



Do you think people in Southeast Asia could live without rice? Rice is more than just food. It is part of our way of life, our beliefs and our well-being. Let's explore the amazing world of rice!



ABOUT THIS BOOK

Young readers will explore and appreciate:

- ♥ The diversity and similarities among people and cultures in Southeast Asia
- ♥ The relationship between people and their environment
- ♥ Interactions between different communities in and outside Southeast Asia.



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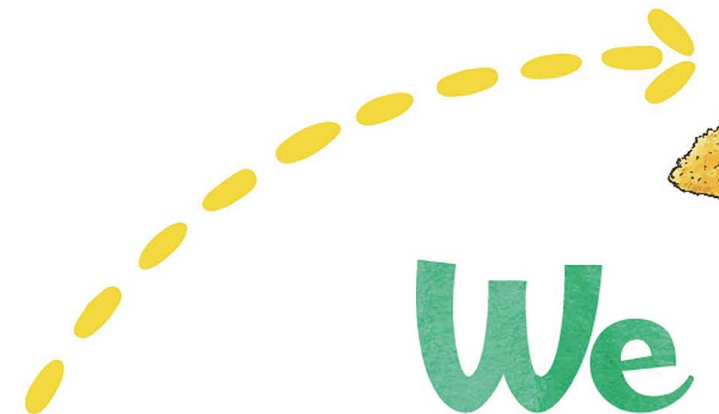
Understanding the Shared Histories of Southeast Asia



ACTIVITIES AND GAME INSIDE

We all eat
Rice





We all eat rice



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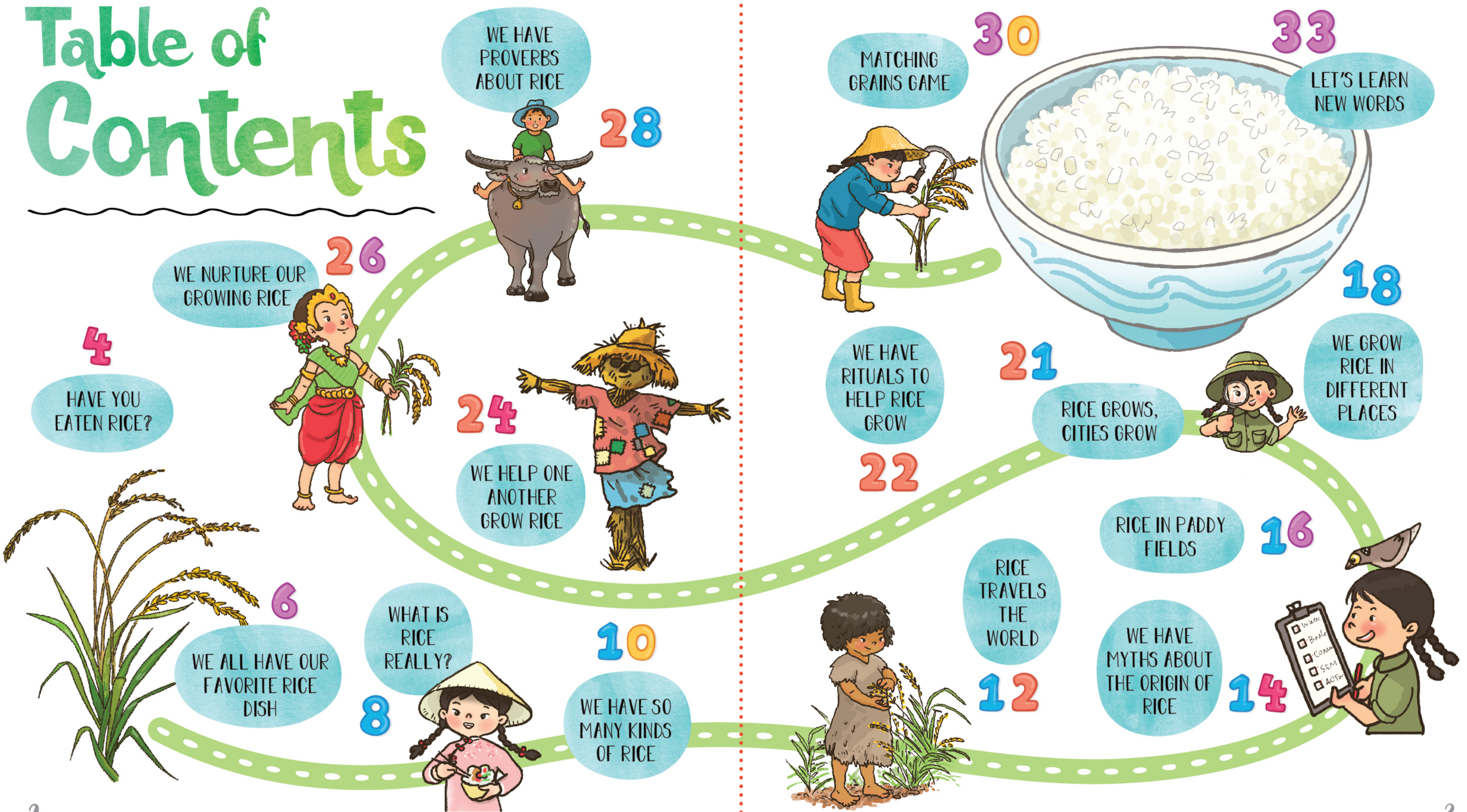
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PEOPLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA LIKE TO EAT RICE.

