



Chinese New Year

[A to Z Kids Stuff](http://www.atozkidsstuff.com)



Introduction

There is a lot to the celebration of the Chinese New Year. The people start to prepare themselves for the five-day New Year celebration a month in advance. At the end of the five-day celebration the people start again to prepare for the lantern festival, which takes place about ten days later. The holiday of the New Year lasts about one month.

The five-day celebration is the most important part of the Chinese celebration. The people will do no cooking, except reheating, during these five days, and the shops will be closed. During the month before the celebration takes place chicken, fish, and pork are dried; eggs are preserved, and vegetables are pickled. All food preparation is one in order to be ready for the many guests who will be coming.

Days before the New Year, every family is busy giving its house a thorough cleaning, hoping to sweep away all the ill-fortune there may have been in the family to make way for the wishful in-coming good luck. People also give their doors and window-panes a new paint, usually in red color. They decorate the doors and windows with paper-cuts and couplets with the very popular theme of "happiness", "wealth", "longevity" and "satisfactory marriage with more children". Paintings of the same theme are put up in the house on top of the newly mounted wall paper. In the old days, various kinds of food were tributes at the altar of ancestors. (see Banners for banners to color and hang).

The Eve of the New Year is very carefully observed. Supper is a feast, with all members coming together. One of the most popular course is jiaozi, dumplings boiled in water. "Jiaozi" in Chinese literally means "sleep together and have sons", a long-lost good wish for a family. After dinner, it is time for the whole family to sit up for the night while having fun playing cards or board games or watching TV programs dedicated to the occasion. Every light is supposed to be kept on the whole night. At midnight, the whole sky will be lit up by fireworks and firecrackers making everywhere seem like a war zone. People's excitement reaches its zenith.

AM.

Mini-Lecture. Explain to the students that all people celebrate the New Year differently. Briefly describe to the children the customs of the Chinese New Year, and when it takes place (sometime between Jan. 21 and Feb. 19).

The Chinese Lunar Calendar is a yearly calendar like the western calendar, except that the start of the lunar year is based on the cycles of the moon. Thus the beginning of the year can fall anywhere between late January and the middle of February. Western cultures date the years from the birth of Jesus Christ (For example, 1994 means 1,994 years after the birth of Christ), and thus approach the progression of years from a linear point of view. In traditional China, dating methods were cyclical, meaning that the years repeat according to a pattern. The repetition is in increments of twelve years.

In the Chinese lunar calendar, one of the schemes for counting years is a 12-year cycle. One counts from Year 1,2,3,... up to 12. Then starts over from Year 1. Instead of inventing 12 special symbols for this purpose, 12 animals are used to represent these 12 years. Rabbit (hare), for example, is the 4th year of the cycle.

1	2	3	4	5	6
鼠	牛	虎	兔	龙	蛇
Rat	Ox	Tiger	Rabbit	Dragon	Snake
7	8	9	10	11	12
马	羊	猴	鸡	狗	猪
Horse	Sheep	Monkey	Rooster	Dog	Pig

Concept Development. Review the information of the legends briefly. Define the concept of a legend (the story of how people think things came to be). Ask the students to give examples of legends that they have heard. Discuss what kinds of stories are and are not legends. This would be a good place to read legends to the children of many things, if desired.

Mini-Lecture. Share the information about the origins of the Chinese New Year with the children. The legend of Nian and the legend of the torches being lit on the night of the full moon to find spirits are found in the reading below. In pairs, have the children respond to the discussion. What did you learn about the legends behind Chinese New Year? Have each pair share with the rest of the class.

Origin of the Chinese New Year



The origin of the Chinese New Year is too old to trace; but the tales about it are quite interesting. Legend has it that there was a beast called Nian (which means "year" in Chinese) that would come to China the night before the new year began (according to the Chinese Calendar) and prey upon the people. One of the legends has it that Nian had a very big mouth and that he would swallow a great many people with every bite.



One day an old man came to the rescue of the people, he said to Nian, "I hear that you are a very capable beast, but do you think that you could swallow the other beasts of prey instead of people, who are not worthy opponents?" So Nian started to swallow the other beast which were harassing the people anyway. After that the man disappeared riding Nian, it turns out that the man was really an immortal god.



The old man told the people to put up red decorations on their windows and doors at each year's end to scare away Nian in case he came back. Nian lived in fear of the color red. The people celebrate the New Year by putting up red paper and lighting fire-crackers to scare away Nian. They say the words "Guo Nian" which mean both, "Survive the Nian" and "Celebrate the year." The word "guo" in Chinese means both observe, and pass-over.

