

# MEZEN

BOARDGAME

## RULEBOOK

*In the far far north, in the land of dark days and white nights, flows the river Mezen.*

*From meadows and forest edges horses gallop towards it, birds flock to it, foxes run to it.*

*Not even the man could resist this river. The man walked to it and stayed for centuries.*

*The nature of Mezen amazed the man so much that they decided to commemorate it.*

*They gathered soot, black as the night itself, and clay, red as the sun, picked up a brush and started creating.*

*That is how the famous Mezen painting came about — the style which this game is based on.*

In Mezen you will take on the role of a northern craftsman, creating intricate ornamental paintings to order. Combine symbols and flip tiles to accomplish goals and earn Victory Points. The player to earn the most Victory Points after the tenth round wins.

## COMPONENTS

125 double-sided Mezen painting tiles  
(25 identically shaped tiles for each player)



36 goal cards

Active Player miniature



5 «50/100 points» tokens

75 amulets

5 markers for tracking Victory Points



Game board



This rulebook

# GAME SETUP

1. Place the game board at the center of the table.
2. Take the goal cards. Each goal card has two icons in the top corner. Choose one of the 6 icons: ☀, ☾, 🌿, ✂, 🦋. Then draw 12 goal cards with that icon in the bottom. This way you will have a balanced set of goals.



These three cards will suit you if you choose the Sun — all three have a Sun in the bottom.

Shuffle these 12 goal cards and place 5 cards face-down above and 5 cards below the game board (line your cards up according to the markings ♁ on the edges of the gameboard). Put the remaining 2 cards and the rest of the goal cards back in the box — you will not need them.

3. Deal 25 double-sided tiles of identical shape to each player. Put the rest of the tiles back in the box.

4. Each player puts their tiles down light side up, shuffles and randomly arranges them into a 5×5 grid. This is the *painting*.

5. Each player takes a marker of the same shape as their tiles and places it onto the zero ♁ on the game board.

6. Reveal the first 2 goal cards of the top row. These are the goals for the first and second round.



7. Dial 5 amulets to each player. The rest of the amulets go into the center of the game board — this is the pool. Arrange the «50/100 points» tokens beside the game board into a pool as well.

8. Give the Active Player miniature to the player that was the last to spend time in a forest.

Now the game can begin.



# GAME PLAY

The game lasts 10 rounds, each round the players complete the following actions:

1. See the goal of the current round (the first revealed card along the Victory Point tracker) — it indicates what actions you will gain Victory Points for at the end of the round. You can also see the goal of the next round. See the full card key on page 12.

2. The Active Player announces one of five symbols:



Every player has to combine a group of tiles with that symbol and take it off their painting unless they choose the following alternative action: a player can give 1 amulet to the Active Player and combine another of the five symbols on their painting instead.

## Note:

- ♦ The Active Player cannot announce a different symbol for their painting.
- ♦ You cannot announce Spruce as your symbol. Spruce is a special symbol that can only be found on the dark side of the tiles (such tiles are marked with ♣ on the light side).



3. Each player chooses a group of tiles with the announced symbol to combine on their painting.

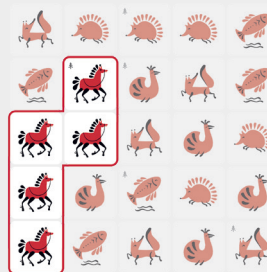
4. Every player can place an amulet onto any tile of their painting to turn it into a bridge between groups of tiles, making the combined group bigger or to exclude that tile from a group.



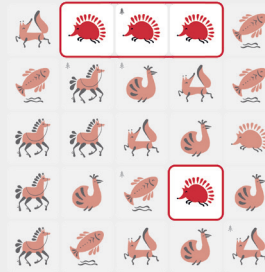
This can be done to any number of tiles as long as there are enough amulets to do so.

## GROUP OF TILES

A **group** is a chain of any number of tiles with identical symbols connected to each other vertically or horizontally but not diagonally. One tile can count as a group as well.