We eat rice everyday, but do we all eat the same kinds of rice? Have you ever wondered where rice comes from? What does a rice plant look like? Rice is actually more than food. It is a central element in many cultural traditions. Do you know any legends about rice? Let's discover the world of this fascinating plant.

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Do you feel hungry or unsatisfied when you eat a meal without rice? Do you feel you have more energy after a rice meal?



Nham bay howie nov?
CAMBODIA



Kin khao rue yang?
THAILAND

Have you eaten rice?

Sudah makan nasi?
INDONESIA



For Southeast Asians, having enough rice to eat means life is going well. So in many of our communities, we have various greetings that could translate into "Have you eaten rice?" This shows that we care about each other, just like when we say "How are you?"



Chi guo le ma?
SINGAPORE



PHILIPPINES
Kumain ka na ba?

LAO PDR

Kin khao kin nam laew bo?



MYANMAR

Sa pyi byi la?



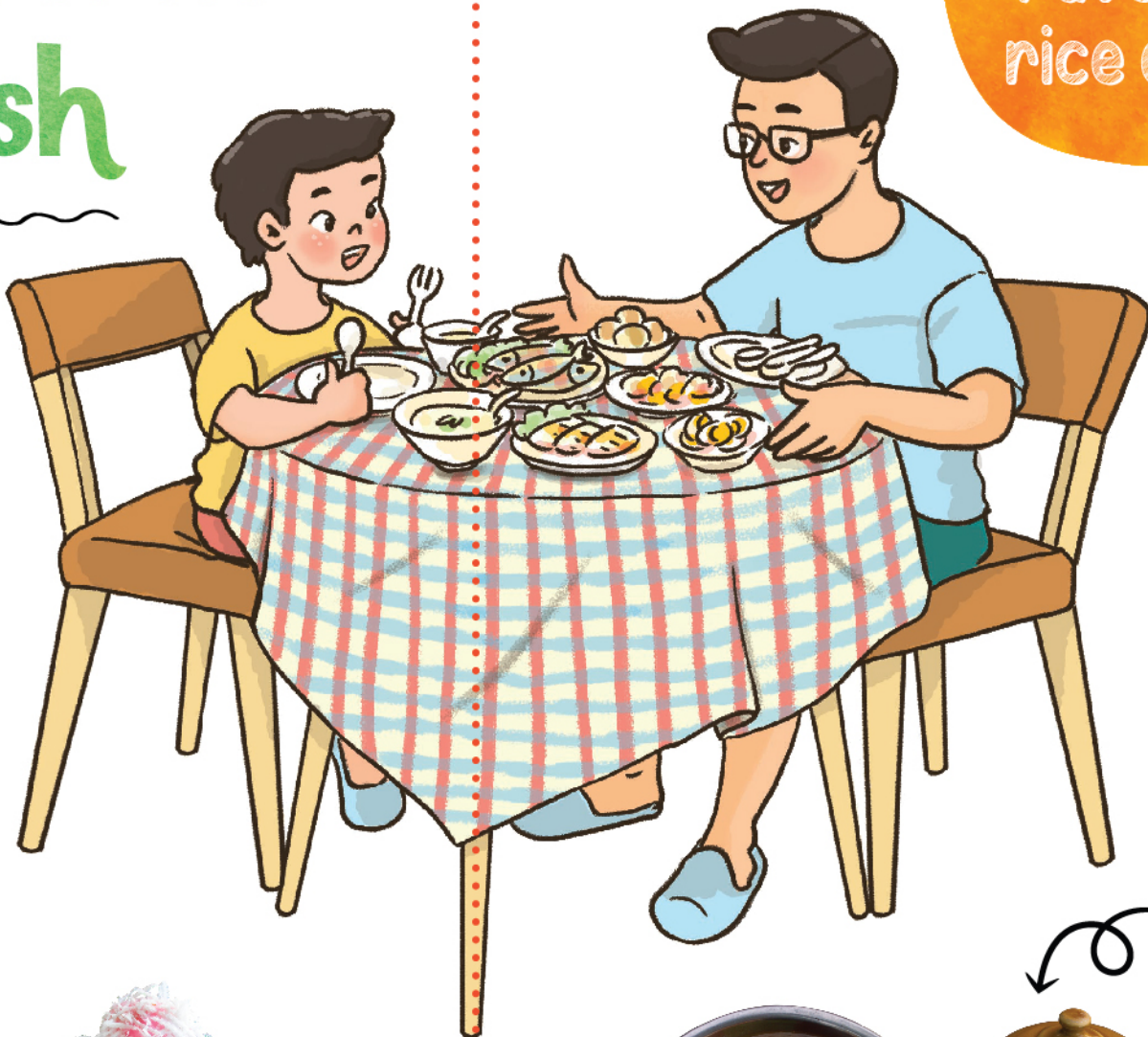
Do you greet your friends this way? Why is that?



