

Year of the Rat

Primary Education Pack

Resources to help your school
celebrate Chinese New Year 2020

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年



Introduction

According to the Chinese Lunar Calendar, we enter the Year of the Rat on January 25th, 2020. Did you know that the Chinese word and character for a rat is Shǔ 鼠. This is also the same character for a mouse and part of the two character word for a computer mouse 鼠标 shǔ biāo or mouse pointer.

This education pack for primary schools contains information and activities to help teachers and pupils learn more about this important spring festival and explore Chinese language and culture.

Your pupils can read a traditional story about a pair of ambitious rat parents trying to find a husband for their rat daughter and discover how rats are regarded in China. You can also try out a Tangram puzzle, learn about a number of Chinese festivals and how to write greetings in Chinese. There are letters from children in different parts of China about their favourite celebrations and you can get creative making finger puppets and steamed rice dumplings as a traditional celebration treat.

Spring Festival Chūn Jié (春节)

Spring Festival Chūn Jié (春节) Celebrated from the first day of the first lunar month, the Spring Festival is regarded as the most important festival of the year in Chinese culture. During the festival, people hold family reunions and honour their ancestors. The lion dance is performed in public and red envelopes of money are placed in the lion's mouth for good luck. It is traditional for grandparents to give their grandchildren red envelopes with money inside; this is called yā suì qián. These days the envelopes are just as likely to have cartoon characters on them as traditional symbols.

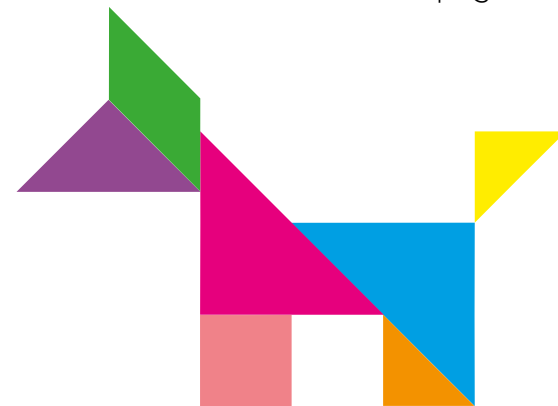
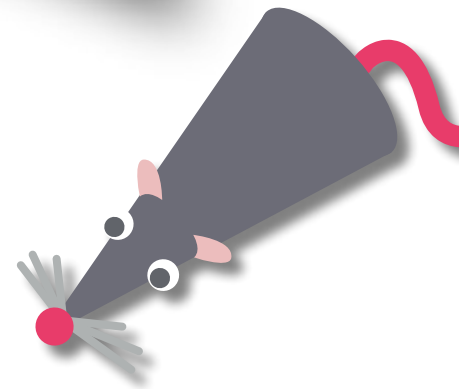




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Factual information to share with your pupils

The Year of the Rat is the first year of the Chinese zodiac. This is because in the story of the great animal race arranged by the Jade Emperor, the quick-witted, wily rat is the winner of the race. He persuades the ox to let him sit on his head to cross the river and then makes a dash for the finish line ahead of the ox who comes in second place followed by the tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. There are many stories in different cultures of a small animal outwitting larger ones. In the UK we have Aesop's The Hare and the Tortoise and Julia Donaldson's The Gruffalo.

In Indonesia children are told the story of The Mouse Deer and the Crocodile. Encourage your class to write their own stories where a small animal hero or heroine triumphs over larger animals and adversity.

In Chinese culture, the rat is viewed very positively. They are recognised for their intelligence, and people born in the Year of the Rat are considered quick-witted, resourceful, and versatile people. There is also an ancient custom of being kind to mice and rats on one particular night of the year. In many parts of China, this is the third day of the Chinese New Year. Some people leave grains of rice or scraps of food out for them on this night. Artists have created pictures and paintings showing a wedding procession of rats or mice taking advantage of this night, with rats playing instruments and a rat bride being carried on their shoulders in a palanquin which was a form of covered transport like a sedan chair.

Learning Objectives: To engage pupils with a traditional Chinese story and carry out activities to deepen their comprehension, understanding and engagement with the text.

Curriculum Links: English, Drama, Art and design.

Core and transferable skills: Creativity and imagination, collaboration and communication.

Preparation and resources: You will need: a copy of the story, large pieces of paper, pens, card and art materials.

The Story of the Rat Wedding

Share with your pupils the following traditional Chinese story of two ambitious rat parents trying to find a husband for their daughter. When you are reading the story, stop before Ending 1 and ask your class to predict what they think will happen at the end of the story. Encourage them to share their ideas and then read the two alternative endings provided. Discuss which they think is the best ending to the story and their reasons why.

Long, long ago, there was a family of rats: mother, father and their only daughter. Mr and Mrs Rat were very proud of their daughter, and, knowing that they were really rather poor and humble, wanted to find a better life for their only child. They talked about this for many days and nights, and finally decided that the only way was to find their daughter the best possible husband to marry.



