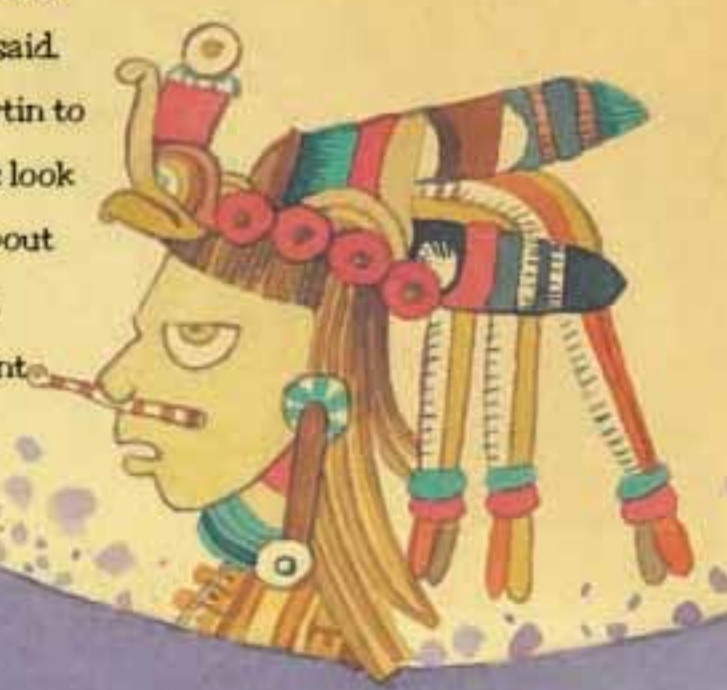




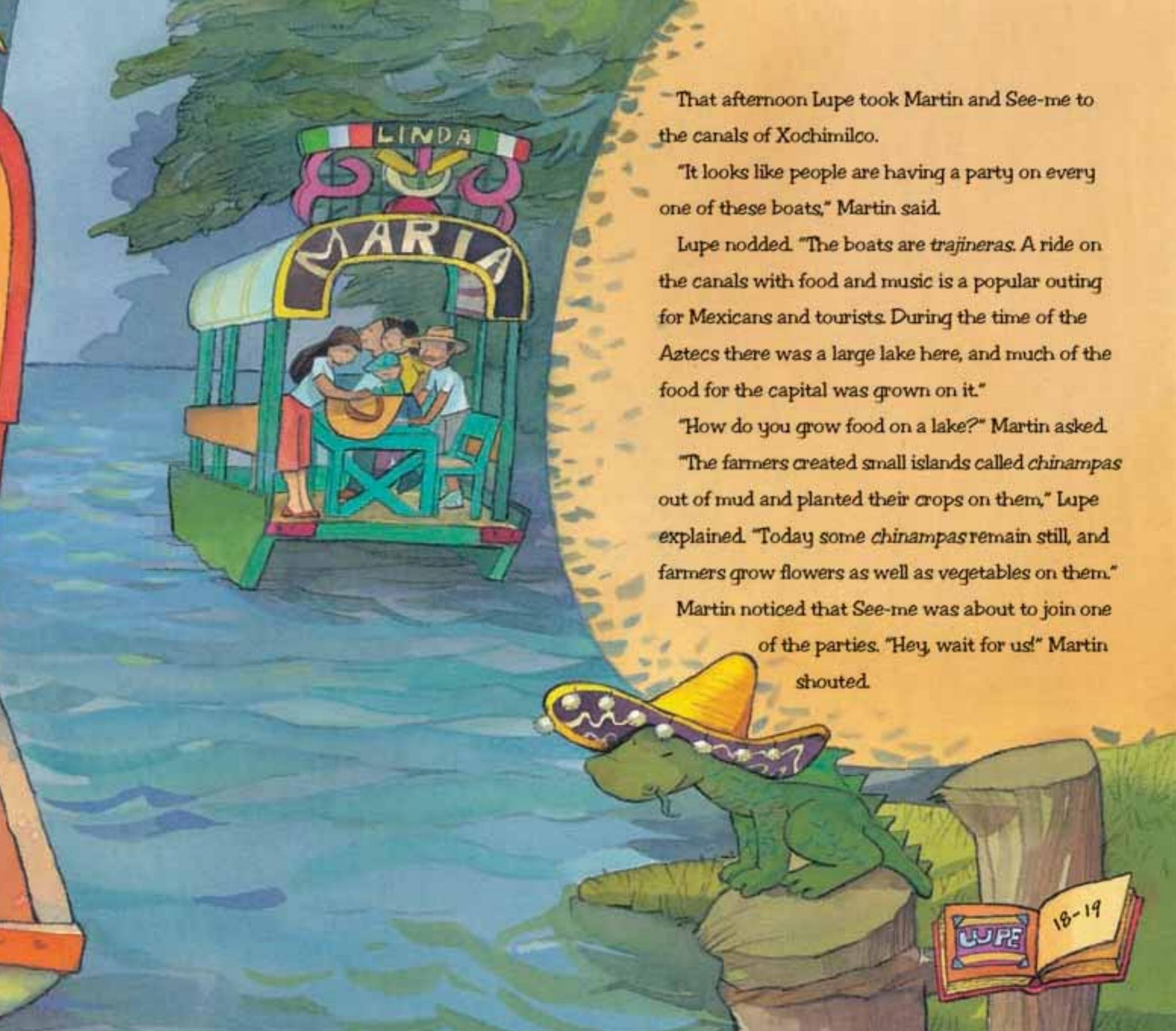
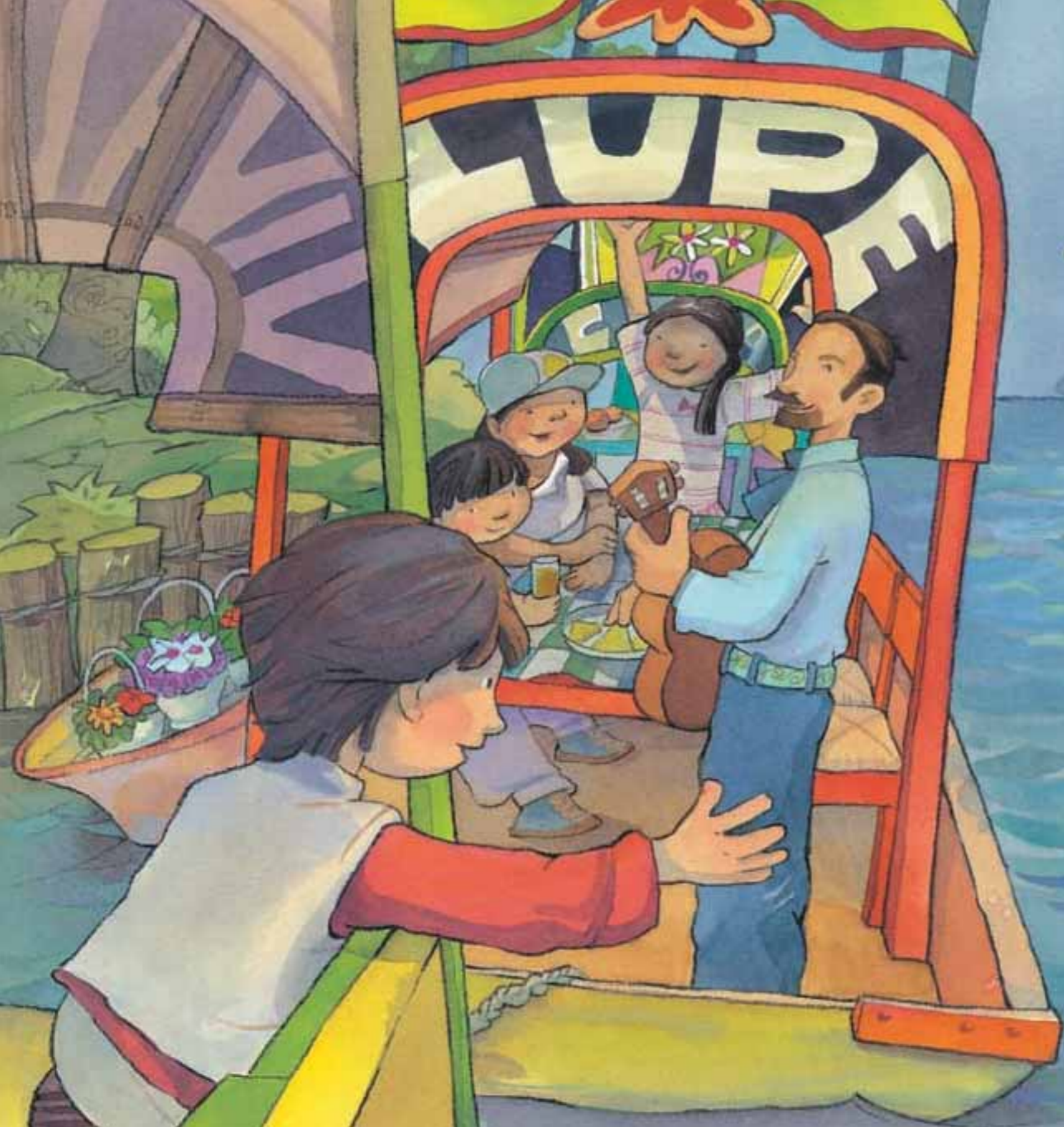
Their next stop was the National Museum of Anthropology. "That's *la Piedra del Sol*—the Sun Stone," Diego said, pointing to an enormous disc. "The Aztecs carved symbols on it that tell the history of the universe and the destruction of four worlds. The sun god is in the center."

