

OBJECTIVE

To introduce children to the work of a Salvadoran handicraft workshop called "Semilla de Dios" (Seed of God) and its workers who earn their living by designing and making colorfully painted wood products.

INPUT

While not as common in El Salvador as many other countries of the world, some Salvadorans earn their livings as artisans by making and selling handicrafts—both traditional crafts and some that have been more recently introduced. Some of El Salvador's traditional crafts include basket-weaving with reeds and bamboo, clay pottery-making, especially of utensils such as water pitchers and cooking pots, and the creation of hammocks and bags from the fibers of the *maguey* plant.

In the early 1970s, a folk art style was developed by a Salvadoran artist named Fernando Llort in the small town of La Palma in the department of Chalatenango. The style, inspired by the adobe houses and rural life, uses bright primary colors. The style was first applied to small seeds and is now worked mostly on wood and some embroidered clothing. (An example of this work is the painted cross included in the resource box.)

CONNECTING ACTIVITIES**Explore the work world of artisans.**

Show the students pictures of the "Seed of God" from online. Ask the students what they see in the pictures. What is happening? What does the word "artisan" mean?

Discuss the following:

- What types of handicraft work does your family do?
- What kinds of handicrafts are traditional in your community?
- Do you think the work pictured looks like something you would enjoy doing? Why or why not?

Profile

Refer again to the photos of the artisans at work. Share with the students the following:

In the early 1970s, a Salvadoran artist named Fernando Llort (Fair-NAHN-doe Yort) opened a small artisan

workshop in the northern town of La Palma (The Palm). He named the shop the "*Semilla de Dios*" or "Seed of God."

A few years later Llort turned over the business to his workers in the form of a cooperative. That means that each worker was a part owner; everyone had a part in decision-making, and the profits were divided fairly. The cooperative was appropriately named because it is indeed a seed of God that flourishes and provides jobs for many people.

Antonio and Laura are two of the 50 persons who work in the cooperative. The work is divided into different areas—carpentry, drawing, painting, finishing, varnishing and packing. The artisans are proud of their work and its quality. Imagine how difficult it must be to draw and paint by hand.

During the war it was difficult to work at times, because of the lack of electricity and danger of carrying products into the capital to sell. The cooperative has been exporting for several years and sells to Ten Thousand Villages, an MCC program that sells handicrafts in North America. The *Semilla de Dios* cooperative celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1997.

Cross-making or Coloring Sheet

Show a Salvadoran-made cross and ask the students what they see. Ask them to look closely at the painting. What do they notice about the drawings? What colors are used? (Salvadorans love bright colors. Often they will paint their homes and public buildings bright pink, blue, yellow and green.)

Discuss the following:

- What does a cross represent?
- Why do you think the artist painted houses and animals on the cross?
- If you were to paint a cross, what would you paint on it?

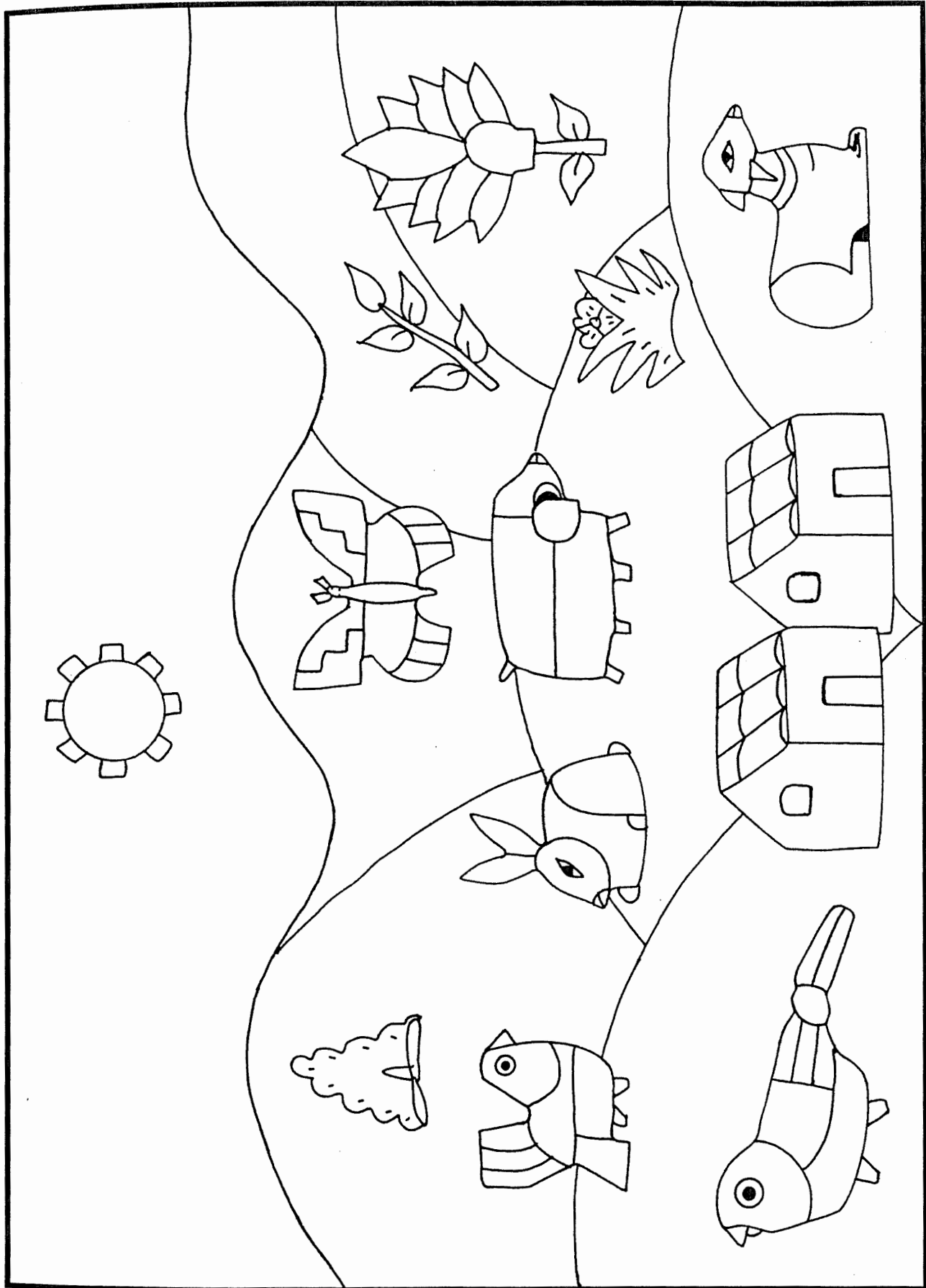
Choose one of the following activities:

- Distribute cardboard crosses, 12-by-20 inches (30-by-50 centimeters) that you cut beforehand from white posterboard. Ask students to decorate their crosses. Encourage them to use bright-colored markers or paints.
- Have students color one of the coloring sheets provided on the next two pages. (You will need to photocopy them.) The sheets are another example of the type of folk art style developed by Fernando Llort. Encourage use of bright colored markers, crayons, or paints.

LEVEL: PRIMARY

SOURCE: Latin America & Caribbean Series

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COLORING SHEET

