

# Action sheet A

## What buildings do you like?

WHAT MUST A BUILDING LOOK LIKE SO THAT YOU LIKE IT?

HOW MUST IT BE DESIGNED SO THAT YOU FEEL  
COMFORTABLE IN IT?

Today our topic is architecture.

You can think about the buildings in your city or your quarter, but perhaps you can spontaneously think about a building you have seen or visited in another place in the world.



**DRAW OR DESCRIBE...**

When you have found a building, try to give reasons for your choice, for example by naming details about it:

*Components, forms or the facade...?  
What was it that made you like it?*



**WRITE DOWN THESE POINTS!**

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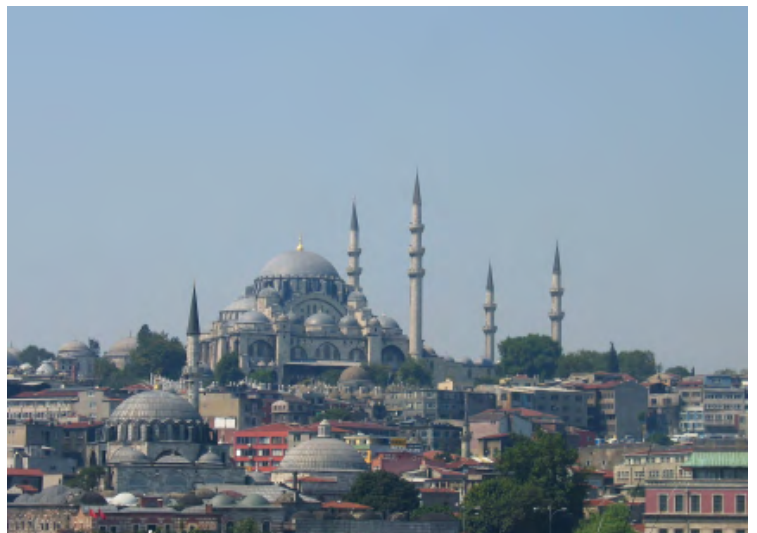
# Action sheet B

## What roots can you name?

1. FIRST LOOK AT THE IMAGES OF THE DIFFERENT BUILDINGS. THEY INVITE YOU TO COMPARE THEM: WHICH BUILDINGS DO YOU LIKE AND ON WHICH DETAILS DO YOU BASE YOUR DECISION?



2. CAN YOU RECOGNISE FROM THE RESPECTIVE FORM OF THE BUILDING WHAT FUNCTION IT HAS, FOR WHAT REASON IT WAS BUILT?



3. DESPITE ALL THE DIFFERENCES, HAVE YOU RECOGNISED A SIMILARITY? IF SO, GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR FINDINGS? READS THE TEXTS ABOUT THEM AND DISCUSS THEM.

Consider also whether the different construction forms can be ascribed to certain local conditions or traditions.