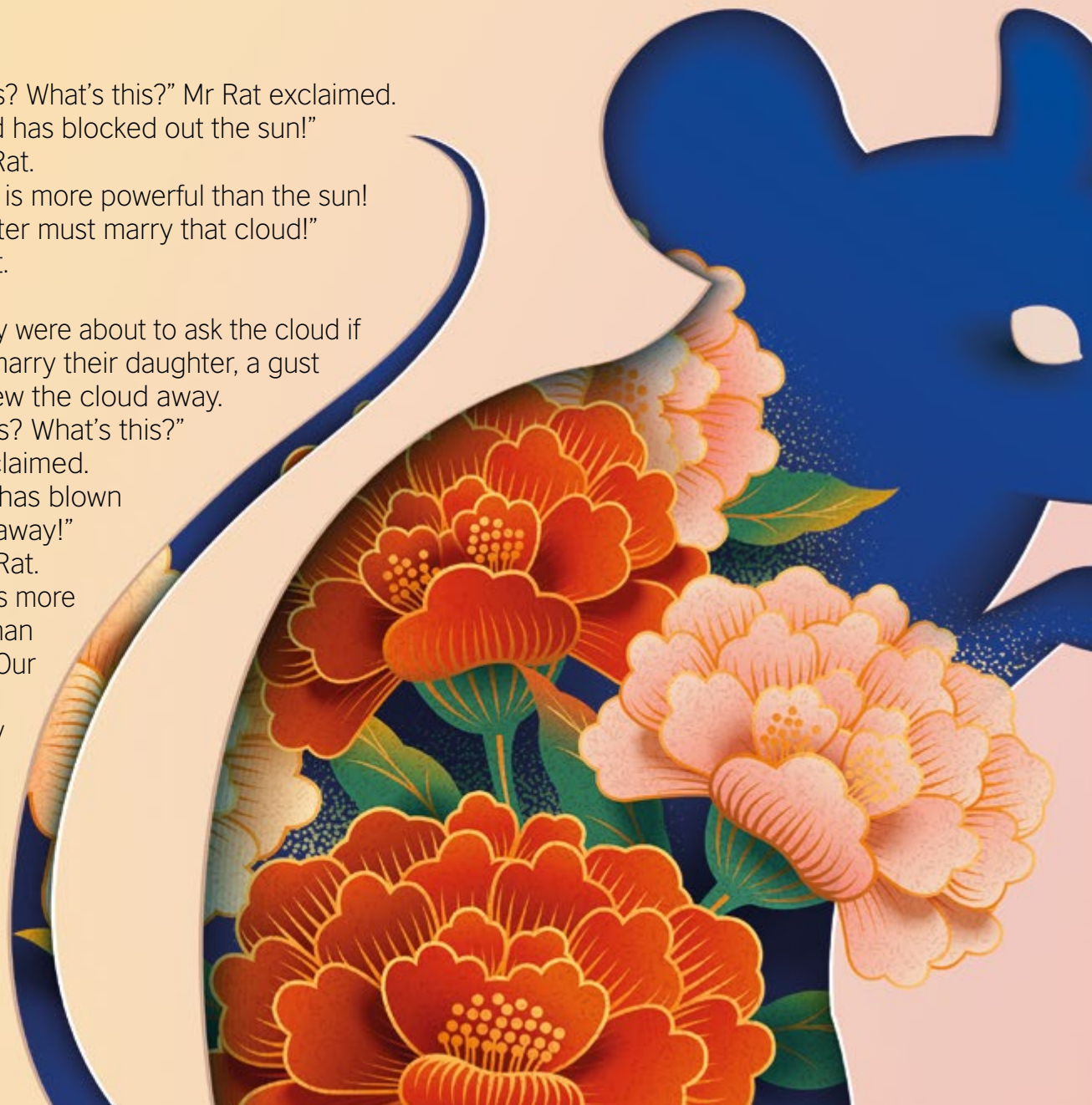
The Story of the Rat Wedding continued

They spent many more days eagerly discussing who would make the best possible husband. They considered many different possibilities, and finally decided that best possible really meant most powerful – a husband whom no-one could prevent giving their precious daughter everything she could want. Once they had reached that decision, there was only one possible choice: the sun, for what in the world was more powerful than the sun?

Mr and Mrs Rat put on their best clothes and went outside to talk to the Sun, which was shining brightly, high in the sky, with a few clouds drifting past. Just as they finished complimenting the Sun on how bright he was, and how powerful his rays were, one of the clouds floated across his path, blocking out the light and plunging Mr and Mrs Rat into cool shade. The two proud parents looked at each other in horror.

“What’s this? What’s this?” Mr Rat exclaimed.
“That cloud has blocked out the sun!” cried Mrs Rat.
“The cloud is more powerful than the sun! Our daughter must marry that cloud!” said Mr Rat.

Just as they were about to ask the cloud if he would marry their daughter, a gust of wind blew the cloud away.
“What’s this? What’s this?” Mr Rat exclaimed.
“The wind has blown the cloud away!” cried Mrs Rat.
“The wind is more powerful than the cloud! Our daughter must marry the wind!” announced Mr Rat.



As they chased after the wind to ask him if he would marry their daughter, they went around the end of a wall, and suddenly couldn't feel the wind anymore.

"What's this? What's this?" Mr Rat exclaimed.

"That wall has blocked out the wind!" cried Mrs Rat.

"The wall is more powerful than the wind!

Our daughter must marry the wall!" responded Mr Rat.

Just as they were about to ask the wall if he would marry their daughter, they looked down and that a rat had tunnelled a hole saw through the base of the wall.

"What's this? What's this?" Mr Rat exclaimed. "That rat has tunnelled through the wall!" cried Mrs Rat.

"That rat is more powerful than the wall. Our daughter must marry that rat!" decided Mr Rat.

Ending 1

A handsome young rat came out of the hole in the base of the wall, and Mr and Mrs Rat immediately asked if he would marry their daughter. The young rat was delighted, as Miss Rat was both intelligent and beautiful, and would make a wonderful wife. The marriage was agreed, and Mr and Mrs Rat invited all their friends, as well as the Sun, the cloud, the wind and the wall to the wedding. Everyone had a wonderful time, and they all agreed that things turned out for the best in the end.

