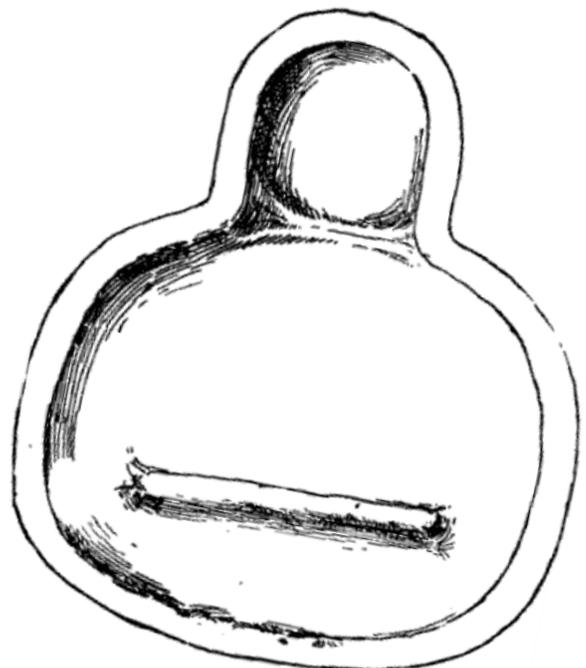
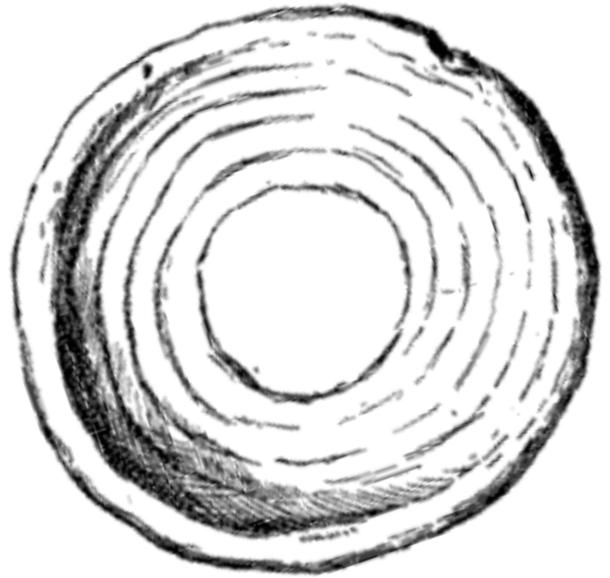
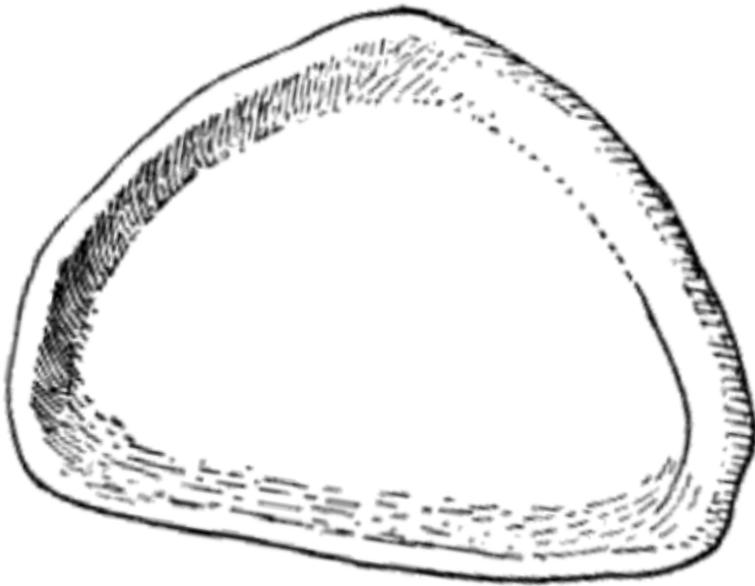


Seal Oil Lamp Coloring Sheet

Discover a historical way to light homes during Arctic winter nights!

In the Arctic, people have used seal oil lamps to light their homes for thousands of years. These lamps are made in a variety of shapes.

Color the inside of the lamp to “fill” it with oil. Then draw a wick and a bright flame!



This lamp has a crack! When this happened, people would repair the lamp so they could keep using it.

Drawings from Walter Hough, *The Lamp of the Eskimo*, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1898: Plates 12, 14, 15, 18.

Seal Oil Lamps

Seal oil lamps are important in many Arctic cultures, including the Iñupiat, Yup'ik, Inuit, and Unangan (Aleut) peoples. They were essential for survival in the winter, as the lamps provided light, warmed the home, melted water, and even helped cook food. A seal oil lamp could be the most important object in the home!

Right: Sophie Nothstine tends a lamp at the 2019 World Eskimo Indian Olympics. [Photo from WEIO.](#)



Left: Siberian Yup'ik Lamp from St Lawrence Island, UA2001-005-0019.

Right: Lamp from King Salmon, UA2015-016-0003.



Seal oil lamps were usually made of soapstone, a stone that can be carved and is very resistant to heat. They were sometimes made of pottery or other kinds of stone. Seal oil lamps are made in different shapes and designs to help burn the wick and make the best light possible.

The lamp was then filled with oil or fat. Seal oil was preferred, as it burned the hottest and brightest, but whale blubber and caribou fat were also used. People traveled far to trade for soapstone and seal oil!

To light the lamp, people made wicks from tightly rolled moss. They adjusted how long the wick was depending on how bright or hot they wanted the lamp to burn. The wick could be up to 30 inches (76 cm) long! With a good wick, the lamp burned hot and made almost no smoke.



Sphagnum moss.

Seal oil lamps made bright light: one description from 1898 compared the light of one seal oil lamp to the light from four kerosene lamps!