Chinese New Year Animals Word Search



E C B B U O E H M U X Y Y X Y
 M F G L D L H R T D P E Z R X
 U F F V V X C N G F K Y R T D
 E S X E B G O D R A G O N L A
 C W X I U N M O N K E Y X H D
 P C T Q T T O S Y S N Z Y G D
 O I I F I S D U R C Z Q M U M
 O Q G L T S Q O I O U F T W A
 A P E E C I H Q M O J J M E M
 W T R U O S O E U I T X S K K
 Z S A K F C X X E F F B E E M
 J U B R U L A U K P A I U G A
 P T B X N B Y R H I H I I U K
 S T I Z V V D U I M T J Z Q G
 J D T B A B Q Y W Z H N C O Q



RAT
 OX
 TIGER
 RABBIT
 DRAGON
 SNAKE

HORSE
 SHEEP
 MONKEY
 ROOSTER
 DOG
 PIG



AM. Projects

Banner Handouts: Have the children color the words red and hang on the door and windows.

Moon Secrets for the year, use plenty of glitter on dark paper with star and moon cut outs. Tell children to make a wish, while they are making them, and not to tell anyone.

Painting Fireworks: Give the children pieces of black paper. Have them put small drops of thinned tempera paint on their picture and then blow these drops with a straw. Before the paint is dry, have them sprinkle glitter on the pictures. Have the children see if they can think of other ways to paint fireworks.

Variation Painting Fireworks: Use glue and glitter. Have the children make a dot with glue and lines of glue radiating from the center. Add glitter. Makes a wonderful bulletin board display.

Happiness





Happiness



Wisdom





Legend 1
The Chinese New Year



An ancient legend tells that Lord Buddha once invited all the animals to a great meeting. Only 12 animals came. To honor these animals Buddha named a special year for each one. The year's cycle begins with the year of the mouse, then the ox, the tiger, the rabbit, the dragon, the serpent, the horse, the sheep, the monkey, the rooster, the dog, and last the year of the boar.



Legend 2-Chinese New Year



The twelve animals quarreled one day as to who was to head the cycle of years. The gods were asked to decide and they held a contest: whoever reached the opposite bank of the river first would be head of the first cycle, and the rest of the animals would receive their years according to their finish.



All twelve animals gathered at the river bank and jumped in. Unknown to the ox, the rat had jumped upon his back. As the ox was about to jump ashore, the rat jumped off the ox's back and won the race. The pig, who was very lazy, ended up last. That is why the rat is the first year of the animal cycle, the ox is the second, and the pig last. If one knows the animal of a person's birth year, the person's age can be known through calculation as the animals repeat every twelve years.

Buddha and the Rabbit



Long ago, the Buddha came to a remote forest. He had traveled for many days, and was tired and hungry. The animals of the forest were all determined to serve him in the best way possible. They gathered together and decided to find food for him. Each animal brought food that it naturally harvested.



The rabbit thought of bringing some grass. "I like grass," thought the rabbit, "so I expect the Buddha will, too." So he found a patch of fresh green grass and started to eat it. When the whole patch was gone, the rabbit suddenly realized what he had done.



Next he found some succulent leaves to bring to the Buddha. "After all," said the rabbit, "I like leaves, so I expect the Buddha will too." He started to eat, and soon there was not a leaf in sight.



Crestfallen, the rabbit brought himself before the Buddha. "O Buddha," said the rabbit, "I am a foolish creature and have nothing to give you except myself. Please eat me if you are hungry." The Buddha was touched by the rabbit's willingness to give up his own life. He placed his hand on the rabbit, and the rabbit flew up to the Moon. Here, the



Buddha set him down, and explained that he would be seen for the rest of time by those on Earth looking at the Moon. The Buddha had given the Rabbit the supreme gift of eternal life. Even today, if you look at the moon, you will see the rabbit, forever grinding the Pill of Immortality.

Chinese Zodiac Activity

Review information about the lunar calendar.

Explain to children how the years on a Chinese calendar are grouped into sets of twelve with each year represented by a different animal, and that the animals are called zodiac signs.

Remind the children that as part of the New Year Celebration, the Chinese people welcome in the new animal for the year. They use pictures of that animal for decorating. Tell them that people believed that the characteristics of people were like those of the animal of the year they were born.

- Rabbit--gentle
- Dragon--successful, bold
- Snake--elegant, sensible
- Horse--popular, clever, capable
- Sheep(ram)--sincere, sensible, artistic
- Monkey--original, talented
- Rooster--dependable, adventurous, forgiving
- Dog--responsible, gracious
- Pig(boar)--trustworthy, loyal
- Rat(mouse)--loving, keeper of secrets, charming, hard-working
- Ox--patient, easy-going, slow to anger
- Tiger--courageous, proud, cautious

Activity Make a Chinese Calendar

Give students the Chinese Zodiac Chart (see handouts). Have them figure out the years for each animal. Then have them find out what year they were born, and what year members of their families were born. Let them match up these dates and determine if they think the characteristics of the animal accurately represents the people born in that year. Ask them if they think this would be true for all people.

