

Mayans 1, Olmecs 1 by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

from *A Season on the Reservation*

READING SKILLS: ANALYZING PROPOSITION AND SUPPORT

When you propose, or suggest, a course of action or reveal an idea or belief, you are making a **proposition**. In many informational texts the writer offers one or more propositions for you to consider. A proposition is usually followed by reasons that **support** it. These reasons may take the form of facts, statistics, examples, anecdotes, or expert opinions.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who was a basketball star in the 1970s and 1980s, became the assistant coach of a high school basketball team composed of White Mountain Apaches. He wrote about his experiences in a book called *A Season on the Reservation*. As you read this essay from the book, keep track of the writer's proposition and support in a chart like this one.

Proposition:			
Support:	Support:	Support:	Support:

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY

Preview these vocabulary words before you begin to read.

parallel (par'ə·lel') *adj.*: extending in the same direction and at the same distance apart at every point.

A basketball net is parallel to the court.

overtones (ō'vər-tōnz) *n.*: things understood but not directly stated; shades of meaning.

The temples at the ends of the basketball court gave the games religious overtones.

ritual (rich'ōō·əl) *n.*: action that is always done in the same way.

In its earliest form, basketball was more of a ritual than a sporting event.

adapted (ə·dapt'id) *v.*: changed to fit a different situation.

Basketball is one of many sports that have been adapted from the games of an early culture.

SKILLS FOCUS

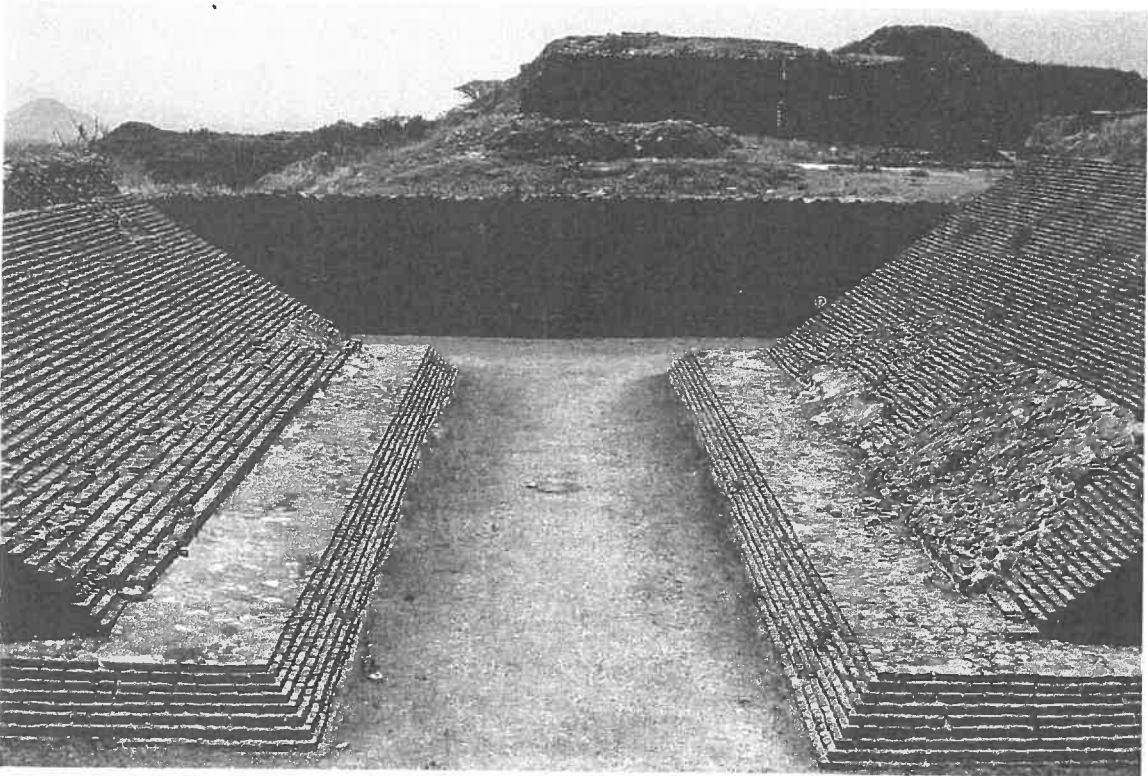
Reading Skills

Analyze proposition and support.

from *A Season on the Reservation*

Mayans 1, Olmecs 1

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar



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A ball court in Mexico.