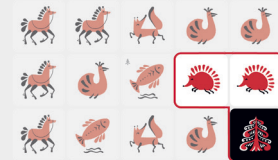


*A group of 5 Horse tiles*



*Two groups of Hedgehog tiles — consisting of three and one tiles respectively*

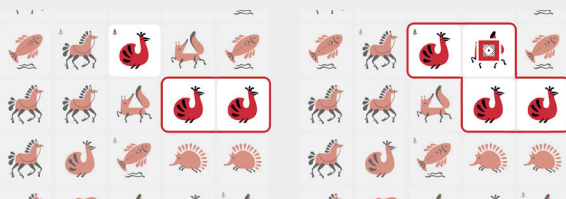
If there are Spruce tiles connected to a chain of tiles vertically or horizontally, it must count as part of that group.



*A Spruce tile connected to a group of Hedgehog tiles counts as part of that group.*

## TURNING A TILE INTO A BRIDGE AND EXCLUDING A TILE FROM A GROUP

**Turning a tile into a bridge:** place an amulet on a tile — now it counts as part of the group of tiles with the announced symbol that is connected to it vertically and/or horizontally even if it has a different symbol on it. This is done to combine several groups into one.



The Bird is the chosen symbol. There is a group consisting of two Bird tiles and a group consisting of one Bird tile on the painting. The player places an amulet onto the fox tile which turns it into a bridge between the two groups. Now the combined group consists of four tiles.

**Excluding a tile from a group:** place an amulet onto a tile — now this tile is not part of any group.



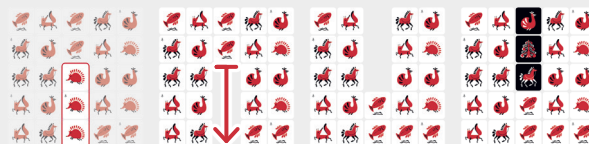
The Horse is the chosen symbol. The painting has a group of 5 Horse tiles. The player excludes one Horse tile and is left with two groups — one consisting of 3 Horse tiles and one consisting of 1 Horse tile. The player can pick whichever of the two groups.

5. Each player removes all tiles of the combined group from the painting, **not touching tiles with amulets on them**, flips them to the other side and places them next to the painting. After that, the amulets are removed from the tiles and returned into the pool.

6. Each player moves the tiles that now have space underneath down, filling the empty spots. Then the tiles that were removed and flipped are placed into the newly empty spots in any order so that they are arranged into a 5×5 grid.

**Hint:** try to arrange the grid in a way so that you can accomplish the goal of the next round.

## EXAMPLE OF REMOVING TILES, MOVING AND FILLING EMPTY SPACE



The player removes a group of three Hedgehog tiles, flips them and places the tiles next to the painting. (1)

The player slides the top tiles down to fill the empty spots. (2–3)

The removed and flipped Hedgehog tiles are placed into the newly opened spots. (4)

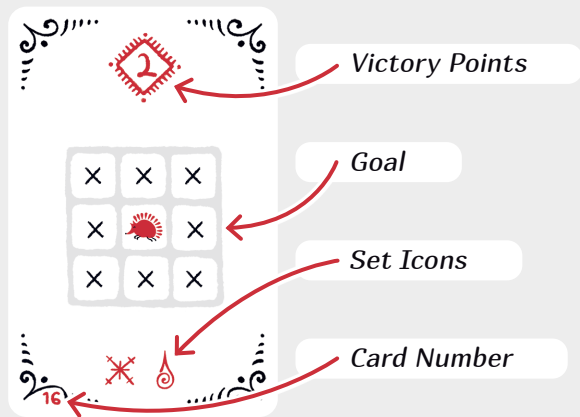
7. When all players are done placing their tiles, Victory Points are scored.

## COUNTING VICTORY POINTS AT THE END OF ROUND

1. Each player counts Victory Points gained for fulfilling the conditions of the goal card of the current round and moves their marker to a corresponding number of steps. See full goal card key on page 12.

You can refuse the Victory Points gained from a goal card and take 2 amulets instead.

### COMPOSITION OF A GOAL CARD



**Victory points** the player shall receive for every tile or group of tiles, that are arranged in a way prescribed by the **goal**.