"It must weigh a ton," Martin said.

"Twenty-four tons, actually!" Diego said. He motioned Martin to follow him. "Let's look at the exhibits about the Maya, Olmec, and other ancient peoples."







That afternoon Lupe took Martin and See-me to the canals of Xochimilco.

"It looks like people are having a party on every one of these boats," Martin said.

Lupe nodded. "The boats are *trajineras*. A ride on the canals with food and music is a popular outing for Mexicans and tourists. During the time of the Aztecs there was a large lake here, and much of the food for the capital was grown on it."

"How do you grow food on a lake?" Martin asked.

"The farmers created small islands called *chinampas* out of mud and planted their crops on them," Lupe explained. "Today some *chinampas* remain still, and farmers grow flowers as well as vegetables on them."

Martin noticed that See-me was about to join one of the parties. "Hey, wait for us!" Martin shouted.





When Martin and his friends reached Palenque's *Templo de las Inscripciones*, or Temple of Inscriptions, a magnificent green and red bird swooped down.

"A quetzal!" Pedro said. "The Maya kings used this bird's long tail feathers as a sign of authority. One king, Pakal the Great, ruled Palenque for sixty-eight years and made it a great city. His tomb is in this temple. It was finished by his son, Kan B'alam II."

"I've met someone called B'alam," Martin said. "The name means jaguar."

When they entered the temple, they saw large tablets covered with hieroglyphs—writing that uses small pictures for words and sounds.

"The Maya were the only ancient people in the Americas to have a complete writing system," Diego said. "They were also fine mathematicians and astronomers. They even measured how long it takes the Earth to revolve around the sun, and their numbers were extremely accurate."