Basketball is not originally a white or a black game, but a Native American one, although most people don't know that. Centuries ago, the Mayans and Olmecs¹ played a form of the sport in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. The ball

TEXT STRUCTURE

The writer presents his **proposition** in the opening lines of this essay. State the proposition of this article in your own words.

1. Mayans and Olmecs: Ancient societies that were located in the areas now called Mexico and Central America, thousands of years ago.

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VISUALIZE

In the space below, draw the two types of rings described in lines 9–11.

TEXT STRUCTURE

Underline an expert opinion in lines 13–15 that supports the writer’s proposition.

INFER

Underline the details in lines 19–22 that help you infer that scoring was rare in the Native American game.

IDENTIFY

As you read lines 24–31, circle the places where basketball was played as the sport developed.

VOCABULARY

parallel (par’ə-lel’) *adj.*: extending in the same direction and at the same distance apart at every point.

overtones (ō’vər-tōnz) *n.*: things understood but not directly stated; shades of meaning.

ritual (rich’ōō-əl) *n.*: action that is always done in the same way.

adapted (ə-dapt’id) *v.*: changed to fit a different situation.

Circle the context clues that help you figure out the meaning of the word *adapted*.

court at Chichén Itzá,² typical of most, was shaped like a quadrangle,³ with temples at its ends and two long walls on the sides. At the northern end of the quadrangle was the Temple of the Bearded Man and at the southern end was the Temple of the Jaguars. High up on each end was a small ring, which was not **parallel** to the ground, as in today’s basketball, but perpendicular.⁴ The game they played on this court had religious **overtones**—and very serious consequences. Scholars believe that the competitors used their shoulders, elbows, hips, or knees to knock a hard rubber ball through the ring, but could not use their hands. Once the ball went through, the game was over and, apparently, so were some other things. The victors won the clothing of the spectators and the losers got their hearts cut out or their heads chopped off. Because the hole in the ring was not large and the ring itself was high up off the ground, a made shot was probably rare and the game was mostly a social **ritual**. Still, people must have died on those ancient ball courts.

The sport spread throughout Mexico and moved north all the way to Arizona, where the Aztecs⁵ traveled and traded with the Native Americans. A centuries-old ball court has been found at the tourist town of Sedona. The “inventor” of modern basketball, Dr. James Naismith, who was living in Springfield, Massachusetts, at the turn of the nineteenth century, **adapted** the old Indian game to the

2. **Chichén Itzá** (chē-chen’ ēt-sā’): Mayan city located on the Yucatán Peninsula.