VIETNAM
Ăn cơm chưa?

We all have our favorite rice dish

Many people eat boiled rice. Others prefer steamed glutinous rice, also called sticky rice. We don't eat just rice, but we also cook many kinds of delicious dishes to eat with it. Noodles and wraps made from rice flour are also very popular.



What is your favorite rice dish?



Nasi Lemak
Coconut-milk rice with chicken, eggs, peanuts and spicy sauce



Philippines
Arroz Caldo
Chicken and rice soup



Myanmar
Mohinga
Rice noodle in fish soup



Viet Nam
Xôi Gấc
Sticky rice mixed with red gac fruit. It is a special food in Vietnamese ceremonies.



Brunei
Ketupat
Rice dumpling in woven palm leaf pouch, eaten with Serunding or spicy coconut flakes

Indonesia
Grilled sticky rice with beef sate maranggi



Cambodia
Nom Plae Ai
Rice cake dessert



Lao PDR
Thailand
Khao Rad Kaeng
Steamed rice with different kinds of curry and stir-fried side menus

What is rice really?

Whether you like long-grain, short-grain or glutinous rice, all rice grains come from the same genus of plant. This **genus**, or biological group is called **Oryza**. Rice is a type of grass. It is in the same family as wheat and corn.

Let's observe rice

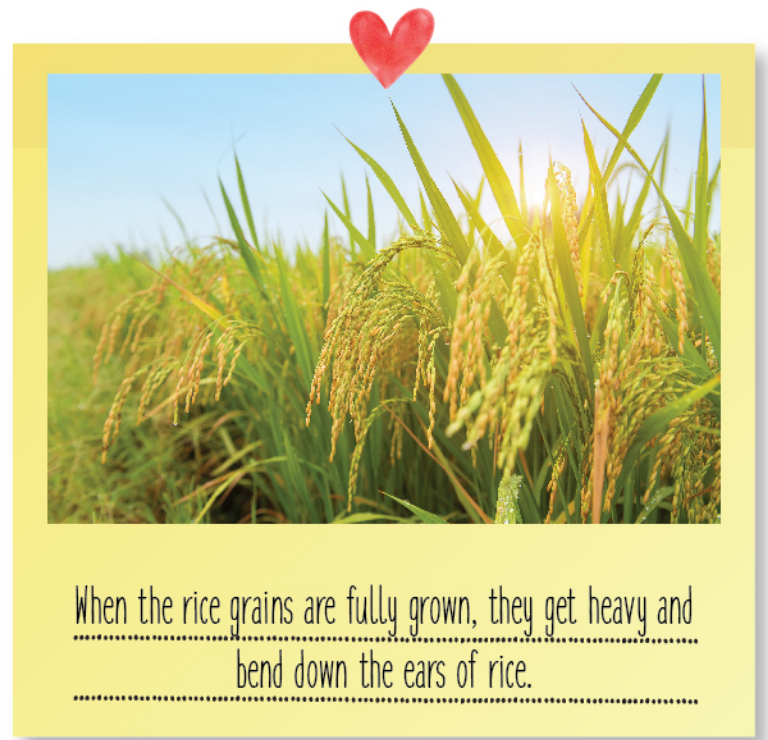
If you live near a rice field, take photos or draw the changes of the rice plant as it grows, for example every two weeks. You can also examine the different parts of the plant with a magnifying glass.



Oh, this is what rice stalks look like! They have long leaves like grass.



Flowers or panicles will develop on branches that we call "ears" of rice. Later panicles will become grains with hard husk, called paddy.



When the rice grains are fully grown, they get heavy and bend down the ears of rice.

An ear of rice has dozens of rice grains.



From a single rice grain, the rice plant grows and sprouts into many stems called tillers.

A long time ago, before people in Asia knew how to cultivate rice, they gathered a plant from the **marshlands**. This plant is Asian wild rice which has a long tail attached to the grain. It is an ancestor of rice with no tail.

