

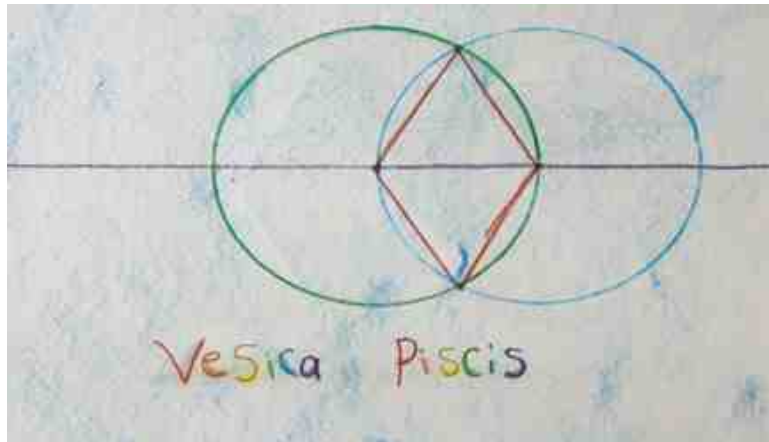
Six Divisions of a Circle

by Kristie Burns of www.Earthschooling.com

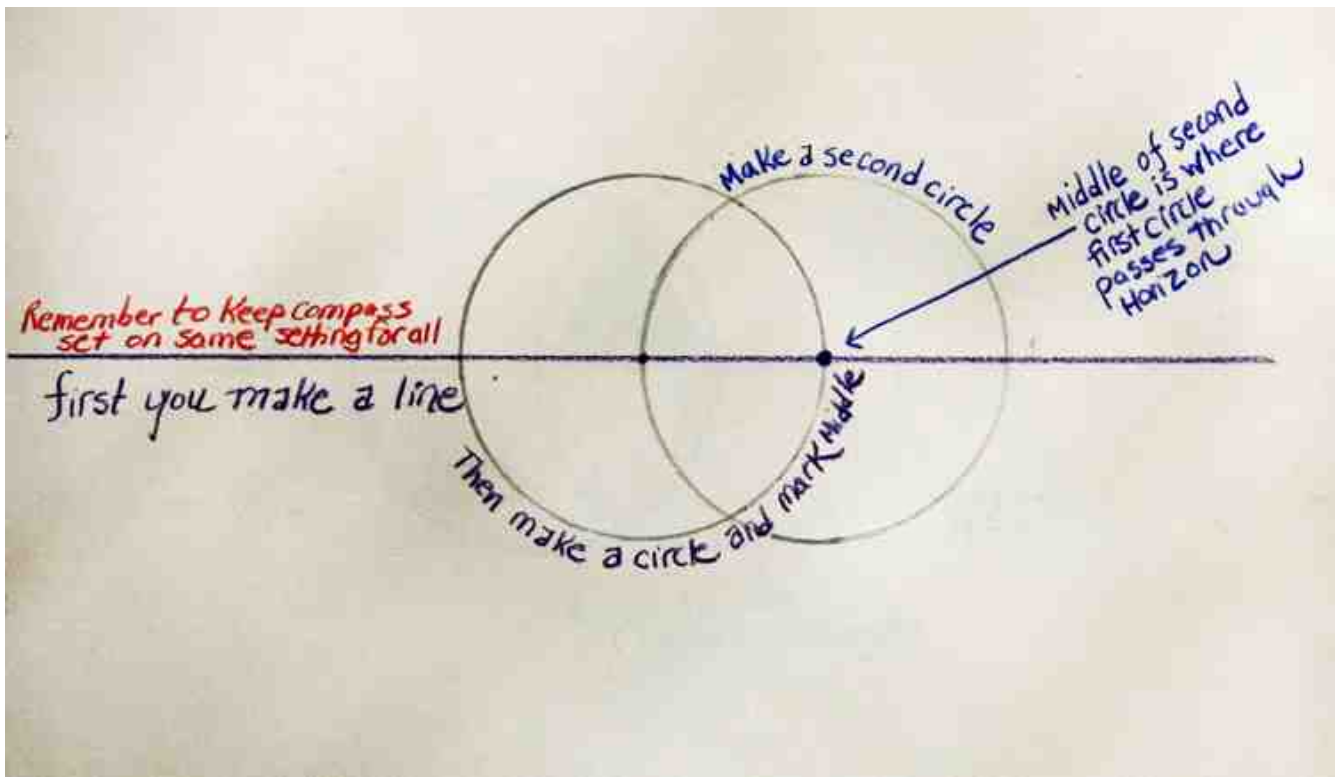
Dividing a circle may seem like a simple task when one says it. "I am going to divide a circle." However, there is a lot of meaning, history and complexity behind those words. Each time one divides the circle it represents a different symbol and each symbol means something different to each culture in history that used it.

