



The California Three Rs Project

Rights, Responsibility, and Respect



Chinese or Lunar New Year 2014

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Communities throughout the world begin the celebration for Chinese (Lunar) New Year, or Spring Festival, on the eve of January 31, 2014 with parades and carnivals. Chinese New Year falls on the first day of the first month of the lunisolar calendar. For China and other Asian countries, Spring Festival is a week-long holiday, though the Lantern Festival that falls on the fifteenth day of the first month brings an end to the New Year season.

The Chinese lunisolar calendar is based on astronomical observations of the sun's longitude and the moon's phases. Though shrouded in history, some scholars believe that Emperor Huangdi introduced the lunisolar calendar between 2500 to 3000 B.C.E. The Chinese calendar is used to determine festivals, so the dates of these festivals vary from year to year.

At home, many Chinese Americans celebrate New Year by burning incense, doing special prayers, and making offerings to ancestors and traditional gods. The celebrations of Chinese New Year are diverse, reflecting various ethnic customs and the combined influences of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Chinese folk religions. Like western Christmas, contemporary Chinese New Year celebrations include decorations, family gatherings, and big meals. Chinese New Year has become a colorful fusion of cultural traditions.

The coming year marks the beginning of the Year of the Horse. The symbols of the Chinese calendar are believed to stretch back to the Buddha himself. According to one tradition, Buddha summoned all the animals to visit him just before his death, but only 12 appeared. In appreciation, Buddha named a year after each of them. In time, people born in a particular year were described by the characteristics ascribed to the animal representing that year. (See "Chinese Zodiac," Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco at <http://www.c-c-c.org/menu-resources/zodiac/>.)

As schools teach about this important holiday, a great activity for students is to research the East Asian heritage in their own community and find out what types of Chinese or Lunar New Year celebrations are taking place among the Asian Americans and others locally.

The study of Chinese New Year fits best with California H-SS standards in grades four and below. However, as an important holiday celebrated by a large portion of the Asian community in California and the rest of the world, older students will gain insight and understanding through further study of this traditional Asian holiday. The following resources are offered as a starting point for such a study.



WEB RESOURCES

Chinese New Year (Religion Facts)

http://www.religionfacts.com/chinese_religion/holidays/chinese_new_year.htm

The site provides an introduction to Chinese New Year and the traditional aspects of the celebrations such as the special foods and the Dragon Dance.

Chinese New Year (University of Victoria)

http://www.educ.uvic.ca/faculty/mroth/438/CHINA/chinese_new_year.html

This rich site has information about how the Lunar New Year is calculated, the 15-day celebration of the Chinese New Year, traditional foods, decorations, and customs and superstitions of the holiday.

Chinese New Year (History Channel)

<http://www.history.com/topics/chinese-new-year>

This site has background and resources on Chinese New Year, or Spring Festival as it's been called since the 20th century. It is the most important social and economic holiday in China.

Chinese New Year (Wikipedia)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_New_Year

Chinese New Year is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays and is celebrated all over the world. Altogether it is a 15-day celebration but traditions vary place-to-place.

Chinese New Year: The Year of the Horse (Infoplease)

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/chinesenewyear1.html>

This site says that Chinese New Year is the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese Calendar. The Chinese year 4712 begins on Jan. 31, 2014.

Examples of Local Lunar New Year Festivals:

- San Francisco: <http://www.chineseparade.com/>
- Alhambra: <http://www.alhambranewyearfestival.com/>
- Riverside: <http://lunarfestriverside.com/>
- Disneyland: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/events-tours/lunar-new-year/>

Video Clips of Chinese New Year Celebration

- Dragon Dance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apimBqqTeBA&feature=related>
- Traditional Dragon Dance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRVhf9Yrdjw&feature=related>
- Chinese New Year Song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciU0TIH2Q9U&feature=related>

The Chinese Zodiac Story

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/chinesenewyear/zodiacstory.aspx>

This online book is a retelling of one of the legends associated with the origins of the Chinese zodiac animals.