**Set Icons** help when preparing for the game. Ignore them when counting Victory Points.

**The card number** will help you easily find a specific card on page 12.

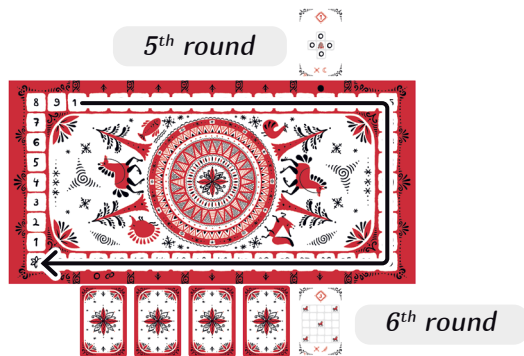
**Note!** When counting Victory Points, the Spruce tile is to be treated as such and cannot be treated as another tile.



If your marker completes the lap and exceeds ✨ on the game board, take the «50/100 points» token and place it in front of yourself 50 side-up. If the marker completes the lap again, flip the token to the 100 side. At the end of the game, add the number of steps on the token to the number your marker is on.

2. Flip the goal card of the current round so that it faces down.

Unlock the next goal card in the row, along the Victory Point tracker. You should always have two cards open — a goal for the current round and a goal for the next round (Exception: The last tenth round, when there is only one goal card left).



3. The Active Player passes the miniature to the player on the left.

### ADDITIONAL VICTORY POINT SCORING AFTER THE 5TH ROUND

At the end of the fifth round (marked ● on game board), each player scores additional Victory Points:

+1 Victory Point for every tile on the painting that has the dark side facing up.

# END OF GAME AND VICTORY

After counting the Victory Points for the goal card of the 10th round (marked **O** on game board), each player counts additional Victory Points:

+1 Victory Point for every tile on the painting that has the light side facing up,

+1 Victory Point for every remaining amulet,

+1 Victory Point for every tile in any chosen group on the painting, including Spruce tiles.

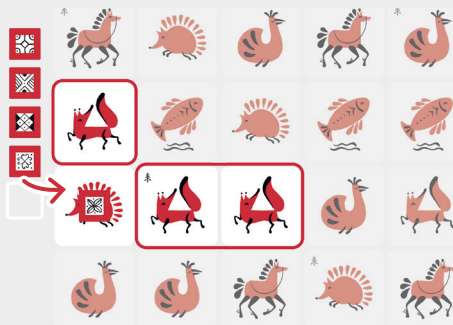
The player to gain the most Victory Points wins. In case of a tie, the player to have the most amulets remaining wins. In case of another tie, the players share victory.

## EXAMPLE OF A TURN AND COUNTING VICTORY POINTS

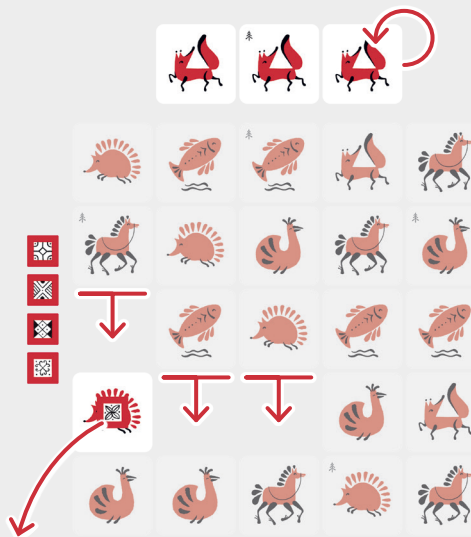
1. The active player announces the Fox symbol.



