource Center, 1987; Salvadoran Ministry of Planning; U.S. Department of Agriculture, "El Salvador: Agriculture Situation Report," March 31, 1989, citing Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador figures; and more.

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## Poems for Children / Poemas Para Niños

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### Names

The early morning  
I call it Sun...  
What a festival of lights!  
Pure resplendence!

And to the beautiful bird  
I give a name  
that no one guesses:  
Angel of the Flower

### Nombres

A la mañanita  
yo la llama Sol...  
¡Qué fiesta de luces!  
¡Puro resplandor!

Y al pájaro lindo  
un nombre le doy  
que nadie adivina  
Angel de la flor

• Claudia Lars, El Salvador, 1899-1974

### The Nest

It is because a little bird of the mountain has made,  
in the hollow of a tree its morning nest,  
that the tree awakes with music in its chest,  
as if it had a musical heart.

If the sweet little bird peeks out of the hollow,  
to drink the dew, to drink the fragrance,  
the tree of the mountain gives me the sensation,  
that its heart has flown out, singing...

### El Nido

Es porque un pajarito de la montaña ha hecho,  
en el hueco de un árbol su nido matinal,  
que el árbol amanece con música en el pecho,  
como si tuviera corazón musical.

Si el dulce pajarito por ende el hueco asoma,  
para beber rocío, para beber aroma,  
el árbol de la sierra me da la sensación  
de que se le ha salido, cantando, el corazón...

• Alfredo Espino, El Salvador, 1900-1928

