

Chinese New Year



Chinese New Year street scene ¹

About this topic – *Learn about the traditions and beliefs associated with this time of year, test your memory with a quiz and game and have fun with animals!*

Resources for this topic

- Suggested session plan
- Chinese New Year Traditions and Beliefs
- Chinese New Year Traditions and Beliefs Quiz and Answers
- Animals of the Chinese Zodiac
- Chinese New Year Dates
- Chinese New Year Word Scramble and Answers

We are happy for you to use the material in this Toolkit exactly as it is or to modify it as required for your purposes. We do however ask that you always acknowledge its source as follows:

“Learning and Sharing Together” Resources (2020)

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Suggested session plan (one and a half hours approx.)

Whilst the plan below has been developed for face to face meetings, all the activities can be used in Virtual meetings too, using the shared screen facility on Zoom for example, and break out rooms for some activities.

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Working in small groups the children and older people should take turns to read aloud **Chinese New Year Traditions and Beliefs**. Encourage them to discuss what they have read as there will be a quiz later
3. As groups finish reading the **Chinese New Year Traditions and Beliefs** hand out the “**Chinese New Year dates**” and “**Animals of the Chinese Zodiac**” for them to read and discuss in their groups. Ask everyone to identify which animal is associated with their year of birth
4. When all the groups have finished 2) collect in **Chinese New Year Traditions and Beliefs** and hand out **Chinese New Year Quiz**
5. As groups finish **Quiz**, they should continue looking at the “**Chinese New Year dates**” and “**Animals of the Chinese Zodiac**”. Hand out **Chinese New Year Word Scramble** to groups when they have finished the **Quiz** and have identified which animal is associated with their year of birth
6. Go through the **Quiz Answers** when all the groups have finished the **Quiz**
7. **Refreshments**. During refreshments check that everyone has identified which animal is associated with their year of birth. Count how many different “animals” there are in the room. Do people recognise themselves and/or one another in the descriptions?
8. **Drawings** – If there is time encourage everyone to draw a picture of the animal associated with the year of their birth and add a greeting
9. **Thankyous and goodbyes** – Before the children and older people leave you may wish to say something about the topic or activity you have planned for the next session. This gives everyone the opportunity to be more prepared and, if appropriate, to bring photographs or other memorabilia

Chinese New Year Traditions and Beliefs

New Year Celebrations

Chinese New Year, also known as Spring Festival or Lunar New Year, is one of the most important holidays in China with many people having at least seven days off work to celebrate. Unlike the universal New Year observed on January 1st, Chinese New Year is not on a fixed date. The date varies according to the Chinese lunar calendar, but usually falls on a day between January 21st and February 20th.

To celebrate the Chinese New Year many streets are decorated with red lanterns and houses are traditionally decorated with Spring Festival couplets.



Chinese New Year street scene ¹



A couplet is a two line poem. It is an ancient Chinese tradition to paste Spring Festival couplets around doorways. People do this to express their feelings of life's renewal and the return of spring and to convey their wishes for peace, fortune and good luck in the new year.

Hand written Chinese New Year poetry around doorways leading to people's houses, Old Town, Lijiang, Yunnan, China ²

Many people also dress in red at New Year. In Chinese culture the colour red is associated with happiness and prosperity and it is believed it can ward off evil spirits and bring good luck.

Another New Year tradition is to parade an ornamental dragon through the streets often accompanied by drumming. The dragon represents wisdom, strength, benevolence and good fortune.



It is believed that the loud beats of the drum and the deafening sounds of the cymbals together with the aggressive face of the dragon can evict bad or evil spirits.

A Chinese dragon in a dragon-dance for Chinese New Year 2000³

The biggest event of any Chinese New Year's Eve is the annual reunion dinner when family members get together to celebrate. A popular food, often eaten at midnight on New Year's Eve is jiaozi, or dumplings. These typically consist of a ground meat and/or vegetable filling wrapped into a thinly rolled piece of dough, which is then sealed by pressing the edges together. Finished jiaozi can be boiled, steamed or pan-fried and are traditionally served with a black vinegar and sesame oil dip. They can also be served with soup.