We have so many kinds of rice

There are thousands of rice varieties in the world. Each has its own color, size, shape and taste. Rice grain is rich in **nutrients**, vitamins, and minerals. It is a staple food for more than three billion people in the world.

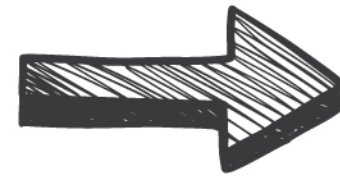


Rice explorer

Let's go to your neighborhood markets and see what kinds of rice are sold there. What kinds of rice have you already tasted? Which new one would you like to try? Where does it come from? How different is it from the rice that you usually eat?



Rice grains or **paddies** have a yellow **husk** protecting them.



Rice grains are milled to remove the husk before it can be cooked.



Whole-grain rice comes in many colors. The layer giving the color, called the bran, brings many vitamins, minerals and fibers.

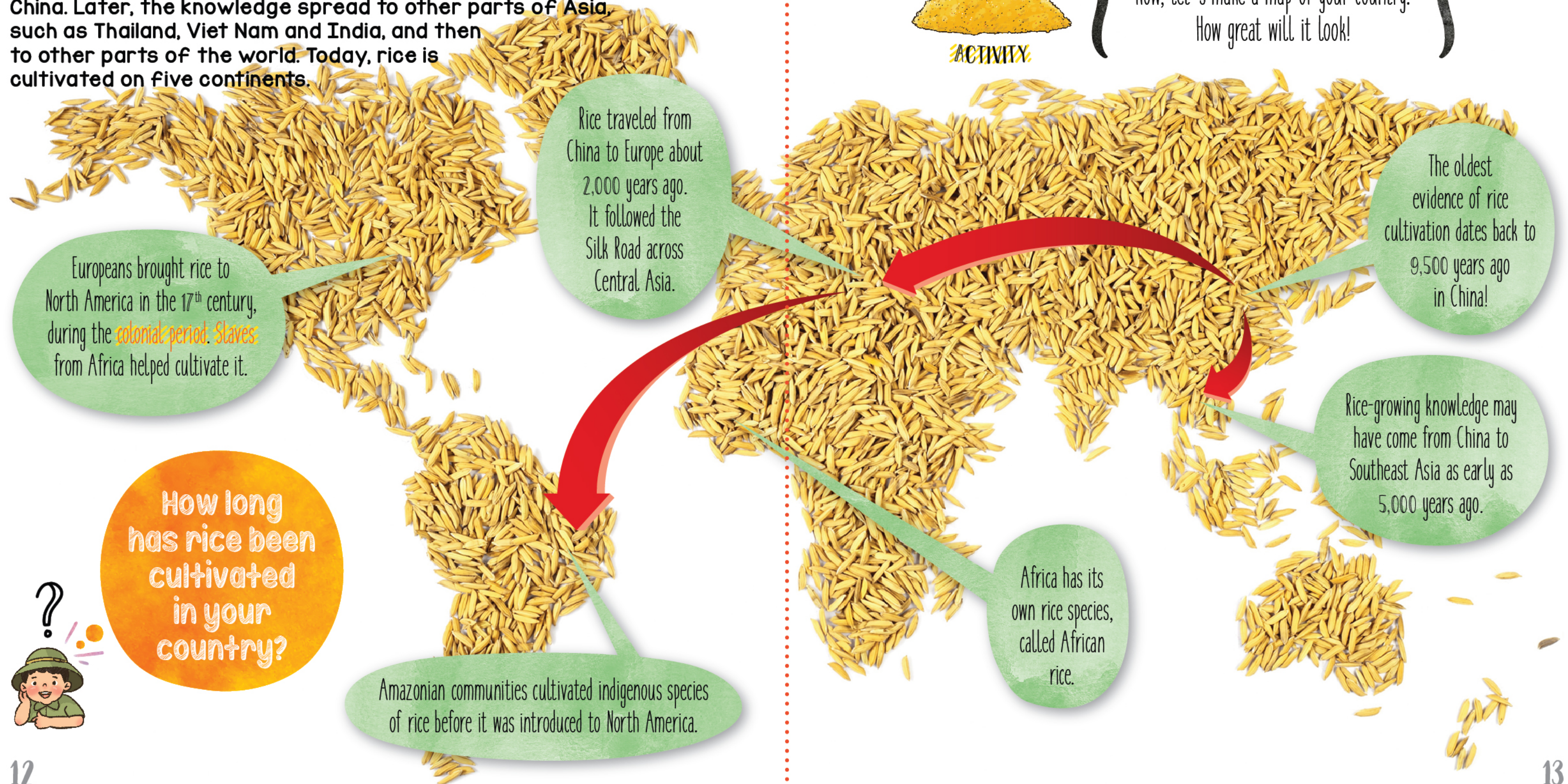
White rice is the same grain, but its bran has been polished and removed. It is faster to cook.