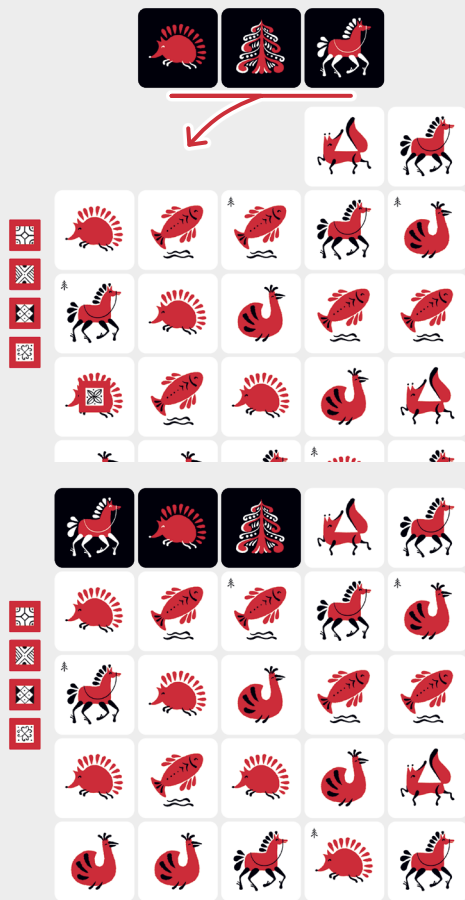
2. They choose a small group of 2 Fox tiles, put an amulet onto a Hedgehog tile to add another Fox tile to the group.



3. The player removes and flips 3 Fox tiles, then sliding the tiles remaining at the top down to fill the empty space.

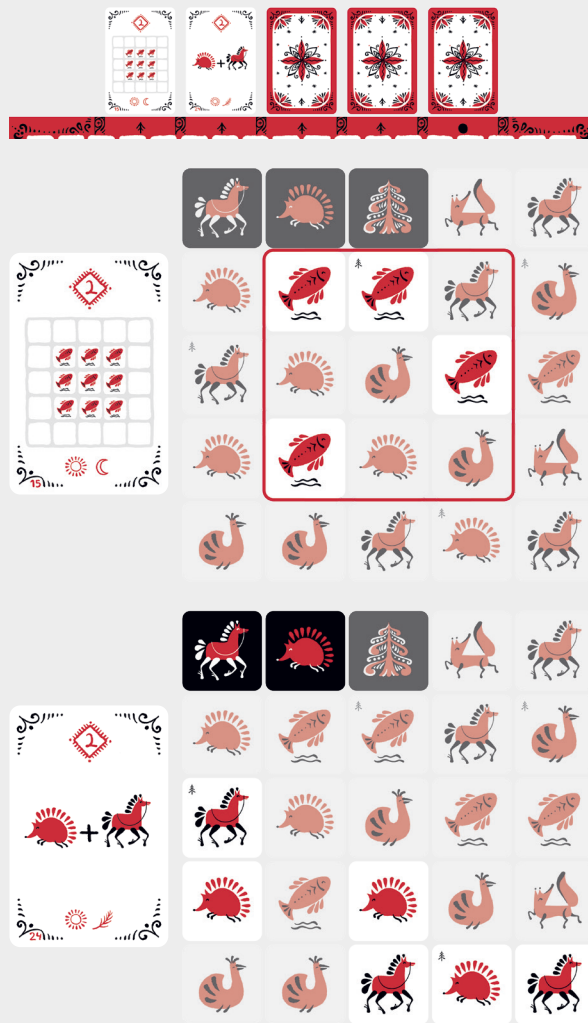


4. The player places the tiles into the empty spots as they wish.

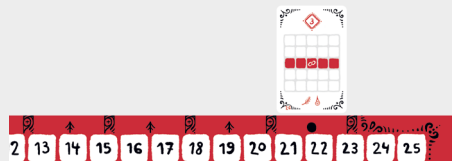


5. At the end of the round the player scores Victory Points for the goal card. It awards 2 Victory Points for every Fish tile in the central area of the painting (a 3x3 zone). The player has 4 Fish tiles in that area, therefore they are awarded 8 Victory Points. Meanwhile

the player is prepared for the next round, in which the goal awards Victory Points for every neighboring pair of Horse + Hedgehog tiles: they were removing and placing tiles in a way to have several required pairs.