WEB LESSONS & ACTIVITIES

Chinese New Year (PBS Learning Media)

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/awr09.socst.world.glob.chinesenyr/chinese-new-year/>

This lesson is based on a Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly interview conducted by Bob Abernathy about the religious significance of and the meaning behind the Chinese or Lunar New Year. (MS–HS)

Tet, the Vietnamese New Year

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-celebrations/wardtet.html>

Comparing Tet with other holidays provides a window into comparative cultures that will enrich many classrooms. PLEASE NOTE: *Students should not make altar remembrances of their own relatives, as suggested in the lesson.* They may view and discuss photos of those altars created by people celebrating Chinese New Year. (Elementary)

Lions, Dragons, and Nian: Animals of the Chinese New Year (EDSITEment)

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/lions-dragons-and-nian-animals-chinese-new-year>

This site features three lessons about the most important festival in the Chinese calendar, the New Year, or Spring Festival. (Primary)

Chinese New Year

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/chinese-new-year/kids-crafts/>

Here are crafts and activities related to Chinese New Year. (Primary)

Arts and Crafts for Chinese New Year

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/>

Scroll to the bottom of the page for crafts designed for children of multiple ages. (Elementary)

Chinese New Year: Everything You Need (Scholastic Instructor)

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/unit/chinese-new-year-everything-you-need>

This site offers a series of lessons and activities to learn about Chinese culture and traditional New Year celebrations and symbolism. Registration required. (Elementary-MS)

Celebrate the Chinese New Year

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/OSSLAArtCelebrateChineseNewYearK3.htm>

Reading materials teach children about the celebration of the Chinese New Year and crafts projects provide relevant materials for the Lantern Festival and dragon parade. (Primary)

The Chinese New Year Starts Today (Read Write Think)

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/chinese-year-starts-today-20424.html>

This lesson was posted last year but offers lots of ideas for integrating Lunar New Year into the language arts curriculum. It links to excellent web resources.



CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

- A to Z Mysteries: New Year Dragon Dilemma** by Ron Roy. Random House, 2011. Gr. 3-6
- Celebrating Chinese New Year** by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith. Holiday House, 1999. Grades K-4
- Chinese New Year Mystery** (Nancy Drew Notebooks, No 39) by Carolyn Keene. Aladdin, 2000. Grades 2-5
- Dancing Dragon** by Marcia K. Vaughan. Mondo, 1996. Grades K-4
- Dragon Dance – A Chinese New Year Lift the Flap Book** by Joan Holub. Puffin, 2003. Gr. K-3
- Emma's American Chinese New Year** by Amy Meadows. Outskirts Press, 2012. Gr. 3-7
- Grandfather Tang's Story** by Ann Tompert. Dragonfly Books, 1997. Grades K-4
- Happy, Happy Chinese New Year** by Demi. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2003. Gr. K-4
- Holidays Around the World: Celebrate Chinese New Year with Fireworks, Dragons, and Lanterns** by Caroline Otto. National Geographic Children's Books, 2009. Grades 1-4
- In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson** by Betty Bao Lord. HarperCollins, 1986. Gr. 5-9
- Lanterns and Firecrackers: Chinese New Year Story** by Johnny Zucher. Barron's, 2003. K-2
- Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year** by Kate Waters and Madeline Slovenz-Low. Scholastic, 1991. Grades K-4
- Long-Long's New Year: A Story About the Chinese Spring Festival** by Catherine Gower and He Zhihong. Tuttle Publishing, 2005. Grades K-4
- My Chinese New Year** by Monica Hughes. Heinemann-Raintree, 2005. Grades K-4
- New Clothes for New Year's Day** by Hyun-joo Bae. Kane/Miller, 2007. Grades Pre K – 2
- New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story** by Li Qiong Yu. Candlewick, 2011. Elem-MS
- Paper Horse** by Clarissa Shen. Better Chinese LLC, 2008. Grades 5-9
- Sam and the Lucky Money** by Karen Chinn. Lee & Low, 1997. Grades K-4
- Wishing Tree, The** by Roseanne Thong. Shen's Books, 2006. Grades 3-8

The material above is available at the California Three Rs Project [web site](#). For further information contact the California Three Rs Project:

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