When you divide the circle with one circle you get a vesica piscis. When you divide a circle with two circles you get a perfect hexagon. When you divide a circle with three circles you get a trefoil and when you divide it into four you get a square as well as a flower. A division of five creates a five pointed star or flower and a division of six is the circle of life. In the sections below I explain each symbol and show you how to draw these progressions. However, please don't stop there! As you continue to add circles different shapes emerge. Additionally, as you travel and visit temples, mosques and churches keep an eye out for these symbols. You will see them everywhere.

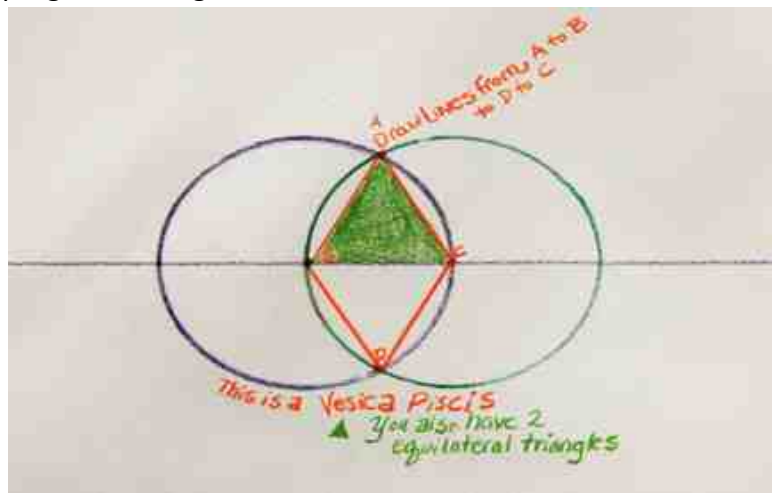
Division of One and the Vesica Piscis



The term, vesica piscis is Latin for "fish bladder" which can actually refer to anything that takes this shape when filled (such as a skin that holds wine or an air sack of bagpipes). This shape is also referred to as a *mandorla*. This symbol is seen frequently in medieval art and architecture and has a long history. It was used to symbolize the sacred chalice or grail in Avalon (of the King Arthur stories). Later, Christians adopted the symbol and made it look more like a fish and used it to represent Jesus. In times of persecution this symbol was a code that Christians used to identify themselves to each other. What is interesting about the fish is that it is not the spiritual significance of the symbol itself that inspired Christians to use it like the people of Avalon did. It was actually the Greek word. The Greek word, "fish" is "ichthys" which is actually an acronym for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior". To this day you can still see the symbol being used to frame pictures of saints and of Jesus.