# Action B

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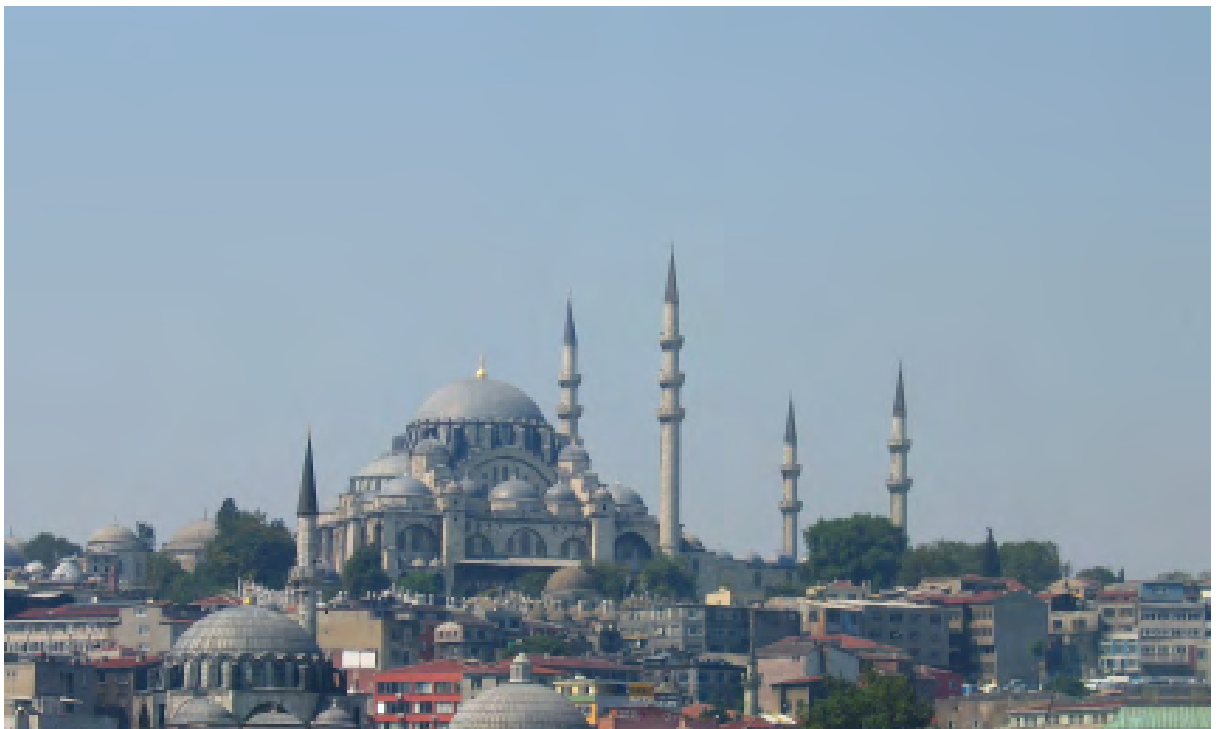
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# Action B

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## Info sheet

# What roots can you name?

### OVERVIEW

Architecture shapes the space in which we live, love, pray, learn – in short: our direct environment. In different regions of the world people build differently – sometimes with a flat roof, sometimes with a peaked roof. Sometimes we build mainly with wood, sometimes with brick, sometimes stone or steel and glass.

#### INPUT

In some places it looks as though people have been building like this for centuries, like they are still doing so today – but that is not quite true. Architecture has always been subject to change and it alters; in doing so, however, it draws on regional traditions which have stood the test of time. But sometimes a new form can also spread across borders and be adapted regionally. The history of architecture contains many such examples.

### COMPONENTS OF A MOSQUE

A mosque (Arabic: masdschid, which means “site of prostration” (in prayer)) is first and foremost designed according to its function. Is it a simple mosque in which believers come together to pray? Or is it a Friday or congregational mosque where a large number of people assemble to pray together and listen to a sermon?

Two elements are relevant architecturally: firstly, it has to be an enclosed space which can either be open or roofed over. Secondly, the direction facing Mecca, the qibla, must be apparent; this is usually shown by a prayer niche, the mihrab. The only exception is the Al-Haram Mosque in Mecca which – since it surrounds the Kaaba – does not need a mihrab to show the direction.

Other elements may be included: the minbar (the pulpit for the Friday sermon in the large mosques); a dikka (a pedestal); the kursi (the lectern for the Quran); a facility for ritual ablutions such as, for example, a fountain and finally, minarets.

The above-mentioned components are not mandatory for a mosque: Muhammad’s house in Medina, which was the first mosque for Muslims, merely had a three-step pedestal which served as the minbar.



## Info sheet

# What roots can you name?



### SYRIA: DAMASCUS

The Great Mosque of Damascus was built from 90/709-96/715. It is the oldest surviving mosque of Islam in its form today.

The prayer hall includes three rows of columns, the central aisle is perpendicular to the qibla and contains the mihrab. On a monumental scale this was characteristic here for the example of a mosque, magnificently decorated with all the means available at that time: marble panelling, mosaics and stucco latticework windows.