These are some varieties from just one country, Thailand.



Rice travels the world

Scientists and **archaeologists** found that rice was first cultivated in China. Later, the knowledge spread to other parts of Asia, such as Thailand, Viet Nam and India, and then to other parts of the world. Today, rice is cultivated on five continents.



Paddy art

This world map was made with rice grains. Now, let's make a map of your country. How great will it look!

How long has rice been cultivated in your country?



We have myths about the origin of rice

Although rice is a plant, many people in Southeast Asia believe that it has a soul and that it is sacred. There are many stories throughout the region about how the gods had given this sacred plant to mankind to help them survive on earth.



Indonesia

It is believed that rice was once grown only in heaven. One day, the goddess of rice, Devi Sri, met a young man and invited him to heaven. There, she taught him to cultivate rice. Later, the man stole rice grains from heaven to grow on earth. At first, the goddess was upset but she later understood that rice could really help mankind, so she let people cultivate it.



Meet Devi Sri and learn to grow rice with her. Download this fun game!



<http://tiny.cc/SEAwander>



Thailand

The goddess Mae Posob transformed herself into rice to feed mankind. If people do not take good care of rice, the goddess will run away, and we will not be able to grow rice anymore.



Malaysia

Rungus people believe that the spirits that protect rice are named Bambarazon. People organize ceremonies and gifts to thank them and get good harvests.

Why do people in many different places believe rice has a soul?
Do you have a legend about rice in your community?



ACTIVITY

Bring legends to life!

There are so many legends about rice! Let's stage a play to tell one of these fantastic stories. Don't forget to make awesome sets and costumes for an even better show!



Farmers build dirt ridges in the fields to divide plots and to retain water.

Rice in paddy fields

Many varieties of rice like hot and humid weather and plenty of sunlight and water. Southeast Asia has regular monsoons. It is just perfect for wet rice cultivation. Rice fields need to hold water and give nutrients that the rice plants need.

Rice needs water during its growing period, for 3 to 6 months depending on rice varieties.



Wetland rice grows best in water that is 10 to 20 centimeters deep.

Flooded fields help prevent weeds from growing. The wet field also gives more nutrients for the rice to grow better.



In areas that rely on rainwater, farmers begin growing rice when the rainy season starts, and harvest the grains during the dry season.



Where do you think rice grows better, in plains and wetlands with rivers, or on mountain slopes?



We grow rice in different places

Lowlands along rivers are an ideal place for rice farming. In areas far from waterways, Southeast Asian farmers also found clever ways to grow rice.