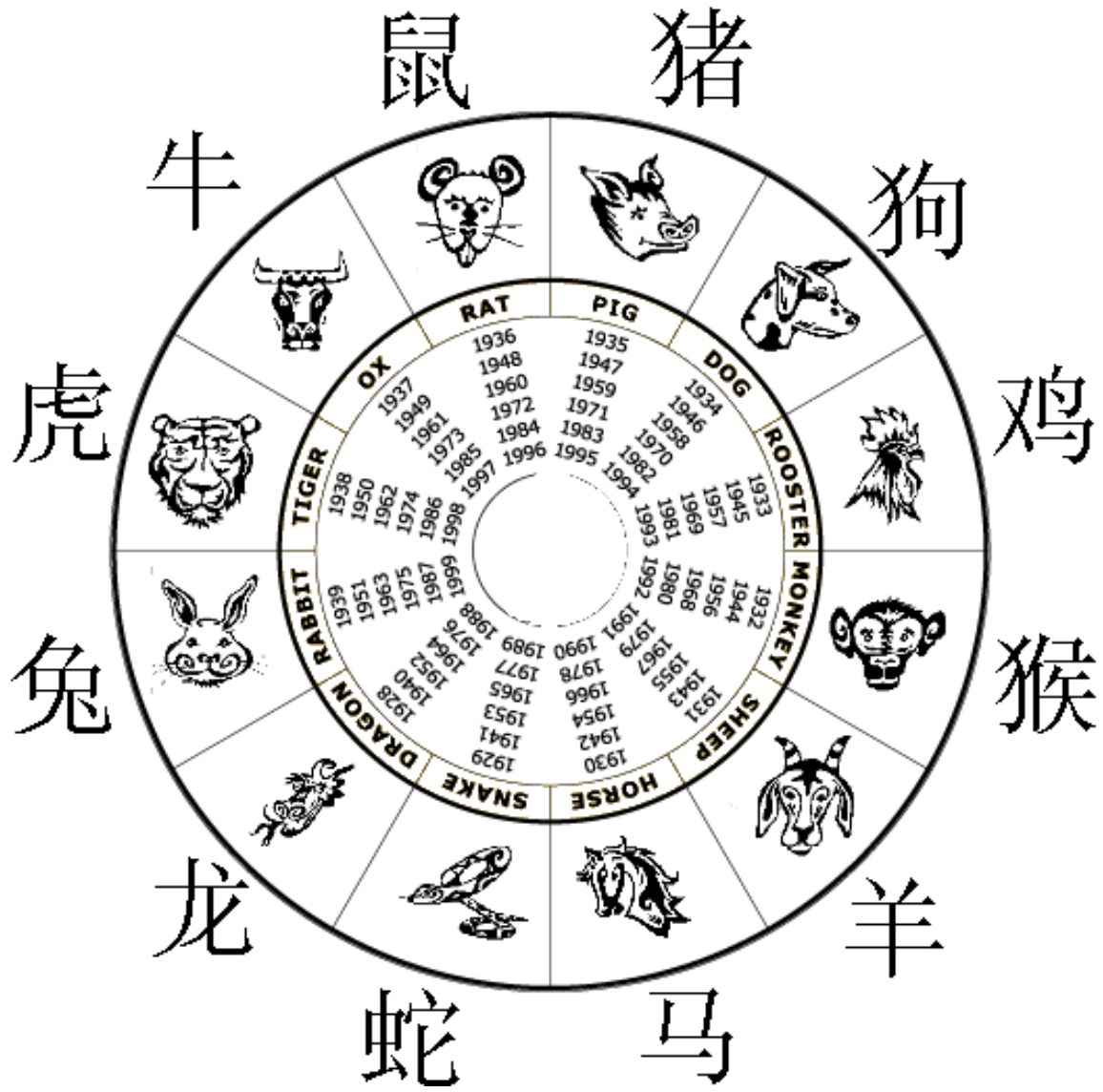
Zodiac Pendants (handouts)

After the children have found what animal year they are have them color and cut out the pendant for that year. Punch a hole at the top. String yarn through the hole and tie off to make a necklace. Could have the children color and use to decorate a bulletin board.

Penny Activity

Shine up old pennies by soaking them in vinegar. Use for lucky coins the next day. Will need two pennies per child. Can have children soak pennies in vinegar, soapy water, and lemon juice to see which substance shines the pennies best.