The form of the mosque was characteristic for the west of Islam: a columned hall as a prayer room in front of which there is a courtyard surrounded by arcades. There are many overlaps with church architecture in this style.

### ISLAMIC WEST: CÓRDOBA

The type of the columned hall, previously characteristic of the mosque in Damascus, was developed further on the Great Mosque of Córdoba. On its extension from 350/961 onwards, a magnificent area was created in front of the prayer niche, the maqsura. In this area the Caliph and his followers could lead the believers in prayer and still be protected from assassination attempts. For this purpose the qibla wall in Córdoba was also created as a double wall with a separate, protected entrance for the ruler. The design of the mihrab, designed here as a separate room, is also striking. The individual rows of columns were furnished with their own roofs so that light could come into the mosque everywhere.

In 929/1523 the Christian rulers built a cathedral in the middle of the mosque, which disrupts the unique structure up to the present day.



## Info sheet

# What roots can you name?



### EGYPT: AL-AZHAR

The Fatimids founded the al-Azhar Mosque in their new capital city, today's Cairo. Over time this university has developed into an important centre of Sunni Islam and most of Egypt's rulers added further buildings. For this reason, we can speak of a "museum of all Egyptian styles" with respect to this mosque.

Another Fatimid mosque, which was founded somewhat later, worked with a portal for the first time, which was designed towards the street. In later mosques the entrance was planned more thoroughly than the facade, since the usually loud city came up to the calmed area of religious worship here. The appearance of the portal was supposed to prepare visitors for the transition between the spheres.

### IRAN: GREAT MOSQUE OF ISFAHAN

The Great Mosque of Isfahan (begun in 479/1086-87) shows a clear example of the four-iwan architectural style of mosques, which was mainly used in Iran and Central Asia. In addition, buildings in Egypt and on the Indian subcontinent took up this style.

Due to climatic conditions a relatively windowless, domed room is the most suitable for the heartland of Iran, since the summer heat cannot penetrate so easily into such a room. The iwans, the large arches at the entrances, are also adapted to this climate.

When it was finished, the dome of the Friday Mosque of Isfahan was the largest domed room in the region, since it spanned several spaces between the columns. In this period the columned hall, the inner courtyard, the dome and the iwans were consolidated into an architectural unit which represented the main style of Iranian and Central Asian mosques from then on. The Great Mosque acquired its present appearance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century so that the courtyard today corresponds to a textbook on Iranian architecture.



## Info sheet

# What roots can you name?



### MALI: GREAT MOSQUE OF DJÉNNÉ

Traces of Islam have been found south of the Sahara in West Africa since about the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The religion encountered deeply rooted traditions here and a unique concept of the world, from which a synthesis of a West African Islam emerged.

The Great Mosque of Djenné was founded at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and since then it has been extended and rebuilt. Since architecture in this region is a process which never ends, the appearance of the building is still changing. Loam architecture can be seriously destroyed by the weather and for this reason new layers of loam are continually applied to protect the mosque for a further year. Nevertheless, in 1897, the building was in ruins. The mosque which we see today is a reconstruction of the old mosque of 1909. The building is regarded as exemplary for the building of mosques in West Africa.

### CHINA: GREAT MOSQUE OF XI'AN

The construction of the Great Mosque of Xi'an began in 794/1392. Parts of the present building are still from this early period but most of it was rebuilt several times and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was completely redesigned. Despite all this it is the largest of the early mosques in China and the best preserved.

Typical for Chinese mosques is the adaptation to the local architectural language. Four courtyards are situated one after the other on the main axis which leads to a prayer hall. Each courtyard is marked by a centre, for example the third courtyard by a two-storey pagoda which was used as a minaret previously. The prayer hall with a terrace in front of it can accommodate 2000 believers.