Ending 2

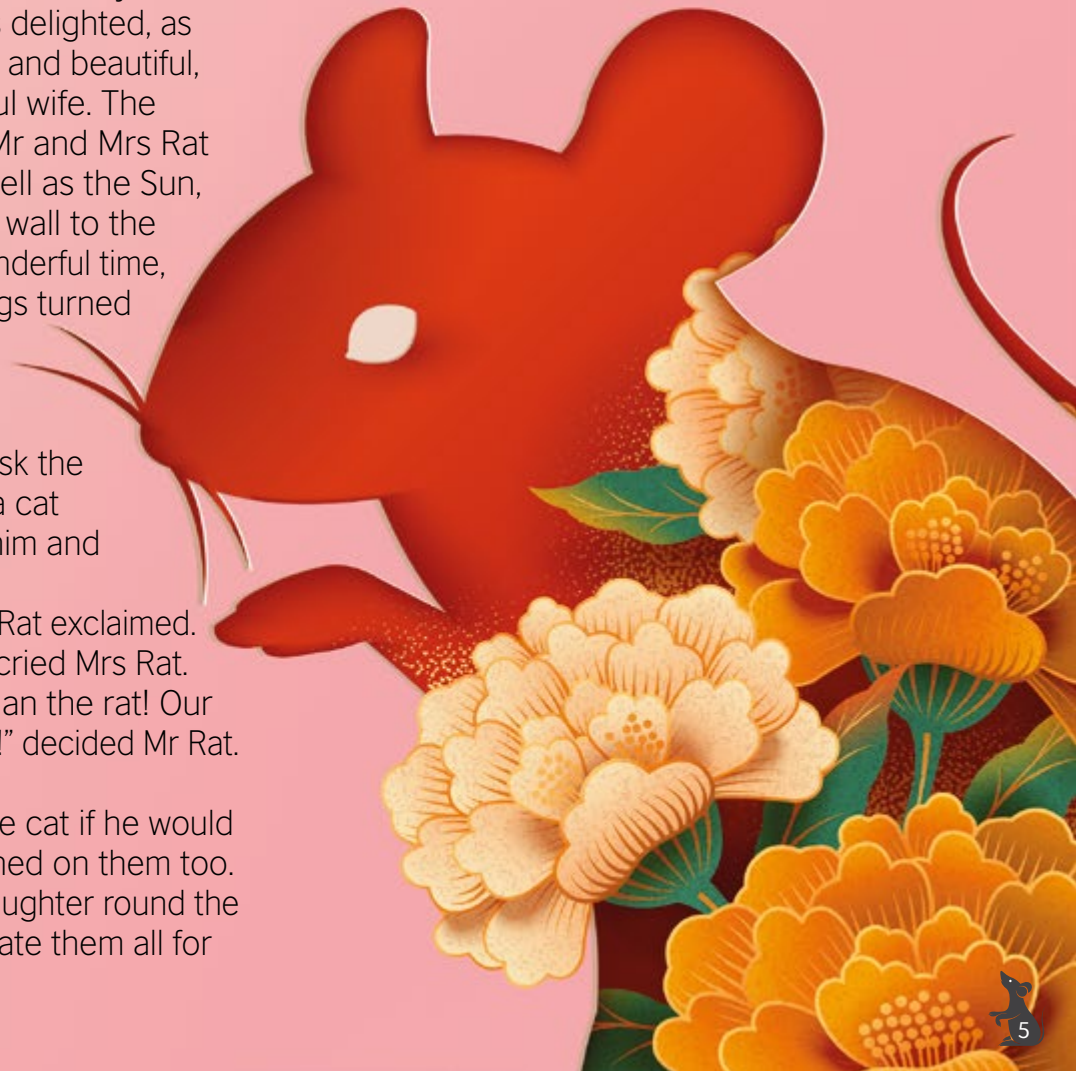
Just as they were about to ask the rat to marry their daughter, a cat appeared and pounced on him and ate him.

"What's this? What's this?" Mr Rat exclaimed.

"That cat has eaten the rat!" cried Mrs Rat.

"The cat is more powerful than the rat! Our daughter must marry that cat!" decided Mr Rat.

But before they could ask the cat if he would marry their daughter, he turned on them too. He chased them and their daughter round the wall, pounced on them, and ate them all for his dinner!



Activity sheet

Retelling the story

Activity 1

Discussion and reflection

Divide your class into small groups and ask them to choose adjectives to describe the characters of Mr and Mrs Rat and their daughter and questions they would ask each character. Ask members of the class to take part in a 'hot seating' activity where they answer questions from the rest of the class 'in role' as one of the characters. Do your pupils think there is a message in this traditional story - if so, how would they sum it up in one sentence?

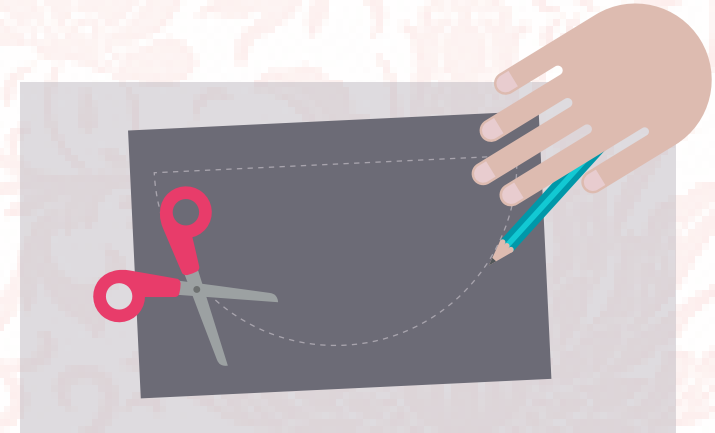
Invite each group to record the events of the story of The Rat Wedding as a story map with pictures on a large piece of paper. This can act as a visual reminder to help them to retell the story orally without notes. Ask each group to then practice retelling it together including an ending of their choice. If they wish, they can add additional description or dialogue to make the story their own.

Activity 2

Make Year of the Rat finger puppets and props to retell the story for an audience

Share the following instructions with your pupils to make rat finger puppets of different sizes for the rat family in the story.