Chinese Lunar Calendar



ANIMALS IN THE CHINESE ZODIAC



Year of the Dog

All the fine traits of human nature are in the possession of people born in the year of the dog. They have a deep sense of duty and loyalty and are extremely honest. Dog-year people inspire other people's confidence and know how to keep private secrets absolutely private.



Year of the Horse

Horse-year people are quite popular. They are very cheerful people. Those born under this sign are wise and talented and are good with their hands. They are skillful with money and handle finances well.



Year of the Tiger

Tiger people are deep thinkers. Other people have deep respect for those born in the year of the tiger. Those born under the sign are capable of great sympathy for those they like. It is a fortuitous thing for a person to be born in the year of the tiger.



Year of the Snake

People born in this year possess tremendous wisdom. They are unbelievably fortunate in money matters in that they never have to worry about them. Those born under this sign have a tremendous sympathy for others. Snake-year people if men are handsome and beauties if they are woman.



Year of the Sheep

Those born in this animal year are true artists. They are happy and contented when doing something creative. Sheep people are sometimes shy and often not leaders. Sheep people usually manage to eat well and live comfortably. They have elegant tastes, wisdom, and an inborn gentleness.



Year of the Dragon

Dragon people are given the gifts of health, energy, courage, and sensitivity. They speak sincerely and are honest. When a boy is born in the year of the dragon, he will have good fortune. Dragons are believed to have the potential to be rulers. The person born under this sign is said to have these four blessings: virtues, harmony, riches, and longevity.



Year of the Rat

People born under this sign are known for their charm. Rat people have a great deal of ambition, integrity, and unbelievable persistence. Naturally thrifty, they have the ability to save money (and can be stingy, too). They like to live well and are good to themselves.



Year of the Rabbit

A person born under this sign is gifted and ambitious. Other people respect and trust them. Rabbit people seldom lose their tempers. When they make a promise, their promise is good. They're lucky financially, with an uncanny sense for picking a winner. This makes them good gamblers.



Year of the Rooster

People born under this sign are deep thinkers. Devoted to their work, they habitually undertake challenges. They are eccentric, which makes people watch them with interest. They are ambitious and quite brave when the occasion calls for it.



Year of the Monkey

Persons born under this sign are usually successful in any field they choose. Decisions are easy; they have plenty of common sense. Monkey people read extensively, remember everything they read, and are usually well informed. Monkey people are eager to begin new tasks. Those born under this sign are clever and skillful.



Year of the Ox

People born in the year of the ox are very patient and speak little. They have the rare gift of inspiring confidence in others, and this self-assuredness can help them become successful. They are extraordinarily good with their hands. They are naturally quiet and unemotional.



Year of the Boar

Boar people are brave and chivalrous. They have tremendous inner strength and follow through on whatever they undertake. Boar people are shy and prefer to solve their problems alone rather than seek help. Those born under this sign don't make many friends, but when they do, they make friends for life.



Boar
猪



Dog
狗



Dragon
龙



Horse
马



Monkey

猴



Ox

牛



Rabbit

兔



Rat

鼠



Rooster

鸡



Sheep

羊



Snake

蛇



Tiger

虎

Day One

On New Year's Day the people all dress in new clothes and spend the day with their families. They exchange gifts; some of these gifts are gifts of money wrapped in red and gold paper. This money is to be spent throughout the holiday. Food is kept warm all day for visiting family. The tradition is to eat dumpling soup; whoever bites into the dumpling with the surprise in it is supposed to have good luck throughout the year.

AM.

Friendship Quilt

Give each child a 12-inch by 12-inch piece of construction paper. Put out some beautiful junk (yarn tissue paper sequins cotton balls ' you get the idea) Let the children create their own square for a FRIENDSHIP QUILT. When all is dry, connect the squares together and display for everyone to see. Mine will hang in the classroom for almost the whole year. It is remarkable how the children will continue to talk about it for a long time. At the end of the year I cut it apart and send the squares home.

Family Scrolls

Scrolls are made with red construction paper. Have the children draw a picture of what they like doing with their families. If needed a teacher can write the words to go with the illustrations. Use thin sticks I to roll the scrolls up. Tape the pictures , to the stick at the top of the page and roll it down and tie it with a piece of yarn.