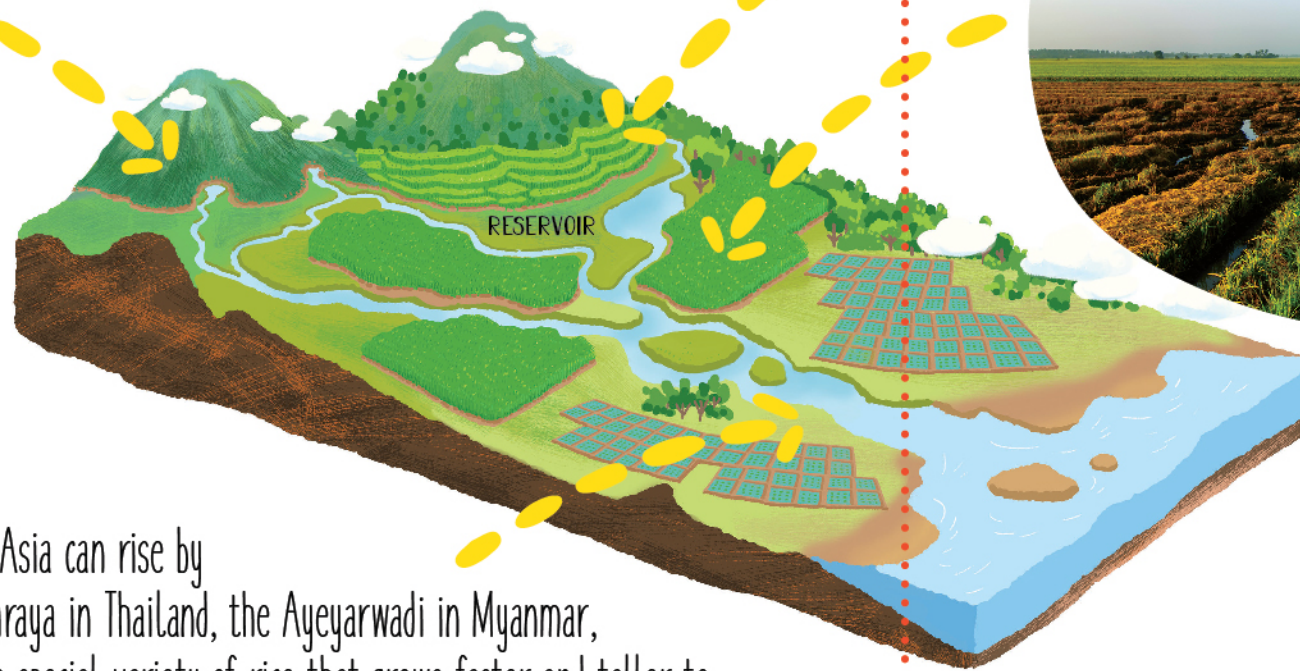
Upland rice

In some mountainous areas, farmers plant rice seeds directly in the soil. They rely on rain to supply enough water. This rice is usually for eating in the family or for bartering, not for sale.



Lowlands and plains

During the rainy season, the rivers in Southeast Asia can rise by several meters. Farmers living along the Chao Phraya in Thailand, the Ayeyarwadi in Myanmar, and the Mekong in Cambodia and Viet Nam, use a special variety of rice that grows faster and taller to remain above water. This rice is called “floating rice” or “deep water rice.”



Rice terraces

On mountains slopes, farmers build flat steps, called “terraces”, for farming. These terraces can be quite large or very narrow. They store rainwater needed to cultivate rice. For thousands of years, farmers in Sa Pa in Viet Nam, Banaue in the Philippines and Bali in Indonesia, have passed on the traditional knowledge on how to build and take care of these rice terraces.



Irrigated areas

In areas far from rivers, lakes, or reservoirs, canals are dug to bring water to rice fields. This way, farmers do not need to depend on the rain, and have enough water to grow rice all year round.



?
Where is rice grown in your country?
Which rice farming practices require more work?



* Siam

Some 250–700 years ago, wetlands along the Chao Phraya river were the key rice-growing areas of the Siamese kingdom. Ayutthaya, its capital city, was an important port city that had flourishing trade with other cities in Southeast Asia, China and Japan.



* Khmer Empire

The empire emerged 1,200 years ago near Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. It developed thanks to a sophisticated and vast irrigation system. Because they controlled water, the Khmers could grow and harvest rice 3 to 4 times a year, enough to feed several hundreds of thousands of people in their capital, Angkor. The Khmer empire dominated a large area of Southeast Asia for 600 years!



* Champa

Some 550–1,800 years ago, wetlands along Thu Bon river were the vital rice-growing areas that fed the entire Champa kingdom, which is today Central Viet Nam. From the 7th to 10th century, the port cities of Champa became important regional trading centers with control over the spice and silk trade of the South China Sea.

Rice grows, cities grow

In the past, in places with good soil and water, people could grow large quantities of rice and feed a large population. People who did not farm, such as blacksmiths and carpenters, would exchange their skills for rice and food.

Tiny communities grew into big cities, with people working in different professions. There were rulers and soldiers to protect people, food supplies, and goods. These cities then merged into states, and eventually, nations.

Do you know any ancient kingdoms that became powerful because they could grow so much rice?



We have rituals to help rice grow

For the rice plant to grow and give a good **yield**, it needs favorable weather and soil. But there are many natural **calamities**, such as storms, floods and **droughts**, that humans cannot control.

In Southeast Asia, farmers use rituals to ask supernatural powers for protection against bad happenings that could destroy a good crop.



Bapua ceremony in Malaysia

Farmers put on a performance in which two groups pretend to fight each other with sticks as weapons. The group representing the demons eventually loses. This performance symbolizes the chasing away of the evil spirits from the rice field, so that the rice crop could thrive.

Hudoq masked dance in Indonesia

Farmers wear animal masks, such as that of a pig, bird, crocodile, or monkey, and dance in a group. The ceremony is to call the good spirits to come and reside in the field and protect the rice crop, and to chase away pests, such as mice and crows, that might eat the young rice plants and rice grains.



In your hometown, is there a ritual about rice? Have you ever participated in one? Is it similar to or different from rituals in other places that you know?



Mae Posob ceremony in Thailand

Farmers make offerings of beautiful presents, such as mirrors or dresses, to Mae Posob (the goddess of rice) to keep her happy. They also comb the rice stalks, as if they were the goddess' hair.



We help one another grow rice

Rice farming is hard work. The process involves many steps, from ploughing the field to harvesting the crop. Farmers have to finish them quickly to ensure a good harvest. Because farmers often rely on their families and neighbors to help with farming, harmony in the community is very important in a farmer's life.