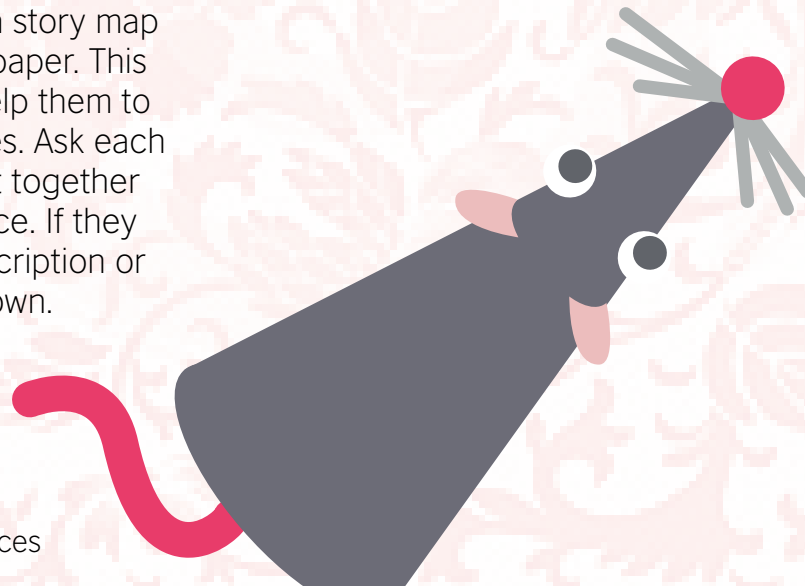
Ask each group to then tell their version of The Rat Wedding using their puppets and props. Encourage them to use expression and distinctive voices for the characters to make it memorable and then perform it for another class of children or a Chinese New Year assembly.

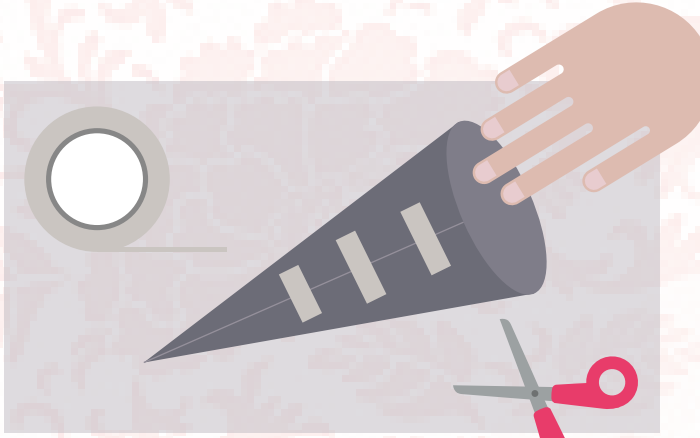


1. Draw a semi-circle onto a piece of grey card and then cut it out.

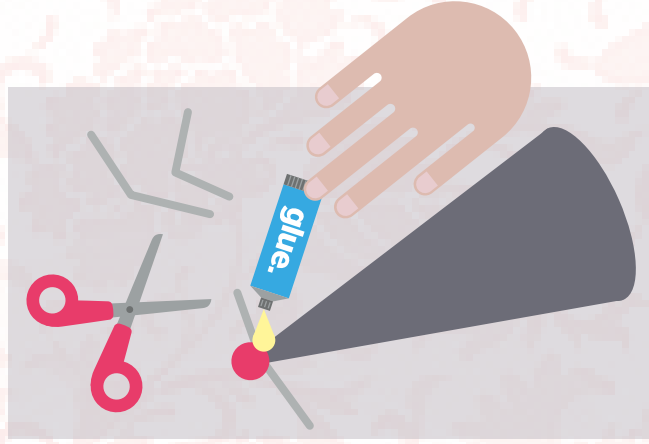


4. Glue or tape a piece of pipe cleaner for the tail at the open end of the cone





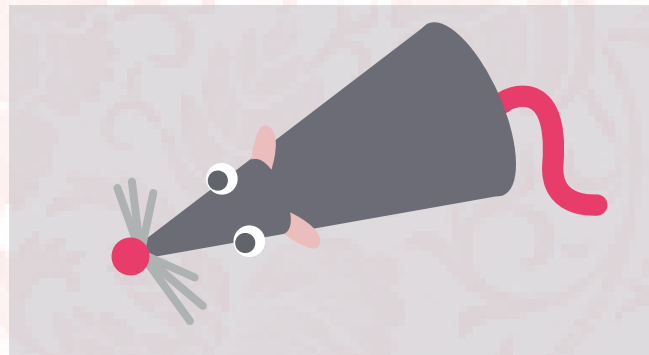
2. Roll it into a thin cone shape around a finger and use sticky tape to hold the ends in place.



3. Cut up craft materials such as pipe cleaners and pom poms and glue to the pointed end of the cone to form whiskers and a nose.



5. Add googly eyes and two tiny ears cut from card. (Note if you do not have these craft materials you can use marker pens to give your finger puppets the characteristics of the three rat characters.)



6. Use the rest of the card to make a sun, cloud, wall and possibly a cat, which can be attached to sticks.

Partner school activities:

If you are working with a partner school, you could:
Discuss how rats are usually portrayed in your country.
Film each group telling their version of the story and exchange the results with your partner school.
If you have access to technology and stop motion Apps, you could also make animated versions of the story with your puppets and props.

Tangram puzzles

Factual information to share with your pupils

In the story of the animal race the rat outwits his opponents. In China puzzles and games that require problem solving are very popular. The Tangram is one of China's most famous puzzles. It is made up of a square divided into 7 geometric shapes - 5 triangles (two small, one medium, and two large), a square, and a parallelogram. These can be rearranged to make other shapes or pictures. It's Chinese name is 七巧板 qī qiǎo bǎn , meaning 'seven ingenious pieces.'

It was invented in China a long, long time ago, probably in the Song Dynasty (970-1279 CE) but not brought to the West until around 1800. Ships bringing goods such as silk and porcelain to Europe and America would also bring these puzzle sets as presents for families and friends. The tangrams were made of a variety of materials including wood, ivory and metal and were often exported in black lacquered boxes.