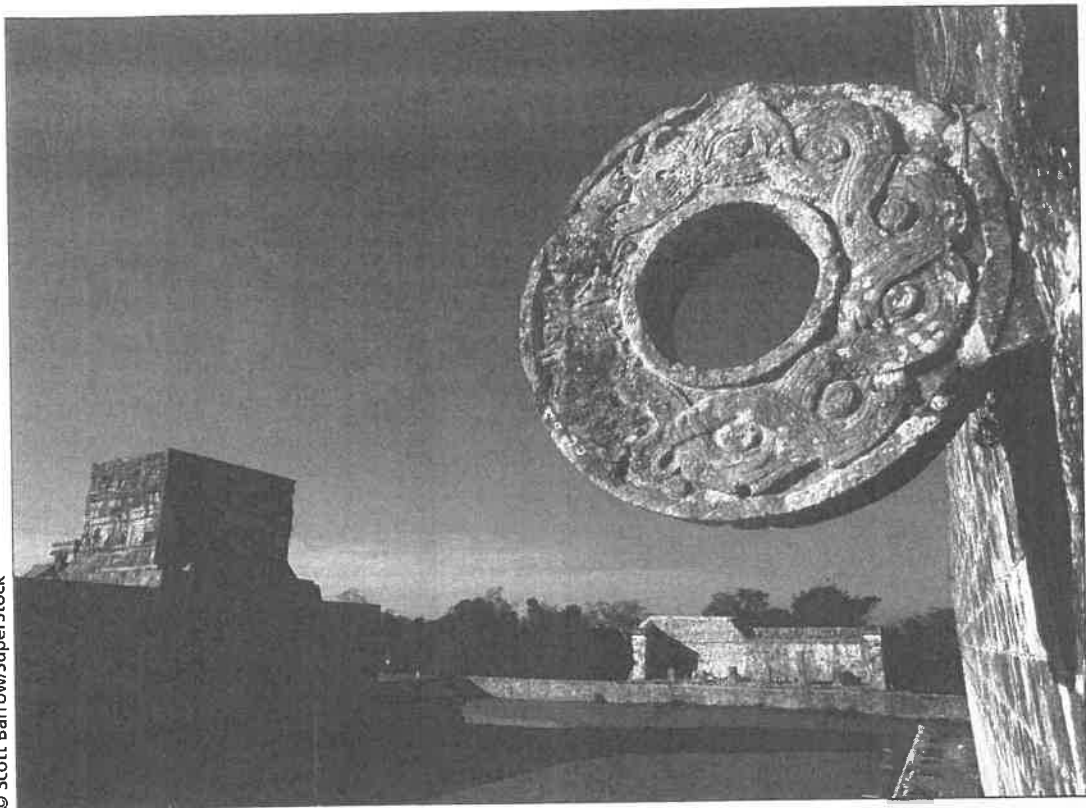
3. **quadrangle** (kwā’dran’gəl) *n.*: shape with four straight sides.

4. **perpendicular** (pər’pən-dik’yōō-lər) *adj.*: If one line is perpendicular to another line, they form a ninety-degree angle.

5. **Aztecs** (az’teks’): Native American people who ruled central Mexico in the 1400s and 1500s.



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modern world. He nailed a peach basket to the side of a building and cut the bottom out of it. The rim of the basket was placed parallel to the ground and Naismith encouraged players to shoot with their hands. In most places throughout the world, he gets credit for founding a sport that others had been playing in one form or another for hundreds of years before his birth.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

List one similarity and one difference between basketball as it was played by Native Americans and basketball as it was "invented" by Dr. James Naismith.

INTERPRET

What details indicate that the writer feels Naismith doesn't deserve the credit he's received for inventing basketball?