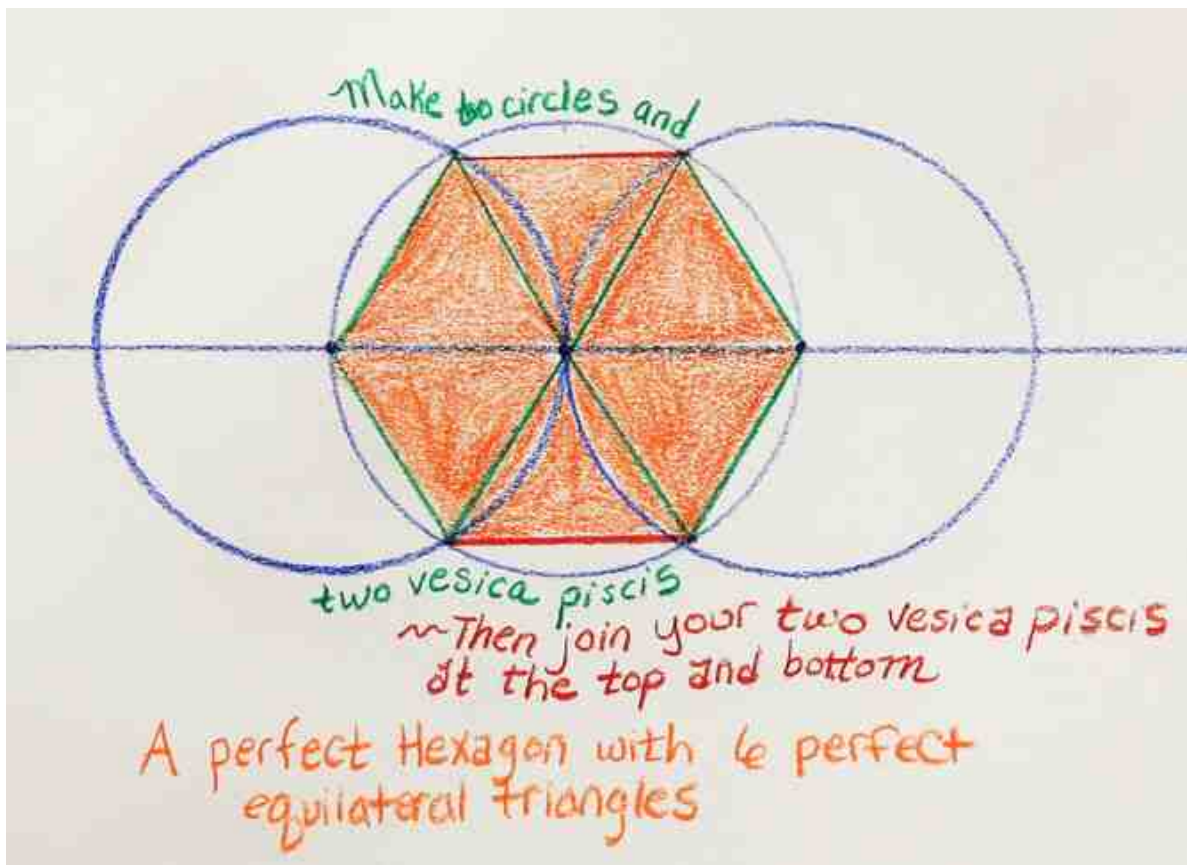
For the Avalonians this symbol had spiritual meaning, however. To them, it looked more like a birth passage than a bladder and thus became part of the goddess and reminiscent of the waning and waxing moon. Later, the Irish used this same goddess symbol in their churches and the Hindus used it with their goddess Kali. Even the Greek goddess, Phyllis became an almond tree – an illustration of the symbol itself. The Greek Goddess Aphrodite, the Egyptian Goddess Isis, and the Chinese Great Mother Kwan-Yin all appear as a fish goddesses. Finally, the Vesica Piscis is a geometrical representation of square roots and harmonic proportions. As I bring the students into this lesson I have them notice how two perfect equilateral triangles are formed as well as the perfect almond shape. I say to them, “isn't it amazing how, by joining circles, we can create perfect geometric shapes? We will be creating more of these as we progress through the lessons.