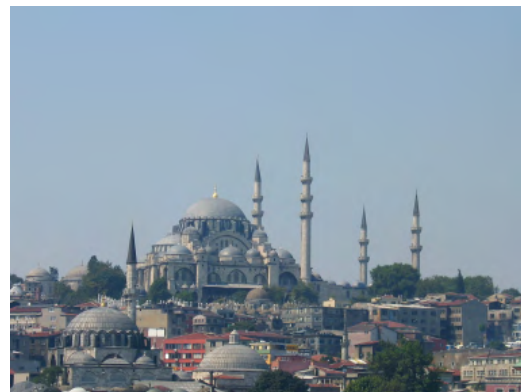


## Info sheet

# What roots can you name?

### INDONESIA: AGUNG MOSQUE IN DEMAK

The mosques of South East Asia and in particular those of Indonesia follow a quite distinct type of construction, which follows the form of Javanese pavilions. The Agung Mosque in Demak on Java (begun 879/1474) follows the same appearance and consists of a room supported by wooden columns with several roofs over it, rising up like a pyramid. At least the roof remained unchanged in its form; the original floor layout in the form of a square was, however, changed over time. The Agung Mosque is regarded as the oldest mosque in Indonesia, although it was largely rebuilt in the 13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> up to the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Overall it can be said about the Indonesian-Islamic architecture that domes and geometric ornaments are missing entirely. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the most diverse factors have led to different architectural languages being used to build mosques: they were mostly built according to Indian models.



### OTTOMAN EMPIRE: SÜLEYMANIYE, ISTANBUL

Due to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the sultans taking the title of Caliph, the architecture was also supposed to show this new status. Mimar Sinan (in German: “Architect Sinan”), born around 895/1490 and who died in 996/1588, was entrusted with this task and he fulfilled the assignment so brilliantly that he went down in history as the most important architect of the Ottoman Empire. He planned the Süleymaniye complex (957/1550-964/1557) in Istanbul. The architecture, inspired by the Hagia Sophia, is distinguished by a main dome which spans the larger part of the prayer room. Two half-domes as well as buttresses support the construction, taking the form of a pyramid. The position of the Caliph as the Protector of Islam is illustrated by the architecture of a dominant dome which spans the community of the believers. The complex is exclusively decorated with ornaments and verses from the Quran, which are supposed to demonstrate the Sunni orientation of the empire. The tall, slim minarets are also characteristic for this period.

## Info sheet

# What roots can you name?



### INDIA: GREAT MOSQUE OF FATEHPUR SIKRI (1650–56)

The Great Mosque of Fatehpur Sikri (around 975/1568–986/1578), built under Emperor Akbar (reigned from 963/1556–1014/1605), is the first courtyard mosque in a Mughal city. Under Akbar the Indian-Islamic architectural style began to flourish, which the Indian subcontinent has been famous for ever since. In particular it is the red sandstone with inlays of white marble which are a feature of the buildings in this region. Elements of the most diverse Indian styles were combined to create this architecture.

The building is distinguished by many arches, decorative chhatris on the roof and three domes over the prayer room. In particular the wide inner courtyard and the actual mosque with three domes became the distinguishing appearance of mosques on the Indian subcontinent.

### TURKEY: SANCAKLAR MOSQUE

The architecture firm Emre Arolat Architects built a new mosque near Istanbul in 2012. The building in a modern, minimalist style fits into the landscape and does not stand out as a landmark, even though the tower of the mosque bears a large calligraphy.

The architects themselves explained that they would have felt it to be anachronistic to construct a mosque in the style of the Ottoman Empire. With their construction they wanted instead to concentrate on the nature of a religious place, the concentration on prayer. The building is fully integrated into the landscape using mainly cast stone as a facade and seldom exposed concrete. The forms are linear and reduced to basic geometrical forms but are, however, adapted to the hill.

Since the emergence of modern architecture with an international influence, modern mosques have also existed.