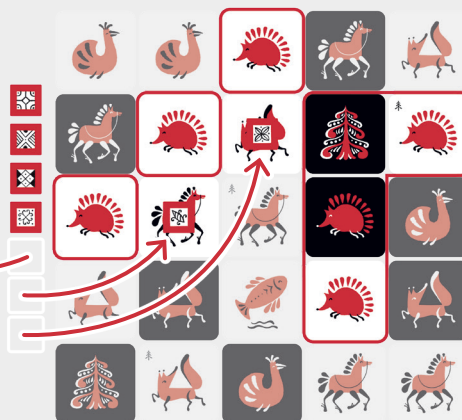
## EXAMPLE OF A TURN AND COUNTING VICTORY POINTS IN THE FIFTH ROUND



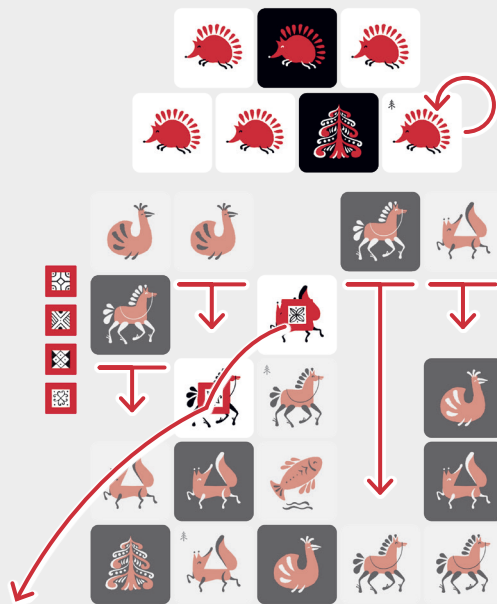
1. The fifth round is in process. The Bird is announced but the player is not happy with that choice. They give the Active Player 1 amulet and announce the Hedgehog for their own painting.



2. The player chooses to combine a group of four tiles on their painting — three Hedgehog tiles and a Spruce tile. Additionally, they place amulets onto 2 tiles to extend the group with bridges.

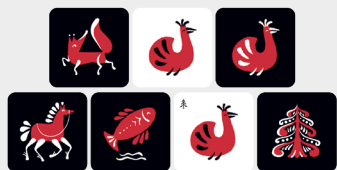


3. The player removes and flips 7 tiles at once. Then they move the top tiles down to fill the empty space.





4. The player puts the tiles into the empty spots as they wish.



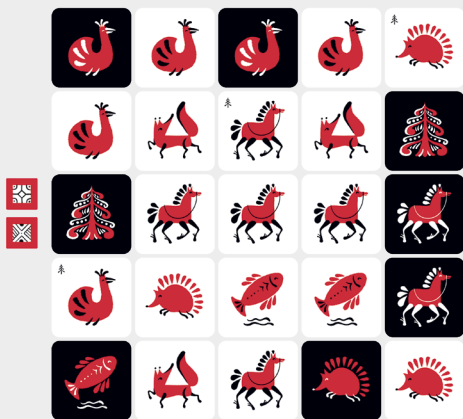
5. At the end of the round the player scores Victory Points. The goal card of the current round awards 3 Victory Points for each identical symbol in the middle row of the painting. The player chooses the Horse symbol and gains  $3 \times 4 = 12$  Victory Points. Since it is the end of the fifth round, the player scores an additional Victory Point for every dark tile in the painting, therefore 12 Victory Points. 24 Victory Points in total.



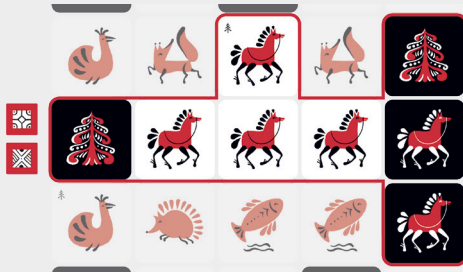
## EXAMPLE OF A TURN AND SCORING VICTORY POINTS AT THE END OF THE GAME



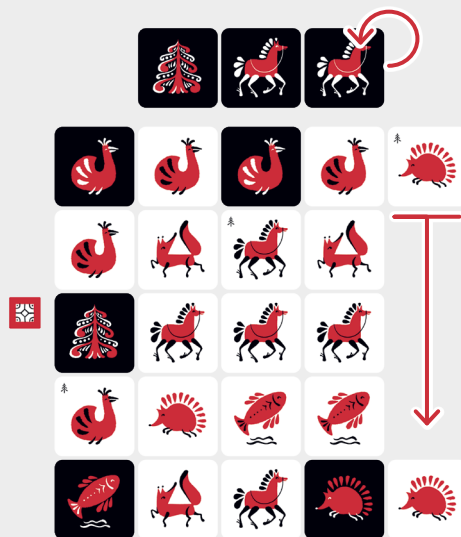
1. The tenth round is in process. The Horse is announced and the player is okay with that choice.