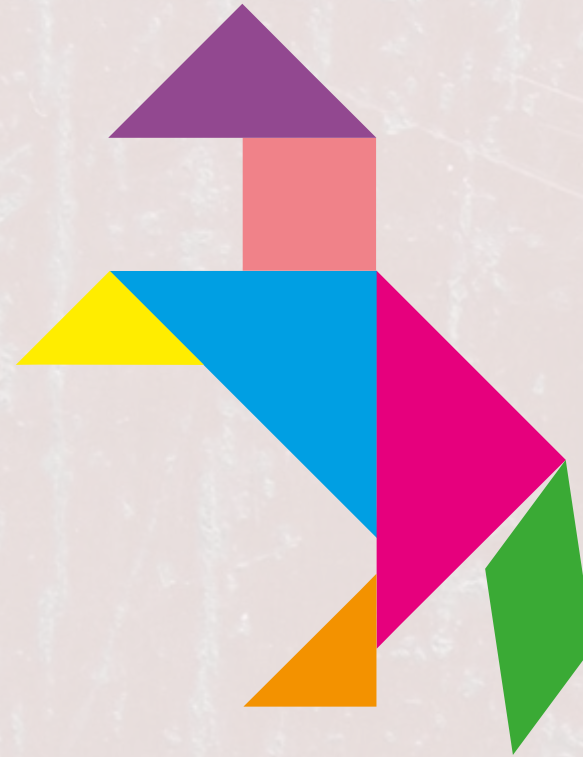
Activity 3

Learning Objectives: To learn about the tradition of Chinese puzzles including the tangram.

Curriculum Links: Mathematics, Modern languages, Design Technology.

Core and transferable skills: Problem solving and critical thinking, creativity and imagination, digital literacy.

Preparation and resources: You will need: copies of the activity sheet, scissors, card and envelopes to keep your tangrams in.



Horse – 马 Mǎ



Dog – 狗 Gǒu

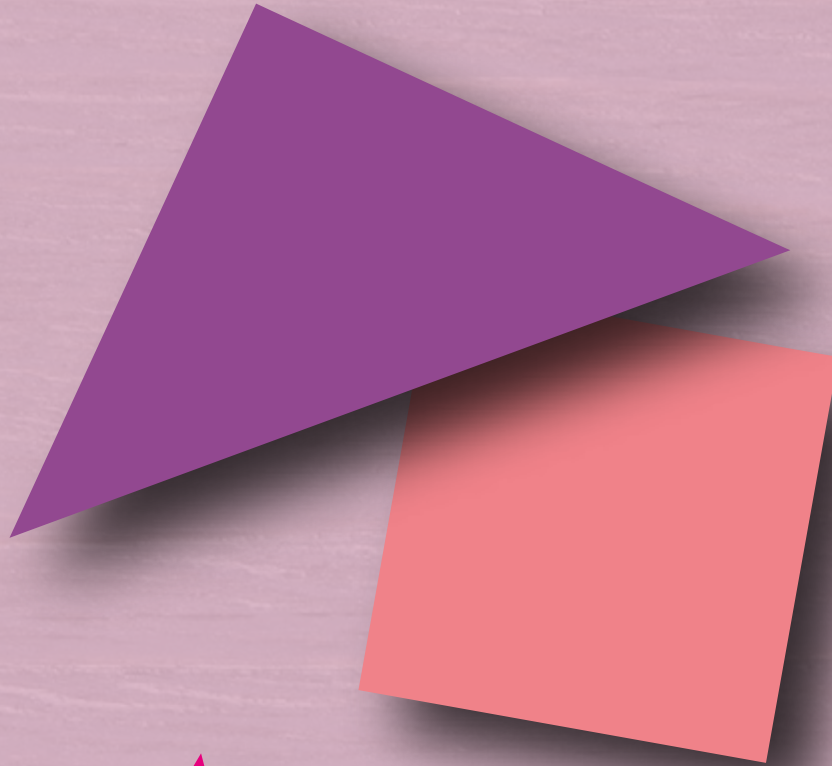
Print out the tangram on the activity sheet onto card. Ask your pupils to cut out the seven individual shapes and arrange them back into a large square. Invite them to then experiment using all the shapes to try and make pictures of animals including some of the twelve Chinese New Year animals. Encourage them to draw or take photographs of their animal pictures. Can they label them with both their English and Chinese names? How many animals can they make? You could also set your pupils other challenges such as making a tangram person or house in an allotted amount of time.

To remind your pupils of the Chinese names and characters for animals, you could refer back to the Education packs for The Year of The Monkey and The Year of the Pig.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/year-pig-education-pack>

Activity sheet

Tangram



Print out the tangram onto a piece of card.

Cut out the 7 geometric shapes.