## Action sheet C

# How would you like to design your mosque?

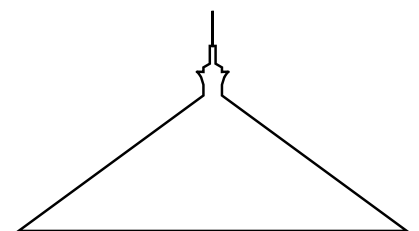
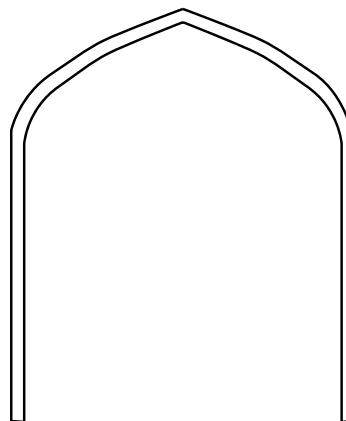
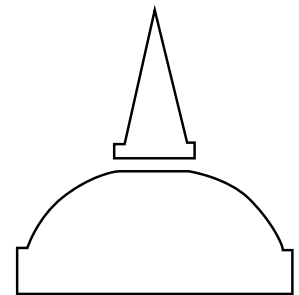
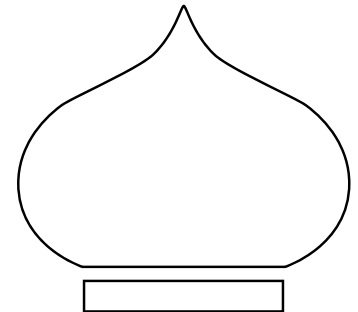
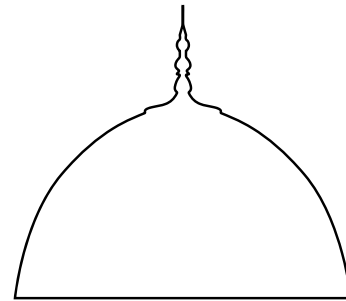
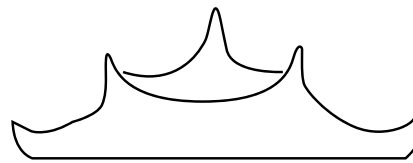
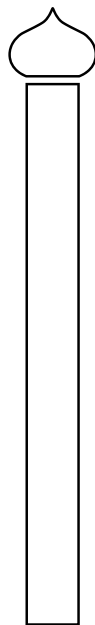
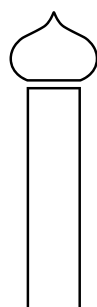
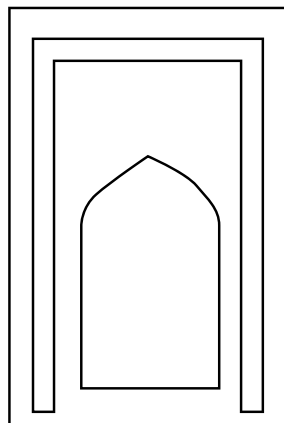
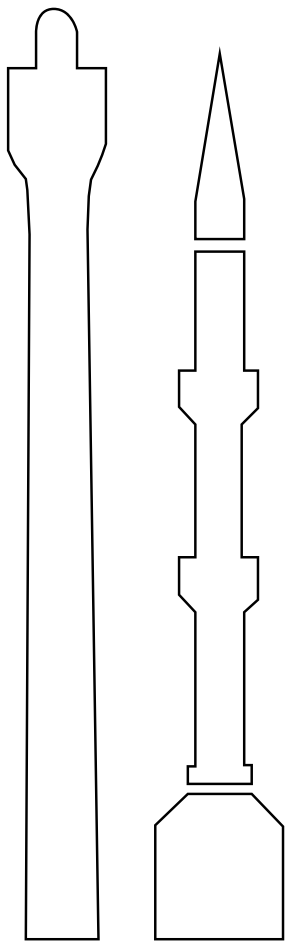
At the beginning of the lesson we spoke about our own preferences and needs with respect to architecture.