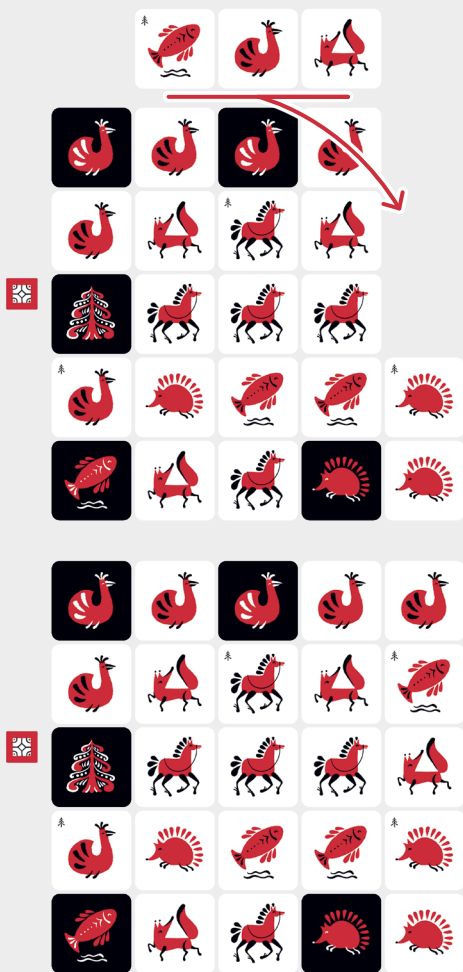
2. The player chooses to combine a group of 8 tiles on their painting — 6 Horse tiles and 2 Spruce tiles.



3. However, the player does not wish to remove all Horse tiles from the painting, so they place an amulet onto one of them to exclude it from the group. The player removes and flips 3 tiles and moves the top tiles down to fill the empty space.



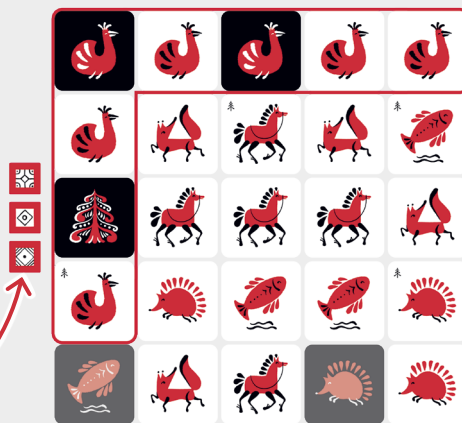
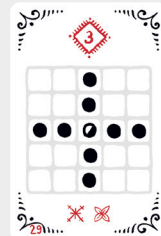
4. The player puts the tiles into the empty spots as they wish.



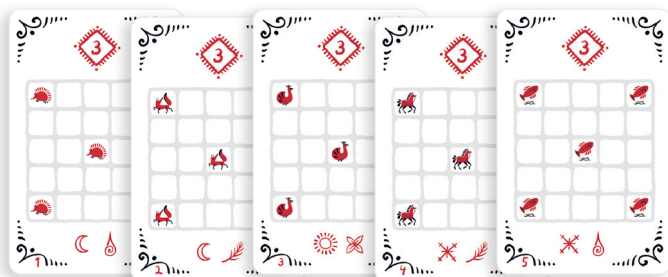
5. Unfortunately, the player does not gain any Victory Points from the goal card, so they decide to take 2 amulets from the pool instead.