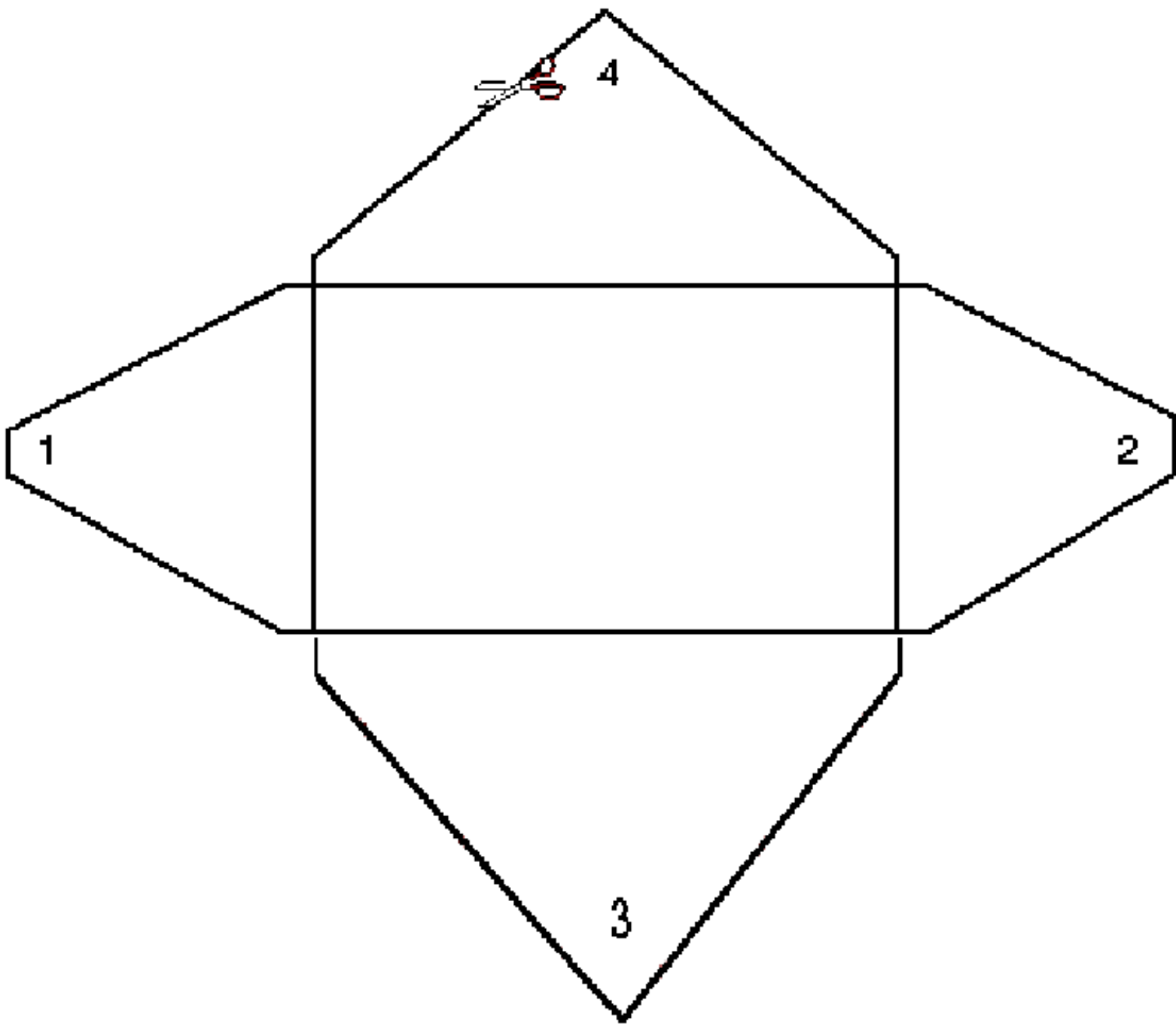
PM.

Making Red Envelopes

Need: Red paper and coins for good luck. Uneven numbers are viewed as bad luck. 2 pennies per child needed.

Give each child two pennies or have the children make money out of foil and paper to put in the envelopes. Give them squares of red paper. Have them fold in the corners to meet in the middle and seal it with a gold sticker. If they wish, they can decorate the envelope to make it more special. The envelopes could be given to friends or family members.

Cut on the outside.
Fold toward the center in order 1, 2, 3, 4.
Tape closed in the center.



Day Two

The second day of the New Year is for visiting family. Money trees are put out as a sign of prosperity.

AM.

Make play money

Need: Different colors of construction paper cut into rectangles.

Have the children decorate the rectangles for play money. To help children understand that not all money is green show children different money than US.

PM.

Money Tree

Make a bulletin board tree from brown paper or brown grocery bags and hang play money on it.

Day Three

The third day of the festival is marked with firecrackers and the Dragon Dance. This is also the day for the beginning of the Lion Dance, which lasts through the fifth day.

AM.

Design a Dragon!!

Have each child choose their own color of construction paper and let them design their own dragon. Affix each dragon to it's own larger background paper.

Let the children tell you facts about their dragon, like what it eats, if it is friendly write the facts on the background sheet and label each dragon according to the child's' name. e.g. Kim's' dragon would be a Kim-o-dragon John's would be a

John-o-dragon, etc. The children are very proud of their creations and it makes for a great bulletin board.