Ploughing

Before planting, farmers must first plough the fields to loosen and soften the soil and make the ground more even. Ploughing uses a lot of labor. Southeast Asian farmers raise oxen or buffalos to help them plough. Today, some farmers use tractors to plough large fields.

Do farmers in your hometown help one another? Or do they hire people and use machines to do the work?



Farmers in Myanmar use oxen to plough.



Let's sing Farmer's songs.

To pass the time during hard work, farmers sing fun songs while they work in the field. Listen to *Vi and Giã* folk songs and stories from Viet Nam. Do you know farmer's songs from your country?



<http://tiny.cc/ViGiam>

Indonesian farmers transplant rice seedlings together.



Seeding and transplanting

In wet rice cultivation, farmers first place the rice grains in a special field called "seedbed". Small rice plants, called seedlings, will grow within a few weeks. They are then removed from the seedbed and planted evenly in many rows in large flooded fields. There, they will grow into mature rice plants.

Harvesting

When the rice plants are mature enough and the rice grains are ripe, farmers rush to harvest the whole field to get the perfect grains.



Vietnamese farmers help one another harvest.

We nurture our growing rice

Farmers want to produce a good **crop**. They always take good care of rice and protect it from anything that can be harmful.



Do you know why I have to wear a mask to cover my nose and mouth?



Using pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides

In large fields, rice can be damaged by diseases, insects and weeds. Farmers often turn to pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides to solve the problem. However, these chemicals **pollute** the soil and water. They are not good for the health of farmers and people who eat the rice.



I don't need that mask!

Cultivating organic rice fields

Some farmers have decided to stop using chemicals. They use local plants, such as neem, to help prevent pests and diseases. Some use ducks and predatory insects to get rid of pests. Other farmers cultivate small-sized fields as they are easier to manage. They also grow local rice varieties that fit into the environment and can better resist pests.

Understand before you decide

Do your research: Read books, pamphlets, websites and other sources on using different chemicals in agricultural production. List the benefits of using the chemicals on one sheet of paper, and the benefits of not using them on another. Compare and decide which method you would prefer using. You can also compare your lists with your friends.



We have proverbs about rice

You can see how much life in Southeast Asia is connected to rice. People work hard and feed themselves with delicious rice. Proverbs about rice teach them to live wisely. These are just a few examples.



1

Philippines

“Cook only as much rice as you have.”



2

Indonesia

“Be smart like the rice stalks that don't resist the wind.”



3

Thailand

“Rice depends on paddy fields, fish depends on water.”



Viet Nam

4

“Eat slowly, it's good for your belly. Plough deeply, it's good for your paddies.”

5

Malaysia



“If you plant grass, you will not get rice.”

7

Cambodia



“Don't let an angry person wash the dishes. Don't let a hungry person look after the rice.”



6

Myanmar



“Believing in fortune-telling is a waste of rice.”

ACTIVITY



Interview your family members to gather more sayings and proverbs about rice.

Which proverb do you like most? Why do you think it is important?



Matching grains game

18 CARDS FROM 6 FAMILIES

Action cards

X = Threats

O = Solutions

Tool cards

L = Labor

P = Planting necessities

W = Water sources

S = Steps to grow rice

AIM OF THE GAME

Players earn points by collecting cards from the same family (L, P, S and W). When all cards are collected, the player with the most points is the winner.

COUNTING POINTS

3 cards of the same tool family are collected and the player can explain how each tool is used to grow rice.

+10 points

A player draws an X card, but cannot find a corresponding O card immediately.