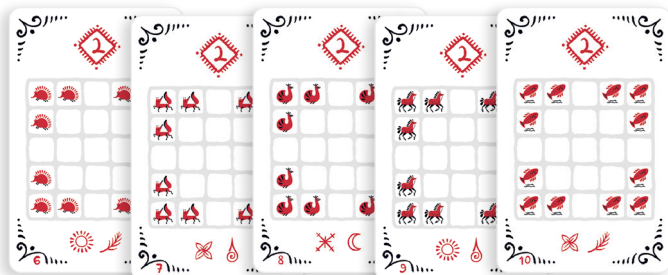
6. During the final scoring, the player gains a Victory Point for every light tile (20 Victory Points), for every one of their amulets (3 Victory Points) and for any group — the player scores a group of 7 Bird tiles and a Spruce tile at the top of the painting (8 Victory Points). 31 Victory Points in total.



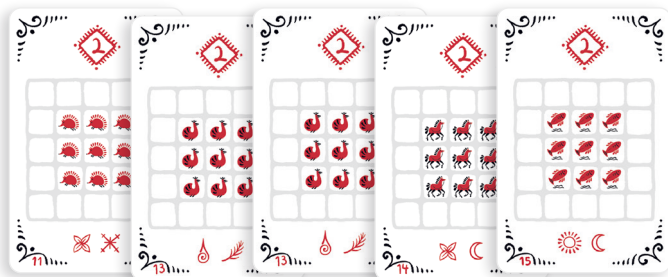
# GOAL CARDS



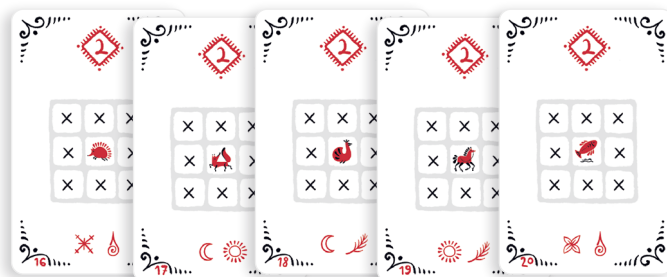
**Cards 1–5.** Gain 3 Victory Points for every tile with the indicated symbol in any of specified positions.



**Cards 6–10.** Gain 2 Victory Points for every tile with the indicated symbol in any of specified positions.



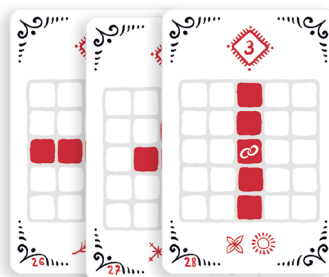
**Cards 11–15.** Gain 2 Victory Points for every tile with the indicated symbol in any of specified positions.



**Cards 16–20.** Gain 2 Victory Points for every tile with the indicated symbol that is not surrounded (vertically, horizontally and diagonally) by any tiles with the same symbol.



**Cards 21–25.** Gain 2 Victory Points for every pair of neighboring (horizontally or vertically) tiles with the indicated symbols. Every tile can only be part of one pair.



**Cards 26–28.** Choose any of the 5 symbols. Gain 3 Victory Points for every tile with the chosen symbol in the specified positions.



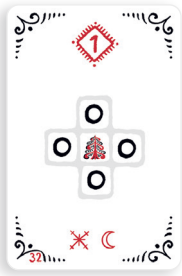
**Card 29.** Gain 3 Victory Points for every column or row that contains no less than 4 tiles with the dark side up.



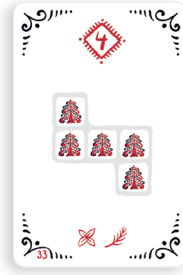
**Card 30.** Gain 2 Victory Points for each tile with the dark side up in the specified positions.



**Card 31.** Gain 3 Victory Points for every Spruce tile in the specified positions.



**Card 32.** Gain 1 Victory Point for every light tile that is neighboring (vertically or horizontally) with at least 1 Spruce tile.



**Card 33.** Gain 4 Victory Points for every Spruce tile in the biggest group consisting solely of Spruce tiles.



**Card 34.** Gain 1 Victory Point for every pair of neighboring (horizontally or vertically) tiles with opposite sides up. Every tile can only be part of one pair.