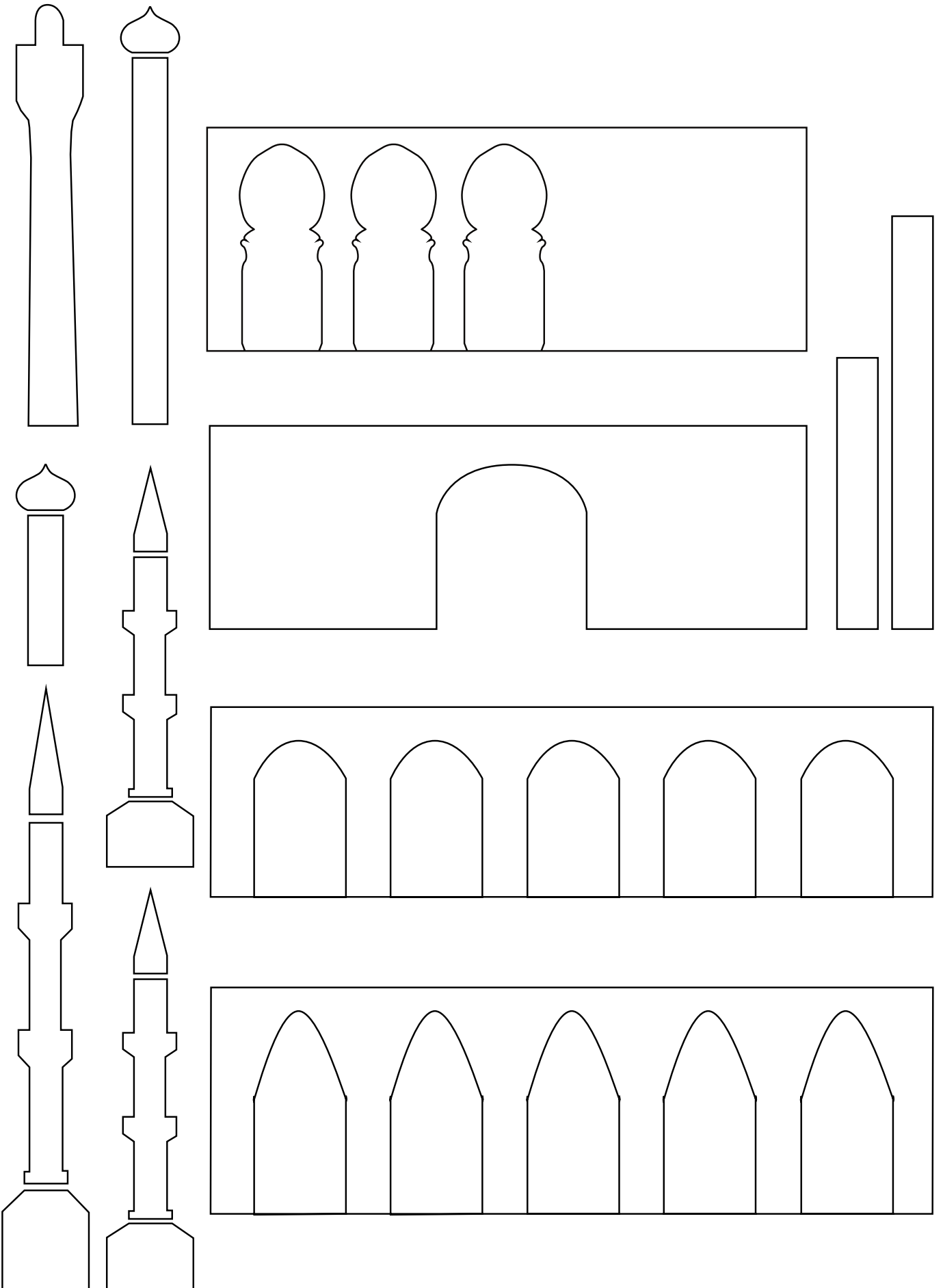
After that we acquainted ourselves with different mosques around the world and discussed them.

Now think about the diversity of the construction forms and your personal preferences together:

What does your ideal mosque look like?

**YOU CAN DRAW IT AND ALSO CUT OUT THE STENCILS AND USE THEM!**





# Action sheet D

## What is Islamic architecture to you?

WHAT WAS NEW, SURPRISING OR WORTH NOTICING TO YOU?

**NEW**

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**SURPRISING**

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**WORTH NOTICING**

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