Variation Design a Dragon

Have children color salt with food coloring. Place salt and food coloring in a baggie. Seal the baggie and shake. Use the colors yellow (add gold glitter), red, blue, and green.

Using dittos of dragons (see handouts) have children glue the dragon onto construction paper and then using glue and the colored salt to design the dragon.

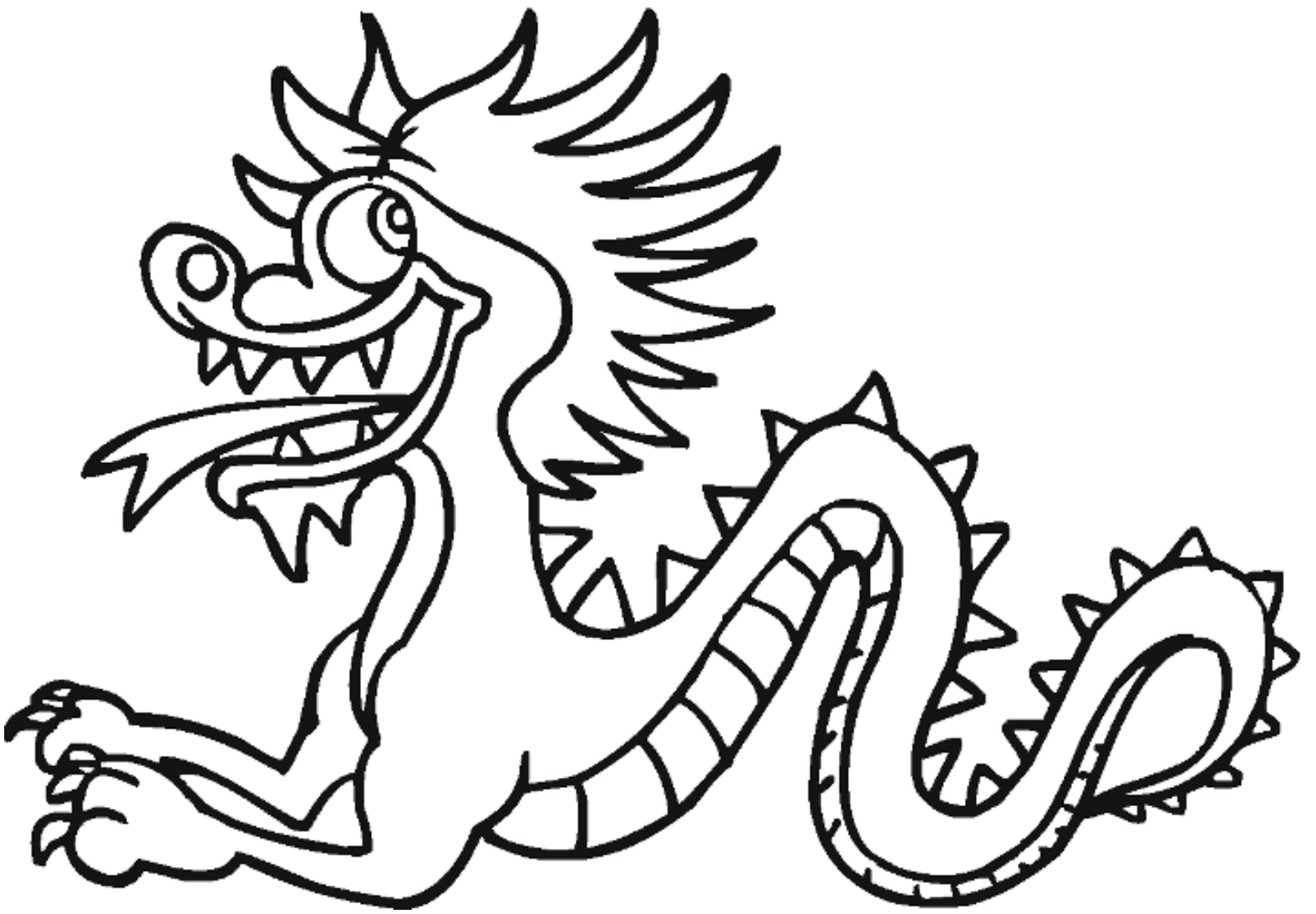
PM.