Serving jiaozi is believed to bring prosperity because their shape resembles the silver or gold ingots which were traditionally used as currency in China. Often a coin will be hidden in one of the dumplings and it is thought to be lucky if you find the coin.

After dinner, some families go to local temples to pray for a prosperous new year by lighting the first incense of the year. Many households hold parties including a countdown to the new year. Traditionally, firecrackers were lit to scare away evil spirits with the household doors sealed, not to be reopened until the new morning in a ritual called "opening the door of fortune."



On New Year's Eve or early on New Year's Day it is traditional for children to be given lucky red packets called 'Hong Bao' containing sweets or money. They usually receive them from their parents or grandparents but it is considered rude to open the envelopes in front of the person who has given it.

A display of Hong Bao or red packets for sale⁴

New Year Greetings

“**Guo Nian Hao**” is one of the most popular New Year greetings and means “Happy New Year”. Here some other New Year greetings:

“**Gong hey fat choi**” or “**Kung Hei Fat Choy**” - “Congratulations and be prosperous”

“**Dàzhǎnhóngtú**” – “May you realize your ambitions”

“**Jíqìngyǒuyú**” – “May your happiness be without limit”

“**Jīnyùnmǎntáng**” – “May your wealth [gold and jade] come to fill a hall”

“**Jīlíng huópō**” - “A bright and lively spirit” (especially used for children aged under 10, wishing them to be active and smart)

The Chinese Calendar

In western astrology each year is divided into 12 periods with a different sign of the Zodiac for each e.g. Aquarius and Pisces. By comparison the Chinese Zodiac is based on a twelve-year cycle, with each year in that cycle represented by an animal. These animals in order are the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. There are several legends about how the animals were chosen for the Chinese Zodiac. Here is one of them.

Long ago, in China, the Jade Emperor decided there should be a way of measuring time. On his birthday he told the animals that there was to be a swimming race. The first twelve animals to get across the fast flowing river would be the winners and they would each have a year of the Zodiac named after them. The rat was the first animal to reach the other side of the river and so the first year of the Zodiac became the Year of the Rat.

With thanks to

Mandy Barrow <http://www.projectbritain.com/calendar/january/chinese.html>

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

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jiaozi>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_New_Year#Greetings

for information

With thanks to Wikipedia for photos

¹ Chinese New Year Street scene

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_New_Year.jpg

Flickr user: ahisgett / CC BY <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>

² Hand written Chinese New Year poetry around doorways leading to people's houses, Old Town, Lijiang, Yunnan, China

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_New_Year%27s_poetry.jpg#/media/File:Chinese_New_Year's_poetry.jpg

Peter Morgan from Beijing, China/CC BY <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>

³ Chinese dragon

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon_dance#/media/File:Chinese_draak.jpg

Caseman / Public domain

⁴ A display of Hong Bao or red packets for sale

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DihuaMarketRat.jpg>

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Chinese New Year Quiz (20 possible points)

1. What other two names are there for Chinese New Year? 2 points
2. Between which dates does Chinese New Year usually fall? 2 points
3. How much time do most Chinese people have off work at New Year? 1 point
4. How are streets decorated at New Year? 1 point
5. How do many people decorate their doorways at New Year? 1 point
6. What three things do people often wish for in the coming year? 3 points
7. Why is the colour red so popular at New Year? Up to 4 points
8. What do people hope to find when eating 'jiaozi' at New Year? 1 point
9. What do Chinese children receive on New Year's Day? 2 points
10. What do the following Chinese greetings mean in English? 3 points

“Guo Nian Hao”

“Gong hey fat choi” **or** “Kung Hei Fat Choy”

“Jīlíng huópō”

Chinese New Year Quiz Answers 20 possible points if full answers given

1. What other two names are there for Chinese New Year? 2 points

Spring Festival or Lunar New Year

2. Between which dates does Chinese New Year usually fall? 2 points

January 21st and February 20th

3. How much time do most Chinese people have off work at New Year?

1 point

at least 7 days

4. How are streets decorated at New Year? 1 point

With red lanterns

5. How do people decorate their doorways at New Year? 1 point

They paste Spring Festival couplets around them

6. What three things do people often wish for in the coming year? 3 points

Peace, fortune and good luck

7. Why is the colour red so popular at New Year? Up to 4 points

Red is the symbol of **happiness** and **prosperity** and it is believed it can **ward off evil spirits** and **bring good luck**.