Second Division of a Circle and the Hexagon/Six-Pointed Star



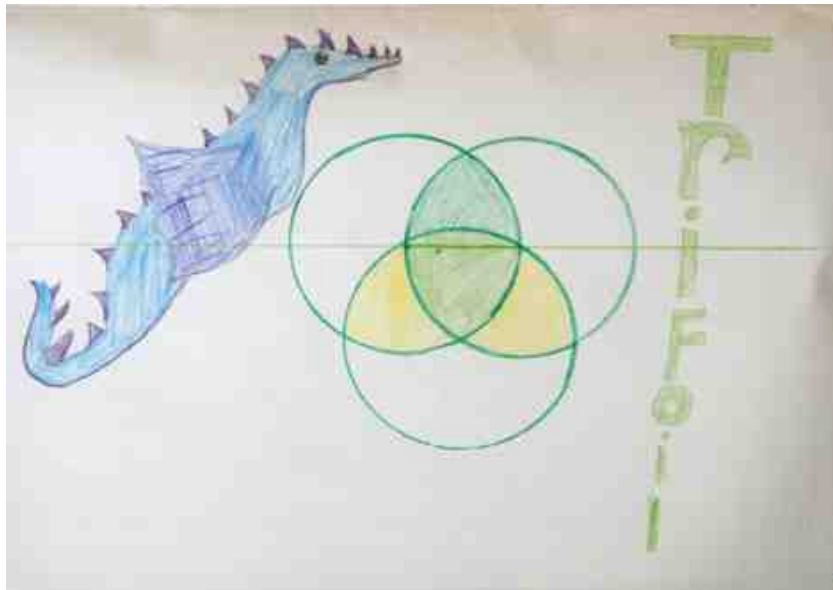
In previous form drawing lessons we've formed a six-pointed star by putting two triangles together. In this lesson we find that we can also form this star by simply putting three circles together. The upwards pointed triangle represents the masculine or the element of fire/choleric and the downward pointing triangle represents the female or the water/phlegmatic element. Thus, the six-pointed star represents the divine balance between feminine and masculine – the yin-yang of the universe.



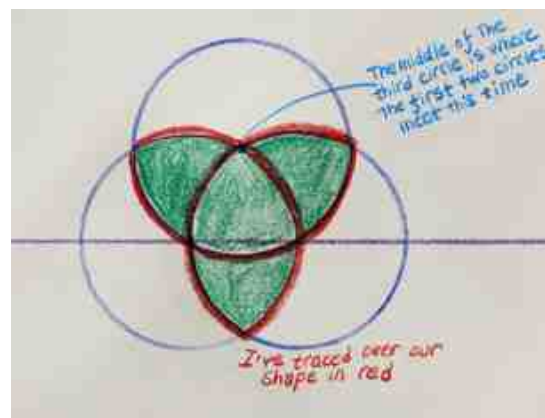
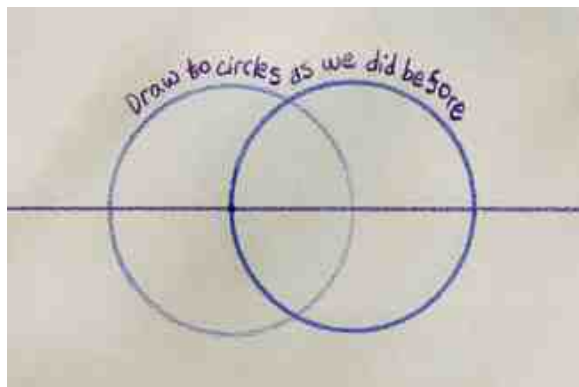
Although the picture above shows that I have colored in the hexagon, you can also connect the dots to make two triangles – or a six-pointed star.

Because of the powerful symbolism, the six-pointed star has been used by many religions and in many ceremonies. The Jewish people called it the Star of David because it is reported that David, who fought Goliath, carried a hexagram-shaped shield. In the Hindu religion it is known as the Shiva/Shakti and is said to invoke balance. In the Ancient Egyptian religion it was the symbol of the first man-god, Horus, who was represented by the six-pointed star hieroglyph. It is used in the rites of Freemasonry who believe, “the symbol represents the union of the active and passive forces in nature.”