-10 points

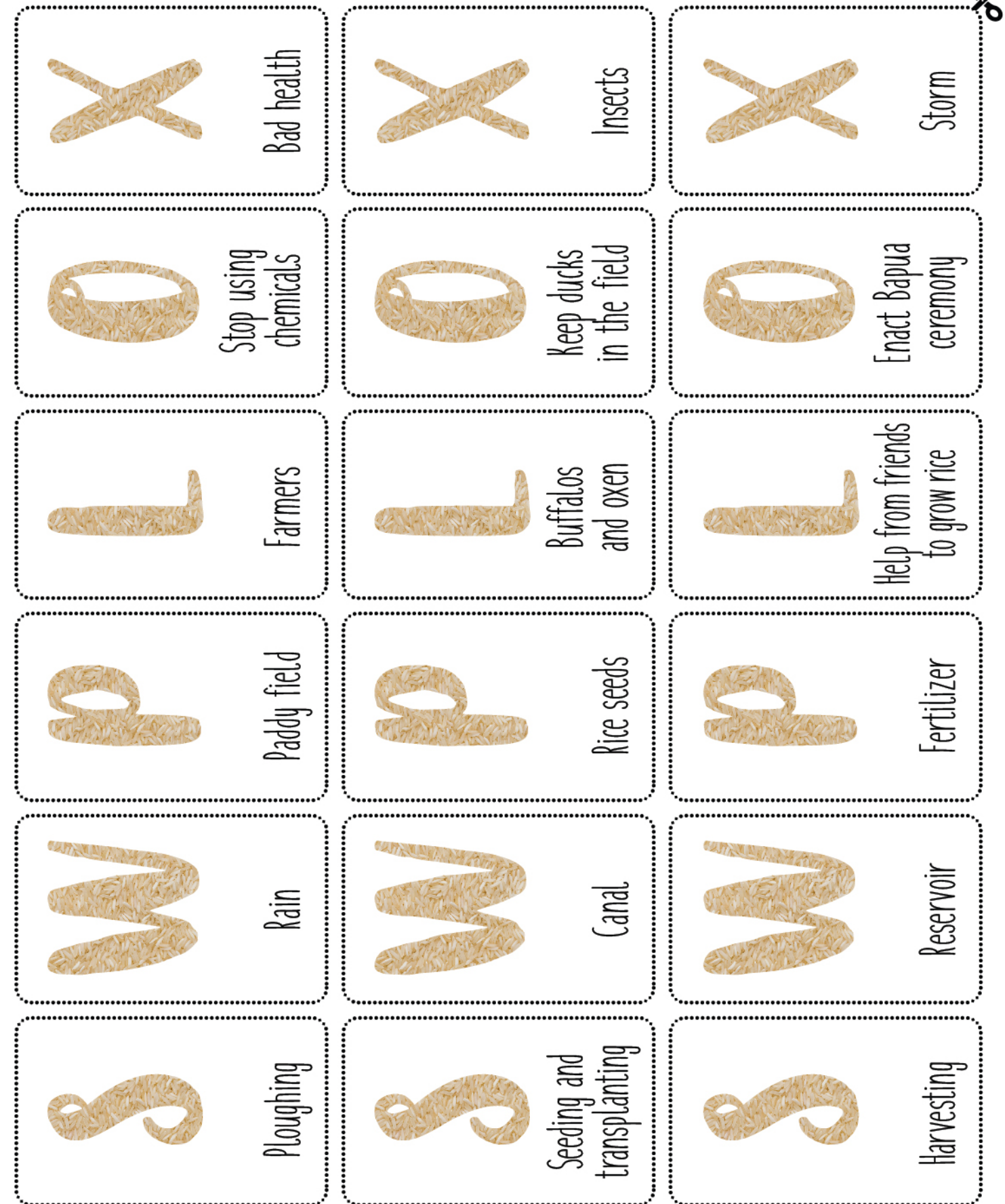
A player draws an O card and can explain what threat it counters.

+20 points



How to play

- 1 Players get familiar with the cards and create matching groups (3 cards of the same tool family, or pairs of threats and corresponding solution).
- 2 Players shuffle the cards and place them on the table face down.
- 3 Player 1 draws 2 cards.
- 4 If both cards are from the same tool family (L, P, S or W), the player draws a third card. If the third card completes the tool family, the player explains how each tool is used. She or he collects the 3 cards, wins 10 points and can continue playing.
- 5 If both cards are not from the same tool family, Player 1 flips them back on the table. It's the next player's turn.
- 6 If an O card is drawn, the player puts it at the bottom of the deck and draws a new card.
- 7 If an X card is drawn, the player must find an O card to solve the threat. To get the points, the player must also explain how that card helps solving threats to rice. She or he then collects both cards and continues playing.
- 8 If the player does not find the corresponding solution, she or he flips the cards back and loses 10 points. It's the next player's turn.
- 9 The game ends when all cards are collected.





Let's learn new words

Archeologist : a person who study human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artifacts and other physical remains

Calamities : disasters

Colonial period : the period during which a country occupies another country and take control of its government, people and resources

Crop : a plant cultivated in large quantity to be sold or for living

Drought : a long period with low or no rain, leading to a shortage of water

Genus : a group of animals or plants that includes several closely related species

Husk : dry outer covering of rice and some fruits or seeds

Marsh / marshland : an area of low-lying land that is flooded in wet seasons or at high tide, and that typically remains waterlogged at all times

Nutrient : a substance that helps a person, an animal or a plant grow

Organic : produced without the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial chemicals

Paddy : a field where rice is grown, or rice after threshing, or rice in the husk

Pollute : to add dirty or harmful substances in the air, water and soil

Slave : a person who becomes the property of another person and is forced to obey them

Stem / Stalk : the main body of a plant, above the roots and usually above ground, where leaves, flowers and fruits are attached to

Yield : the amount of agricultural product