8. What do people hope to find when eating 'jiaozi' at New Year? 1 point

Coins

9. What do Chinese children receive on New Year's Day? Up to 2 points

Lucky red packets called 'Hong Bao' containing money and/or sweets

10. What do the following Chinese greetings mean in English? 3 points

Guo Nian Hao - Happy New Year

Gong hey fat choi or Kung Hei Fat Choy - Congratulations and be prosperous

Jīlíng huópō - A bright and lively spirit

The Animals of the Chinese Zodiac

The year when a person was born is called his or her “Ben Ming Nian” which translates as Zodiac Year of Birth. Traditionally people believe that people born in a particular year will have some of the characteristics of the animal associated with that year. Here are some of the characteristics that are thought to be associated with each of the twelve animals of the Chinese Zodiac. From the list of Chinese New Year dates find which animal is associated with your birth year. Do you think this description is right for you? Would your family and friends agree?

Rats: honest, hardworking and charming



Oxen: calm, modest and patient



Tigers: strong, daring, generous



Rabbits: kind, sensitive, artistic



Dragons: strong, proud, direct



Snakes: wise, graceful, calm



Horses: cheerful, popular, responsible



Goats: honest, artistic, understanding



Monkeys: witty, curious, sociable



Roosters: organised, alert, responsible



Dogs: honest, loyal, affectionate



Pigs: peace loving, hardworking, strong



With thanks to https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Zodiac for information and to Mandy Barrow <http://www.projectbritain.com/calendar/january/chinese.html> for illustrations

Chinese New Year dates 1920 – 2021

Find the year of your birth and the animal associated with it.

(For example in 1920 Chinese New Year began on 20th February so anyone born from 20th February 1920 to 7th February 1921 was born in the Year of the Monkey)

1920 - Feb. 20	Monkey		1955 - Jan. 24	Goat
1921 - Feb. 08	Rooster		1956 - Feb. 12	Monkey
1922 - Jan. 28	Dog		1957 - Jan. 31	Rooster
1923 - Feb. 16	Pig		1958 - Feb. 18	Dog
1924 - Feb. 05	Rat		1959 - Feb. 08	Pig
1925 - Jan. 25	Ox		1960 - Jan. 28	Rat
1926 - Feb. 13	Tiger		1961 - Feb. 15	Ox
1927 - Feb. 02	Rabbit		1962 - Feb. 05	Tiger
1928 - Jan. 23	Dragon		1963 - Jan. 25	Rabbit
1929 - Feb. 10	Snake		1964 - Feb. 13	Dragon
1930 - Jan. 30	Horse		1965 - Feb. 02	Snake
1931 - Feb. 17	Goat		1966 - Jan. 21	Horse
1932 - Feb. 06	Monkey		1967 - Feb. 09	Goat
1933 - Jan. 26	Rooster		1968 - Jan. 30	Monkey
1934 - Feb. 14	Dog		1969 - Feb. 17	Rooster
1935 - Feb. 04	Pig		1970 - Feb. 06	Dog
1936 - Jan. 24	Rat		1971 - Jan. 27	Pig
1937 - Feb. 11	Ox		1972 - Feb. 15	Rat
1938 - Jan. 31	Tiger		1973 - Feb. 03	Ox
1939 - Feb. 19	Rabbit		1974 - Jan. 23	Tiger
1940 - Feb. 08	Dragon		1975 - Feb. 11	Rabbit
1941 - Jan. 27	Snake		1976 - Jan. 31	Dragon
1942 - Feb. 15	Horse		1977 - Feb. 18	Snake
1943 - Feb. 05	Goat		1978 - Feb. 07	Horse
1944 - Jan. 25	Monkey		1979 - Jan. 28	Goat
1945 - Feb. 13	Rooster		1980 - Feb. 16	Monkey
1946 - Feb. 02	Dog		1981 - Feb. 05	Rooster
1947 - Jan. 22	Pig		1982 - Jan. 25	Dog
1948 - Feb. 10	Rat		1983 - Feb. 13	Pig
1949 - Jan. 29	Ox		1984 - Feb. 02	Rat
1950 - Feb. 17	Tiger		1985 - Feb. 20	Ox
1951 - Feb. 06	Rabbit		1986 - Feb. 09	Tiger
1952 - Jan. 27	Dragon		1987 - Jan. 29	Rabbit
1953 - Feb. 14	Snake		1988 - Feb. 17	Dragon
1954 - Feb. 03	Horse		1989 - Feb. 06	Snake