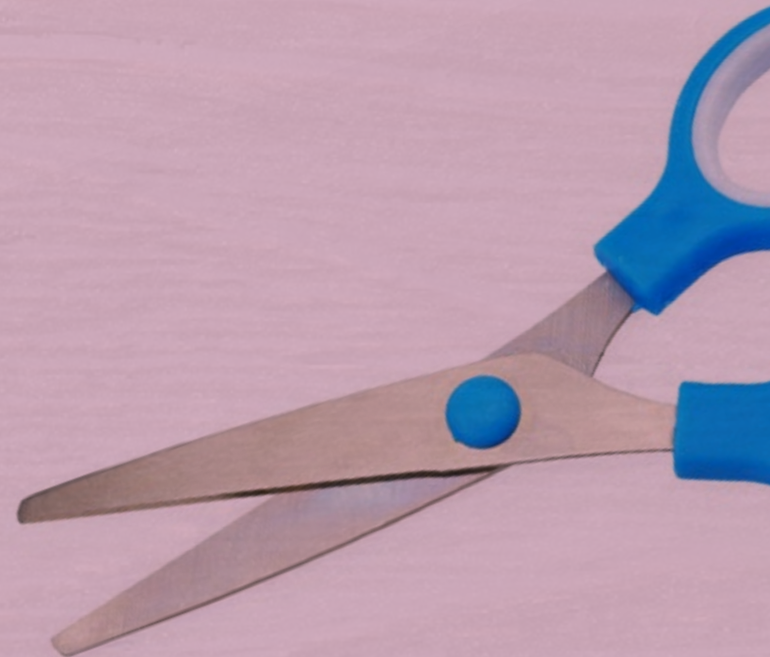
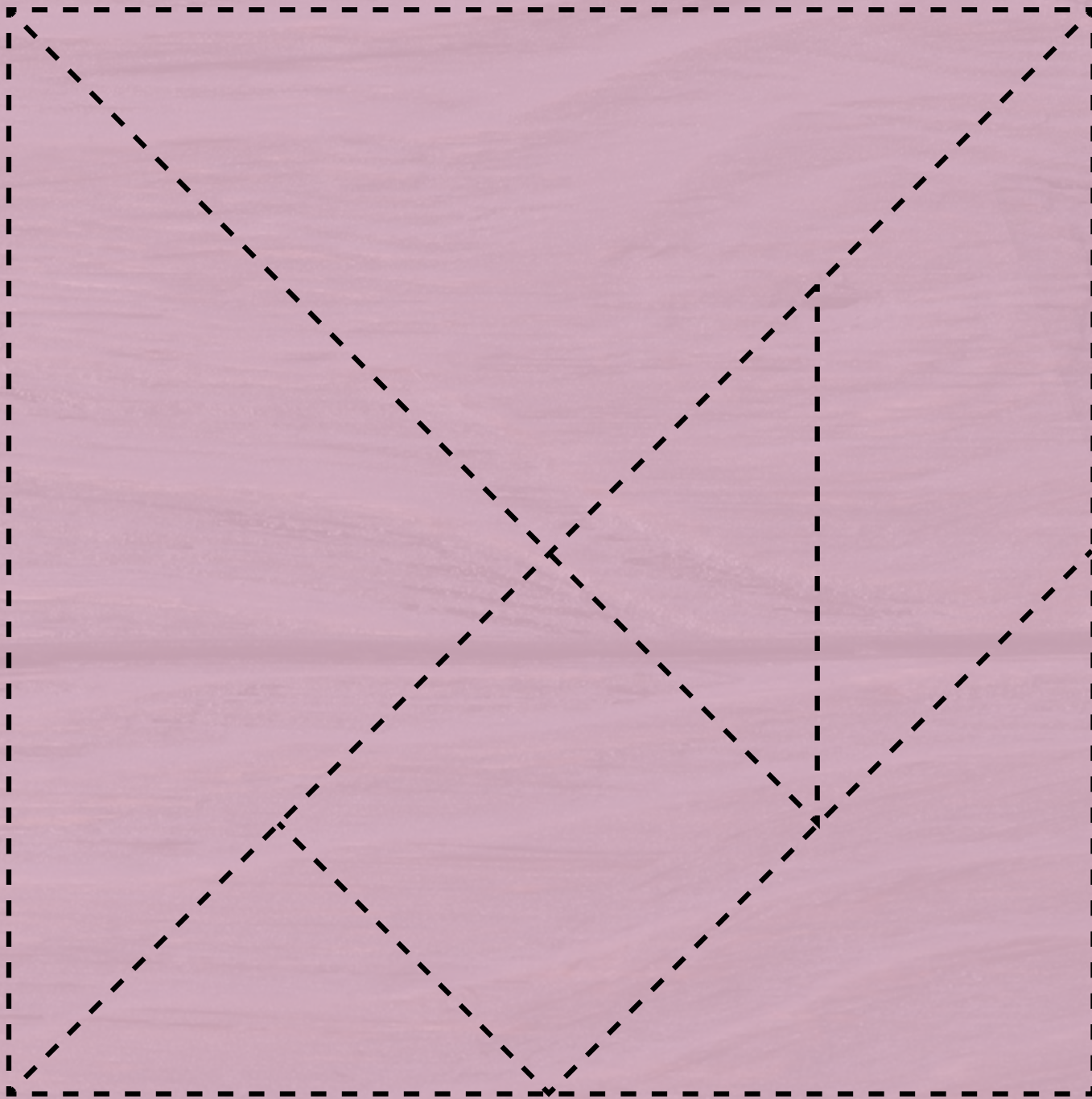
Arrange the 7 shapes to try and make different animal shapes.

Draw or photograph each animal before rearranging the pieces back into a square.

Partner school activities:

If you are working with a partner school, you could:

- Share your favourite puzzle and problem solving games.
- Take photographs and exchange pictures of your animal tangrams.
- Try learning about and playing some other traditional Chinese puzzle games such as Chinese checkers and mah-jong.



Information sheet

Traditional Chinese Festivals

Traditional Chinese festivals are celebrated according to the Lunar Calendar, so their dates vary from year to year in the modern 'western' calendar.

Spring Festival 春节 (Chūn Jié) also known as Chinese New Year is the most important festival of the Chinese year. It is celebrated from the first day of the first lunar month, and traditionally lasts 15 days, but in modern China the public holiday is only four days, usually with two more days over the weekend. The

last day of the Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, is observed with big displays and parades of huge lanterns in all manner of shapes and sizes. During the New Year public holiday, millions of people travel long distances to return to their family homes to celebrate the festival with their parents and other relatives.

Dragon Boat Festival 端午节 (Duān Wǔ Jié) is also known as the Double Fifth Festival because it takes place on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, usually some time in June. The festival celebrates the patriotism of a minister called Qu Yuan in the 3rd century BC. Qu Yuan advised the ruler of the State of Chu to resist the powerful State of Qin as it tried to expand its territory. At first the ruler agreed, but later changed his mind, and exiled Qu Yuan. As Qu Yuan watched the power of the State of Qin grow, he despaired and drowned himself in the Miluo River, saying he would rather die than see China fall into the hands of Qin. A little more than fifty years later, the King of Qin finished his conquest of all of China, and declared himself Qin Shi Huangdi (秦始皇帝), the First Emperor of China. To commemorate Qu Yuan's patriotism, boat races in long canoes decorated with



dragon designs take place on rivers and lakes all across China, and in other Chinese communities. The traditional food of the Dragon Boat festival is zongzi (粽子), leaf-wrapped sticky rice dumplings. A simple recipe for these can be found in this pack.

