

Day 4

“So,” said Melchior to the wise old sage, “did we satisfactorily solve your puzzle?”

“You did just fine, though I have to say for three so-called wise men, you could have been a tad quicker” said the sage. “But, you did it- and so as promised, the directions to the myrrh shop: turn left at that tree, go forwards for two hundred metres or so, the shop will be on your right. Now be off with you! I have to meditate on transience this morning, then this afternoon I am heading back to the inn to take part in the darts tournament”.

The magi shuffled off, feeling a little ruffled. So far, their epic journey from the East had involved far fewer profoundly moving experiences and spiritual revelations (and, it has to be said, far more 11+ style questions) than they were expecting.

“Don’t worry,” piped up Balthazar, “I’m sure the myrrh-seller will be fantastically old and learned.”

They were not to be disappointed. They soon reached a building with a faded sign outside, reading “Ascetic Anna- purveyor of fine myrrh products”. Inside the dark building sat an ancient looking woman, with long white hair in a plait. Her eyes were closed, and her hands folded in her lap.

“We’ve come about some myrrh” stuttered Melchior, hesitantly.

The woman didn’t open her eyes, but nodded her head slowly. The wise men were impressed. This was exactly the kind of lofty, mysterious figure they were hoping to meet with on their journey. They slowly moved inside the building, and as their eyes adjusted to the light, they saw shelves stacked with myrrh. They selected the piece they thought finest, then turned again to the silent old crone.

“How can we pay for such a wondrous substance?” whispered Balthazar reverently.

The old woman still did not open her eyes, but tranquilly gestured her hand towards a bowl containing a few pieces of silver. Melchior carefully placed a generous quantity of silver coins into the bowl, then the three wise men turned to leave. They were feeling slightly over-awed by such a show of serenity, and by the other-worldliness of the whole place. Caspar was just weighing up the relative merits of giving up speaking to try to make himself look cleverer, when the old woman’s eyes snapped open.

“Don’t you want anything else?” she demanded.

The wise men were confused. What else could they want?

“Well, if you have any camel treats in stock..” started Melchior, but the woman interrupted.

“No, no, no- something to go with the myrrh! A gift bag? A nice sparkly box? One of those plasticky ribbon rosette things? How about a sheet of glossy paper with reindeers printed on it, to wrap the myrrh up in?”

“*What on earth is a reindeer?*” muttered Balthazar under his breath.

Caspar sighed. "A reindeer is a species of deer with circumpolar distribution, native to the arctic, subarctic, tundra..."

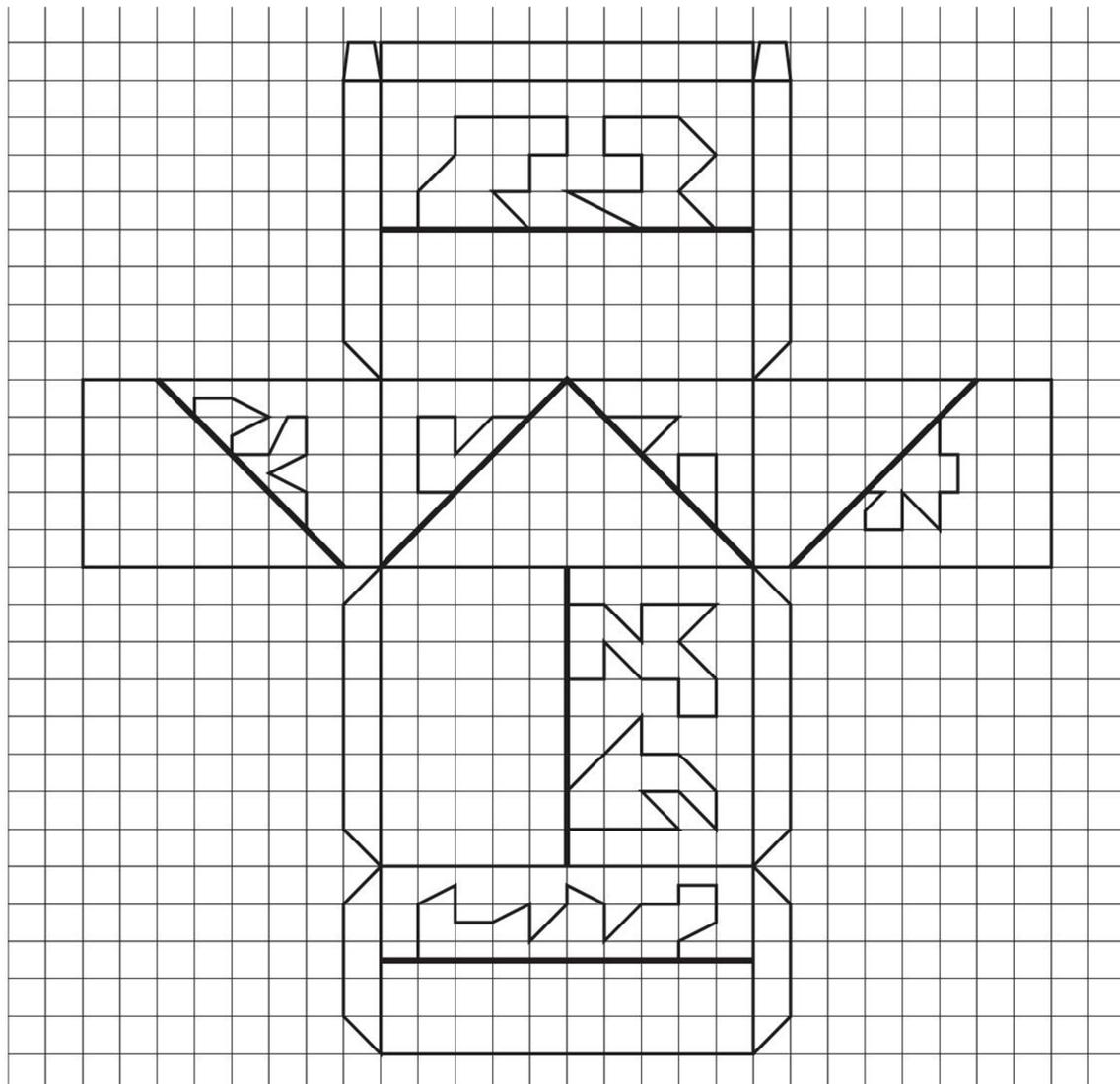
"Never mind that!" cried Balthazar. "We've already bought some considerably costly myrrh as a present, why do we need to buy something to wrap it up in as well? Can't we just hand it over as it is?"

"Certainly not. No, I think a pretty box will do very nicely". The old woman fixed them with a steely glare. "It has to be a *very pretty box indeed*, to be suitable for my myrrh."

She stood up, glided ethereally to the back of the shop, then returned with a sheet of paper.

"This is just the thing. First, finish the patterns to make them all nice and symmetrical. Then, cut the net out, and stick it together to make a box. It is actually rather tricky, so this is the perfect chance to show off your wisdom."

The three magi rolled up their sleeves, got out their emergency colouring pencils and scissors, and got to work.



Good news- you can buy a book on *Shapes and Spatial Reasoning* full of exercises like this at www.sarahbeswick11plus.co.uk.

Answers- if your box functions as a box and has a nice symmetrical pattern on it, you have made it correctly!