1990 - Jan. 27	Horse			
1991 - Feb. 15	Goat			
1992 - Feb. 04	Monkey			
1993 - Jan. 23	Rooster			
1994 - Feb. 10	Dog			
1995 - Jan. 31	Pig			
1996 - Feb. 19	Rat			
1997 - Feb. 07	Ox			
1998 - Jan. 28	Tiger			
1999 - Feb. 16	Rabbit			
2000 - Feb. 05	Dragon			
2001 - Jan. 24	Snake			
2002 - Feb. 12	Horse			
2003 - Feb. 01	Goat			
2004 - Jan. 22	Monkey			
2005 - Feb. 9	Rooster			
2006 - Jan. 29	Dog			
2007 - Feb. 18	Pig			
2008 - Feb. 7	Rat			
2009 - Jan. 26	Ox			
2010 - Feb. 14	Tiger			
2011 - Feb. 3	Rabbit			
2012 - Jan. 23	Dragon			
2013 - Feb. 10	Snake			
2014 - Jan. 31	Horse			
2015 - Feb. 19	Goat			
2016 - Feb. 8	Monkey			
2017 - Jan. 28	Rooster			
2018 - Feb. 16	Dog			
2019 - Feb. 5	Pig			
2020 – Jan. 25	Rat			
2021 – Feb 12	Ox			

Chinese New Year Word Scramble

Here are 15 words associated with Chinese New Year
but the letters have been mixed up

Can you unscramble them?

1. CELTOUSP _____
2. NTSAELNR _____
3. GPMLUDNSI _____
4. INLECSOEBTAR _____
5. WSESTE _____
6. DOCZAI _____
7. RCKEAEICSRRF _____
8. DROAGN _____
9. REORISWFK _____
10. IOTTNAIDSR _____
11. ERREMOP _____
12. GOU NNIA OAH _____
13. ISLAANM _____
14. NPRIGS ASLVEIFT _____
15. ETEIGGSNR _____

Chinese New Year Word Scramble Answers

1. CELTOUSP Couplets
2. NTSAELNR Lanterns
3. GPMLUDNSI Dumplings
4. INLECSOEBTAR Celebrations
5. WSESTE Sweets
6. DOCZAI Zodiac
7. RCKEAEICSRRF Firecrackers
8. DROAGN Dragon
9. REORISWFK Fireworks
10. IOTTNAIDSR Traditions
11. ERREMOP Emperor
12. GOU NNIA OAH Guo Nian Hao
13. ISLAANM Animals
14. NPRIGS ASLVEIFT Spring Festival
15. ETEIGGSNR Greetings

Chinese New Year Additional Activity

Encourage everyone to draw the appropriate animal for this Chinese New Year and write a couplet

At Chinese New Year people traditionally decorate their houses with couplets (2 line poems) to express their feelings of life's renewal and the return of Spring and to convey their wishes for peace, fortune and good luck in the new year.