**Card 35.** Each player chooses any of the 5 symbols (except Spruce). Gain 3 Victory Points for every tile with the indicated symbol, if it is neighboring (horizontally or vertically) with at least 1 Spruce tile.



**Card 36.** Each player chooses any of the 5 symbols (except Spruce). Find the biggest group of tiles with that symbol on their painting *including Spruce tiles*. Gain 2 Victory Points for every tile in that group including Spruce tiles.

## SINGLEPLAYER MODE

Set the game up as usual (but take 2 amulets instead of 5) and place 1 amulet onto the fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth card on the game board each. Whenever you unlock goal cards that have amulets on them during the game, take them and put them into your supply.

Apart from that, play the game as usual: every turn choose any symbol and flip tiles with it on your painting. Use amulets to turn tiles into bridges or to exclude them from groups. Score your Victory Points according to the goal card after every turn and start the next one.

At the end of the game, score the Victory Points following the usual rules and compare your result to the table. It will show your level of mastery in Mezen.

Points	Achievement
0–70	Pupil
71–100	Apprentice
101–120	Artisan
121–130	Skilled craftsman
131 or more	Master craftsman

## THE HISTORY OF MEZEN PAINTING

Mezen painting is the folk craft of Arkhangelsk Governorate that gained popularity at the end of the XIX century.

In the olden times, northern craftsmen would decorate spinning wheels, baskets and kitchen utensils with Mezen paintings. And today we decorated our game with it.

The style of painting originated in the village of Palaschelye on the riverside of Mezen. Hence its second name: palaschelskaya. However, some scholars believe that this style has deeper roots, going back to the petroglyphs of Belomorsk. Prehistoric cave paintings tell similar stories and depict animals, which are the main characters of Mezen paintings, in a similar way.

The craftsmen of Palaschelye would mostly depict Horses, Reindeer and Birds.

These animals used to play an important role in the life of any peasant. Birds and Horses were of great use



*Cave paintings in Belomorsk region of Karelia.  
IV—III millennium BC*

in farming, while Reindeer husbandry still remains an important part of agriculture in the Russian north.

The painting itself originated from the Finno-Ugric tribe arts. The pagans would use zig zag patterns to portray water, squares for earth, and the spiral was used to signify the sun and bring good luck.

Only two colors would be used to apply this style of painting - black and red. This is due to the harsh climate and long winters of Arkhangelsk Governorate. The black color would come from soot and the red — from local clay. The painting was applied with wooden sticks, feathers of the capercaillie or the black grouse, and brushes made of hair for intricate details. At the end, the finished painting would be glossed with drying oil — a film of plant oils and resin.

This craft is kept alive thanks to the descendants of ancient masters from the Fedotov and Fatyanov dynasties. They brought the painting style back when it had almost completely been forgotten during the war, and kept the craft alive by teaching it to a new generation of craftsmen.

The intricacies of the craft, that would usually only be passed down in the male line, were now spread across the nation. Craftsmen started experimenting more, combining new shapes, colors and materials.



Wooden baskets — works of modern masters of Mezen painting.

## MEANING OF THE SYMBOLS

In the olden days, masters of Mezen painting could fit an entire tale in their works. But it would be communicated not with words, but with shapes — historical symbols going back centuries.



The Horse — closest ally to any peasant. Brings luck and keeps away dark spirits. Several Horses depicted next to each other represent the passing of time.



Geese, swans and ducks represent the spirits of ancestors. They are always looking out for their descendants and helping those facing hardships.



The Spruce represents the masculine strength and resilience. Besides, the Spruce is the most common tree in the Arkhangelsk Governorate. Mezen masters would usually use this tree to apply their works onto.



The Reindeer is the symbol of change and new life. The image of this animal is strongly bound with the sky, rain and wind. Many small-numbered peoples of the North still consider the Reindeer a sacred animal.



Fish, Hedgehogs and Foxes — are the indigenous inhabitants of Arkhangelsk forests but they would rarely appear in Mezen paintings. You get to give meaning to these animals! Will they bring good or bad luck? You will find the answer to this question once you sit down to play Mezen.

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