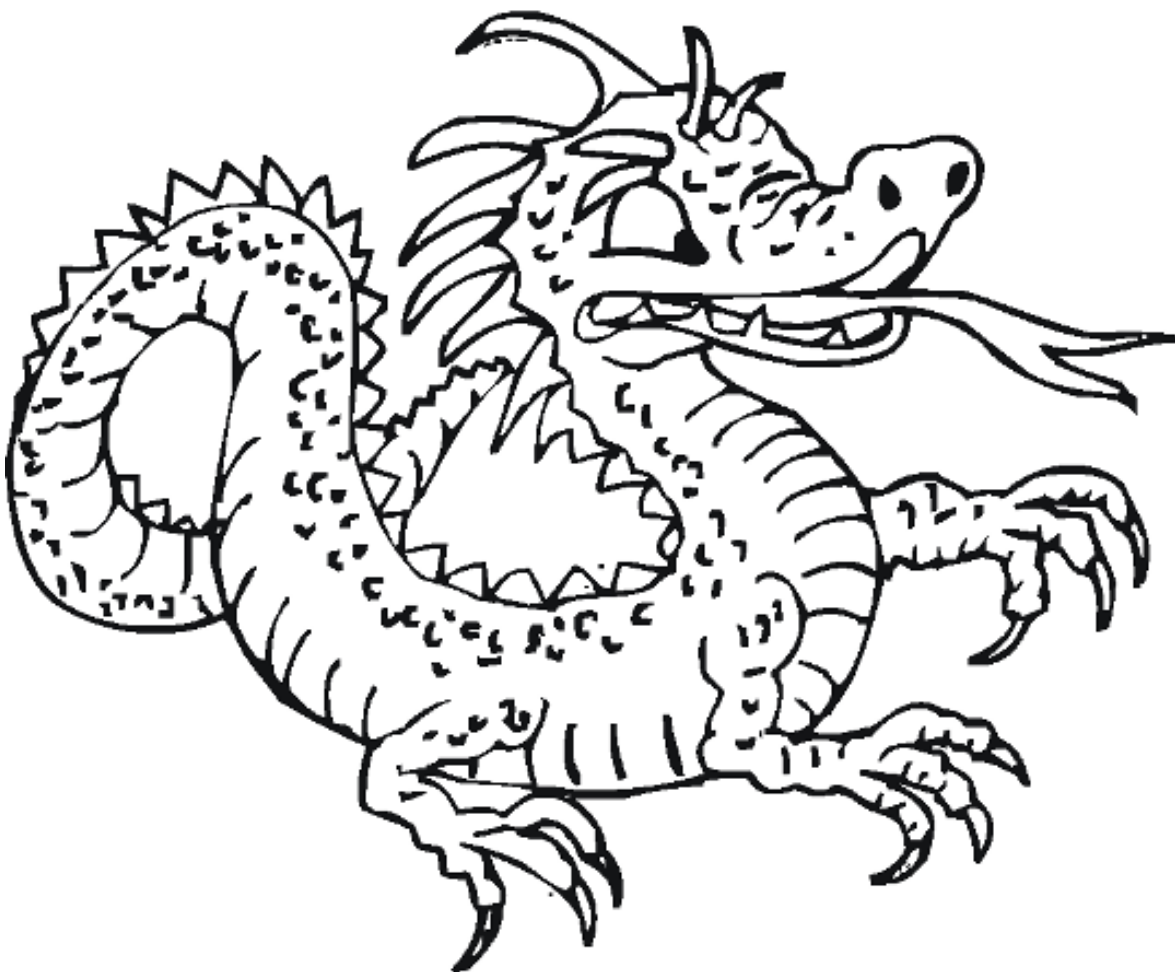
Dragon Dance

Let children work in groups of 3-4 to make their own dragon costume. Paint a large dragon's head on a grocery bag. Attach a long piece of butcher paper for the body. Decorate it with glitter, sequins and feathers to make it more fancy. Have the children make up dances and take turns being the head and the body.

Game: Catching the Dragon's Tail Game

Have all players form a line, placing hands on one another's shoulders. Name the first person the dragon's head. Name the last person the dragon's tail. The dragon's head maneuvers and makes the line weave about as it tries to tag the tail. The rest of the players in the line maneuver to keep the head from catching the tail. The same person remains the head if s/he catches the tail. As soon as anyone lets go of the shoulders of the person in front, the dragon dies, and the next person in line is the head of a new dragon. Continue until everyone has had a turn.





copyright A to Z Kids Stuff

<http://www.atozkidsstuff.com>



copyright A to Z Kids Stuff

<http://www.atozkidsstuff.com>

Day Four

The fourth day is a day for people, even strangers to drop in and visit wherever they like.

AM.

Making good luck symbols

In China, the word for good luck is fu (FOO). (Explain to the children that Chinese characters are like our alphabet.) People paint signs with this character to hang in their homes and in the streets. These signs are painted in the traditional red and gold colors and are hung upside-down. The Chinese word for upside-down rhymes with the Chinese word for arrive. So it is kind of a play on words that by hanging the sign upside-down, good luck will arrive. Have the children use red squares to make their own fu sign. They can either draw the character themselves or decorate a pre-made sign using gold and red paint and glitter (see handouts).