Third Division of a Circle and the Trefoil

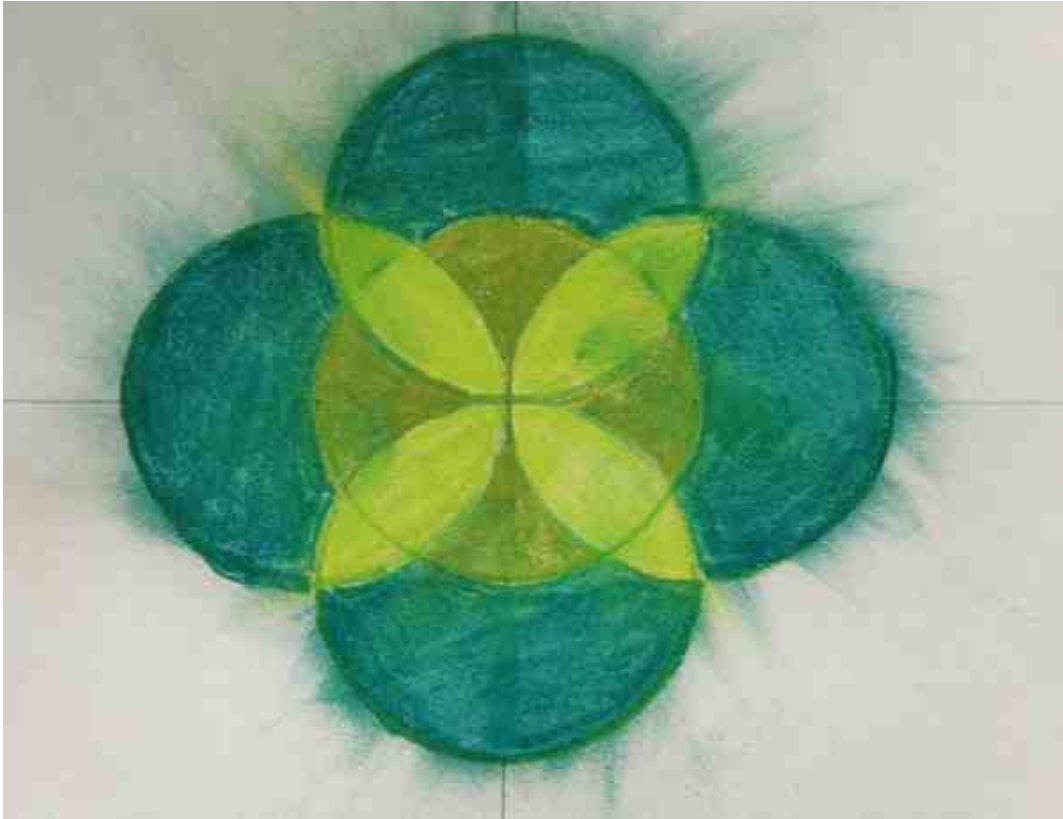


The trefoil crowned the head of the Ancient Egyptian God, Osiris but its power did not end there. For thousands of years it has been used across many different religions to represent the holy divine. The symbol has even been found on 5000-year-old Indian religious statues, Norse runes (where it is known as Odin's Knot). To Christians the trefoil symbolizes the holy trinity – the father, son and holy spirit. The unbroken circle represents eternity.



In paganism the trefoil represents the threefold nature of the Goddess as virgin, mother and crone. It also symbolizes life, death and rebirth and the three forces of nature – earth, air and water. In the Celtic religions the three parts represent the levels of land, sea, and sky and the triple goddess Morrigan. To the Druids it represented totality – past, present and future as well as behind, before and here or sky, earth and underworld. Three was also a mystical number to the Druids.

Fourth Division of a Circle and the Four Petaled Flower



It looks like a simple four petaled flower – the same one you drew with crayon when you were in kindergarten, but it is actually a powerful spiritual symbol as well as mathematical symbol. It is known as the *Double Infinity* or *The Rose of Four Petals*.