Qingming Festival 清明节 (Qīng Míng Jié) also known as the Tomb Sweeping Day is celebrated 104 days after the winter solstice, usually on 4th or 5th April. It is a festival dedicated to respecting and caring for ancestors, a tradition that goes back many thousands of years in China. Families will go to their ancestral graves to sweep and clean the site, decorate it with flowers, and make offerings of food and wine. The family may make the best of the day by having a picnic feast as well. These rites are practised more fully in the countryside, where there are still burials, than in the cities, where cremation is the norm.



Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋节 (Zhōng Qiū Jié) is also known as the Moon Festival and is held on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, when there is a full moon. It was originally a festival celebrating the autumn harvest, and dates back more than 3000 years to the Shang Dynasty. The main legend associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival is the story of the great archer Hou Yi and his wife Chang E, who became the goddess of the Moon. Hou Yi saved mankind by shooting down nine of ten suns that had appeared and were burning up the Earth. The gods rewarded him with the Elixir of Immortality. He gave it to Chang E to look after, but one day, on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, someone came to their house and tried to steal it.

Rather than let the thief take the Elixir, Chang E swallowed it herself and flew away up to the Moon to be safe. Once there she could not come back, so she and Hou Yi were parted forever. Every day, on the day Chang E left him, Hou Yi made sacrifices to her of his wife's favourite fruits and cakes, and soon other people joined in to honour the two of them. Legend says that you can still see Chang E on the moon, making pills out of the Elixir, accompanied by her pet rabbit. People hold parties to view the full moon at Mid-Autumn Festival, most famously on the West Lake at Hangzhou. The traditional food of the festival is moon cakes: round pastries with elaborate decorations on top, stuffed with a variety of sweet and savoury stuffings. People also release sky lanterns to float up to the Moon.



节庆 和 庆典 (jiéqìng hé qìngdiǎn) Festivals and Celebrations



Activity 4

Listen to the sound files and practise saying the names of some of the different Chinese festivals and greetings.

春节 chūnjié
Spring Festival

新年 xīnnián
New Year

清明节 qīng míng jié
Qingming Festival/
Tomb-sweeping Day

端午节 duān wǔ jié
Dragon Boat festival

中秋节 zhōng qiū jié
Mid-Autumn Festival/
Moon Festival

圣诞节 shèng dàn jié
Christmas

复活节 fù huó jié
Easter

生日 shēng rì
Birthday

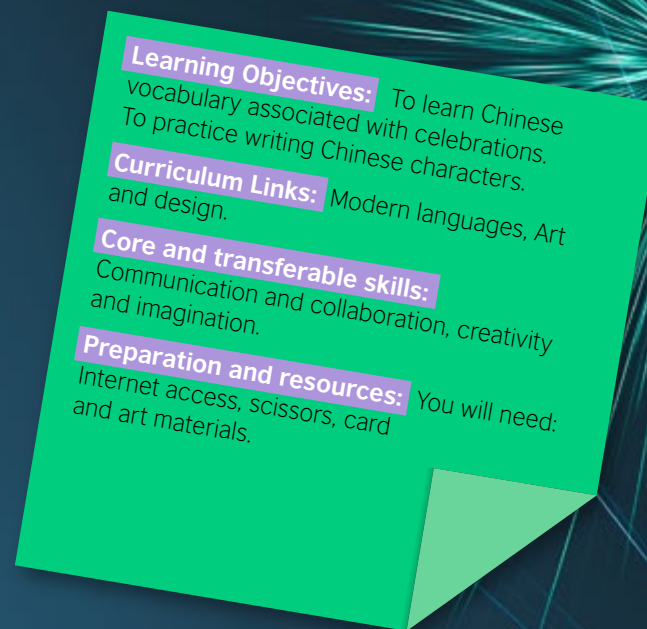
祝你快乐 zhù nǐ kuài lè
(wishing you a) Happy...

e.g. 祝你新年快乐 zhù nǐ xīnnián kuàilè
(wishing you a) Happy New Year

聚会 jùhuì
party

生日聚会 shēngrì jùhuì
birthday party

礼物 lǐwù
present/gift



祝你

Letters from Chinese children

The following letters are written by children from schools in different parts of China. In the letters the children describe their favourite festivals and how they celebrate with their friends and families.

Activity 5

Divide your class into small groups and give each group one of the letters along with copies of the information sheet about Chinese festivals. Ask each group to make some notes about one particular festival on a large sheet of paper and then share three important points with the rest of the class. They could make some slides or posters to communicate what they have found out.

Activity 6

When each group has shared their information, ask each pupil to choose one of the festivals and make and decorate a greetings card for the celebration. When the decoration is complete, ask them to carefully write the appropriate greeting in Chinese characters from the language activities. For example if they choose Chinese New Year, they would write on their card:

祝你新年快乐 zhù nǐ xīnnián kuàilè
(wishing you a) Happy New Year

Activity 7

Ask your pupils to go on to write letters to pupils in China describing their own favourite festivals and the things that they do with their families and friends as part of the celebration. Perhaps they could include emojis as Wendy has done in her letter!

Partner school activities:

If you are working with a partner school, you could:

Discuss your favourite celebrations and exchange festival greetings cards with messages written in Chinese.

新年快乐



Dear Friends,

My name is Wendy Fang and I am nine years old. I was born in Beijing and I moved 🤦 to Shanghai with my parents 🤝 when I was 2 years old. My favourite holiday is the Chinese New Year 🧨. I love 🥰 it the most because we will have a lot of fun 🧑 at school 🏫 and at home 🏠. It is the only day 🚫 that I can play and watch TV 📺 all through the night 🌃. Sometimes in Chinese New Year we can light fireworks 🧨. I've only lit them once before and I liked it.

At school, there will be no 📖 class and we can play all day 🚫. All teachers and pupils will put on beautiful Chinese traditional clothes. This year we played games such as darting, piggy throwing 🐷, kicking shuttlecock, lasso. I like the game lasso. We have performed many shows in the assembly such as singing 🎤, dancing 🕺, kungfu, dragon dancing, Beijing opera, drama... I have performed the song "Reading Poems of Tang Dynasty" with some other pupils 🧑. It is a long poem with many parts and I had practised a lot. The show was a success! I was very happy.