PM.

A New Year's Scroll

Need: construction paper (rectangle shape with a point on the end), symbols for "Happy New Year" (see handouts), black watercolors or thinned black tempera paint.

Post for the children to see the Chinese words for "Happy New Year"--"Gung-Hay-Fat- Choy" and the Chinese symbols for those words. Using black paint the children can copy the words or Chinese symbols onto there construction paper banners.

Cooking:

Buy or make your own fortune cookies for the fifth day celebration.

"What's Happening?" Fortune Cookies

Need: 3/4 cup margarine, softened, 2 cups sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, 3 eggs, 1 cup sifted flour, 40 small strips of paper with "fortunes"

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Grease cookie sheet and dust lightly with flour.

Place margarine and sugar in mixer bowl; beat until fluffy.

Add vanilla.

Add eggs to mixture, one at a time. Beat well after adding each egg.

Add flour. Beat until smooth.

Drop rounded teaspoons of dough on cookie sheet at least 2 inches apart.

Bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes; remove from oven. Use a spatula to remove cookies from sheet. Place a folded "fortune" on each cookie. Gently fold cookies in half. Pinch edges together and twist in the center.

福



Good Luck (Fu) Symbols

福



Good Luck (Fu) Symbols

恭 Gung

賀 Hay

新 Fat

年 Choy

Day Five

The fifth day of the New Year is for visiting family who are far away, a day of travel and reunion. On this day all of the shops re-open and the people can cook again.

On the seventh day a special meal of soup made with seven vegetables is made. This day celebrates the birthdays of mankind or everybody's birthday--everyone is one year older on this day. Yes today is everyone's Birthday in China!

AM.

Make seven vegetable soup for snack in PM. (put soup on to simmer--use beef bouillon cubes to add flavor) At the beginning of the week take a vote on the seven vegetables the children would like to use for the soup. It is best to have each child bring in a vegetable for the soup.

Make birthday cards and banners for everyone's birthday.

PM.

Have birthday celebration. Seven vegetable soup, a fortune cookie, cake and ice cream, and red juice.

Festival

The Lantern Festival begins about ten days later, with the first full moon of the New Year, this lasts three days. During these three days decorated lanterns are hung, the people wear white in honor of the moon and moon cakes are eaten.

The Lantern Festival, comes from the time when the Chinese People would go in search of spirits with burning sticks. They thought that the spirits could be seen during a full moon.

The Lantern Festival marks the end of the New Year season and afterwards life becomes daily routines once again. This description is based upon the recollection of my own experience. Customs of observing the New Year vary from place to place, considering that China is a big country not only geographically, but also demographically and ethnically. Yet, the spirit underlying the diverse celebrations of the Chinese New Year is the same: a sincere wish of peace and happiness for the family members and friends.

AM.

Burning Torches: Create burning torches using rolled newspaper and black, red, and yellow paint.

PM.

New Year's Lantern

Need: cons. paper, paint, yellow tissue paper

Make lanterns for decorations. Use lightweight construction paper. If a piece of paper is 9 inches x 12 inches or 8 1/2 inches x 11 inches it can be folded lengthwise and cut by slashing along the folded edge. When opened and rolled lengthwise into a diamond like cylinder, it appears to be a colorful lantern. Wallpaper makes an interesting patterned lantern, although children may wish to color or paint a plain piece of paper and then cut as described, as the Chinese do. Yellow tissue paper may be glued inside the lantern to resemble a flame.

Point out that red is considered a lucky color for the Chinese. Students may also wish to draw and color any of the zodiac animals to glue onto their lanterns.

Cooking:

Choy Mien Cookies

Need: Butterscotch & Chocolate chips (12 oz packs), 2 cans Choy Mien Noodles

Melt butterscotch & chocolate chips in microwave. Add choy mien. Stir. Drop by spoonfuls onto wax paper. Cool and eat.

Concept Development:

Review some of the traditional things done at Chinese New Year celebrations. Define the concept of tradition (A long-continued practice or custom. The handing down of beliefs, legends, and customs from generation to generation.) Give examples of things that people do that are traditions and things people do that are not traditions. Share with the children some traditions that you have or traditions that we have here in America.

Dates of Chinese New Year, 2001 - 2020!

Dragon -February 5, 2000
Snake-January 24, 2001
Horse-February 12, 2002
Ram/Sheep-February 1, 2003
Monkey-January 22, 2004
Rooster-February 9, 2005
Dog-January 29, 2006
Boar-February 18, 2007
Rat-February 7, 2008
Ox-January 26, 2009
Tiger-February 10, 2010
Hare/Rabbit-February 3, 2011
Dragon-January 23, 2012
Snake-February 10, 2013
Horse-January 31, 2014