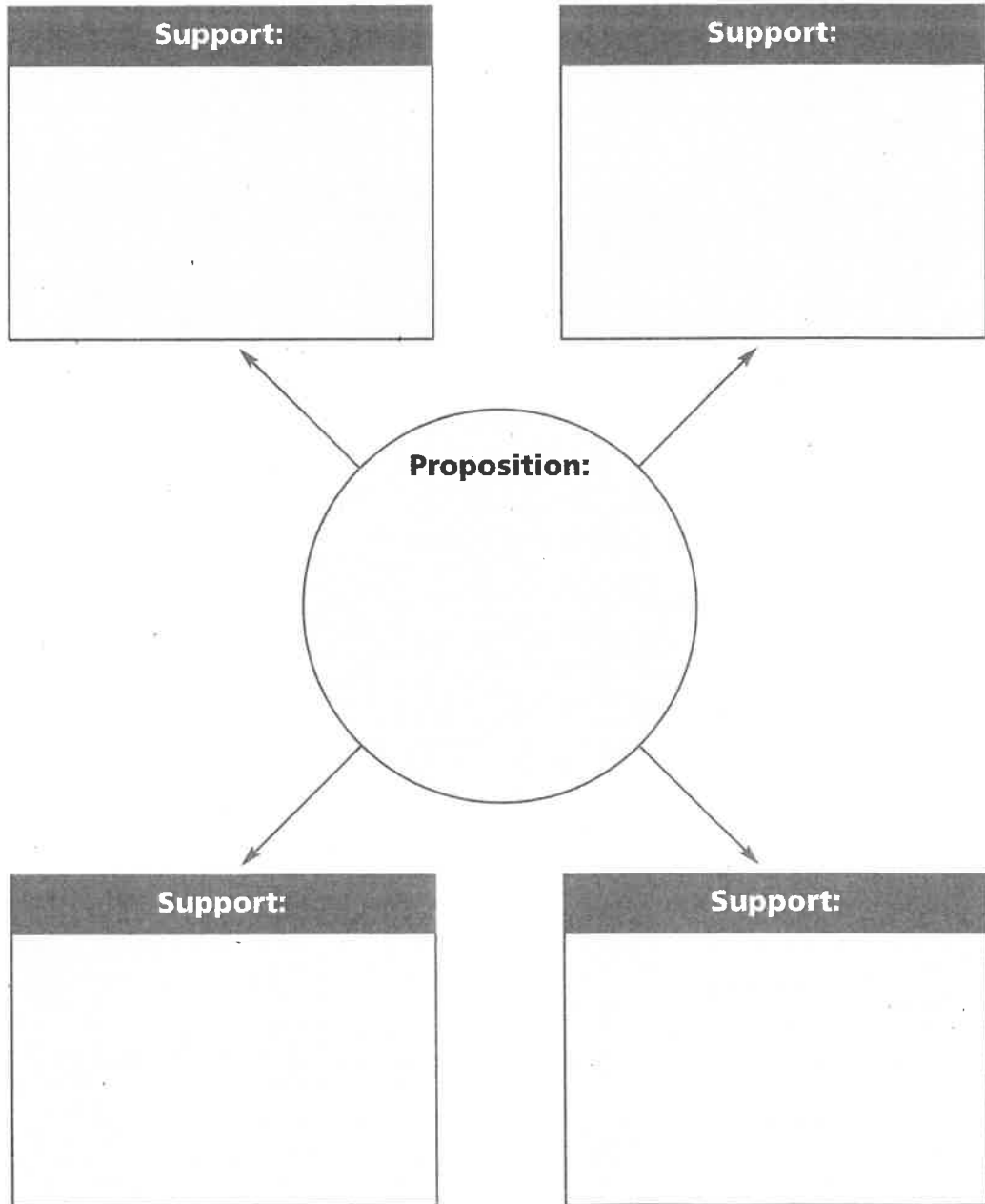
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Mayans 1, Olmecs 1

SKILLS
FOCUS

Reading Skills
Analyze proposition and support.

Proposition-and-Support Chart An important idea or opinion is called a **proposition**. In most cases, writers support their propositions with a variety of reasons. Look back through “Mayans 1, Olmecs 1” and any notes you took. Then, use the chart below to identify the writer’s proposition plus the reasons the writer gives to support the proposition.



Skills Review

Mayans 1, Olmecs 1

VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION

A. Selection Vocabulary Write the Word Bank words on the blanks to complete this paragraph. Use each word only once.

There are several similarities between the Native American game and the game Dr. James Naismith (1) _____ to create modern basketball. For example, both games are played on a rectangular court with a ring at each end. However, in the older game the ring was perpendicular, not (2) _____ to the ground. There are other differences between the games as well. The older game was a solemn (3) _____ that had religious (4) _____, as seen by the temples built on either side of the ball courts.

Word Bank

parallel
overtones
ritual
adapted

B. Reading Comprehension Answer each question below.

1. Describe the way early Native American basketball players scored points.

2. How did basketball spread from Mexico to Arizona?

3. Name two changes Dr. James Naismith made to basketball when he modernized it.