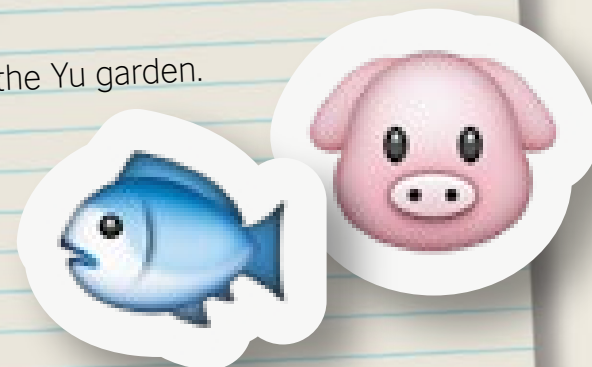
In Shanghai, there is a special tradition. The tradition is to watch the lantern 🏮 show at Yu garden. The lanterns 🏮 have many kinds of shapes such as flowers 🌸, fishes 🐟, dragons, pigs 🐷... all with light 🔦 in it. At the centre square, every building was decorated with sculptures. In the middle, there is a GIANT sculpture of the year's animal. It looks WONDERFUL at night.

If you come to China at Chinese New Year 🧨, you MUST go to the Yu garden. It is AMAZING 🧑! Seriously AMAZING 🧑!

Sincerely,

Wendy (方韵宜)

4th Grade, Shanghai United International School (SUIS)



Dear friends,

My name is Mingda Liu. I study at Peking University Elementary School (北京大学附属小学).

50 years ago, on July 20th, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first person to step on the moon. But a Chinese folktale says that thousands of years earlier, a woman, Chang Er, already went there with a rabbit! She stole a divine pill from her husband and flew to the moon, becoming a goddess. This is the origin of the Mid-autumn Festival which is my favourite.

We celebrate it on August 15th according to the lunar calendar. On that day, the moon will be the roundest and brightest of the year. It's said that Chang Er would come down to reunite with her husband and bestow her blessings on the people.

We have a lot of interesting activities on that day, including eating mooncakes, honouring the moon, lighting lanterns, guessing riddles, drinking osmanthus wine and lots more. My favourite activity is eating mooncakes. Mooncakes are round yellow cakes with words of blessing on it, there are also all sorts of fillings. To me, the most tasty filling is the mashed red bean, but there can also be nuts, rose mash and pork.

This festival symbolises the importance of family to Chinese people, and also signifies their beautiful dreams of the moon. Lastly, I wish to share a poem of Li Bai with you - he's one of the most well-known poets in China.

Thoughts on a Tranquil Night
Before my bed a pool of light;
Oh, can it be frost on the ground?
Looking up, I find the moon bright;
Bowing, in homesickness I am drowned.

Yours sincerely,
Mingda Liu (刘明达)



My favourite holiday

I am Ji Siwei and my English name is Hans. I am in Class 2 and Grade 5. I study in Shanghai Huishi primary school. In China, we have many holidays like Spring Festival, Middle Autumn Festival etc., but my favourite holiday is the National Day which is on 1st of October: the birthday of the People's Republic of China.

Every National Holiday, my parents always take me to travel around China to see different scenery and customs. This year was the 70th anniversary celebration of China, my family went to Beijing - the Capital of China - to celebrate. In Beijing we saw the Five-Starred Red Flag everywhere. Every family hangs the red flag on its door, also many people on the street had the small red flags in their hands, all of them were very excited to celebrate the National Day.

My family visited Tian'anmen Square, The Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven, every place was decorated for the National Day. On the morning of National Day, my family stood on the street and watched the big parade by mobile phone, at the same time waiting for the air force parade. When the air force parade started, many planes with colourful smoke flew over our heads, all the people on the street were very excited and cheering at that time. In the night, there is also a big firework show in Tian'anmen Square, my family enjoyed it very much and took many videos to keep as memories of the day.

I spent an unforgettable National Day in Beijing 2019! I already can't wait for the National Day of 2020!

Ji Siwei





Dear British friends. How do you do!

I am Muzi li, a seven-year-old primary school student from Jinyu school, which is located in Liangjiang New Area, Chongqing, China. I'd like to share my favourite Chinese festival with you — Mid-Autumn festival.

Mid-Autumn festival is on August 15th in the lunar calendar. On that night, our family normally enjoy some reunion time in this way. My parents and I will prepare moon cakes of different flavours, such as egg yolk, bean paste, lotus-paste, ice cream and so on. I will make a cup of osmanthus tea for my mum. I also like wearing the "Chang E costume", sitting on the balcony and enjoying the yummy moon cakes with my parents and grandparents. Meanwhile, we will appreciate the full moon, which is like a white plate hanging in the sky, which is as bright as the Yaotai mirror. Mum will tell me the mythology of "Chang E Flying to the Moon". She will also share some ancient poems about the moon with me. Let's read some together: "明月几时有，把酒问青天"(Bright moon, when will you appear? Lifting my wine, I question the dark night sky.) "海上升明月、天涯共此时"(Arises above the sea is a bright moon, shared by all of us world wide.) Isn't that beautiful?

Confucius said, "it is a great pleasure to have friends come from afar." I hope you can come to China and spend the next Mid-Autumn festival with us one day.

Best wishes for you!
Hope all your dreams will come true, and your life is sweeter than moon cake!

Muzi Li from China



Dear friends,

My Chinese name is Li Guoli. My English name is Donny Jay and I am 10 years old. I am a student in class three, grade four at ChongQing LiangJiang JinYu School and I love reading.

My favourite holiday is "New Year's Eve", which is the last day of the year. On that day, I will put on a big apron and tidy up the house with my family. I will be a good helper to help my parents pasting couplets and upside down "Fu" on the door. I will also let my hands stained with flour and learn how to make dumplings from my grandmother. That's very funny!

On that evening, I will enjoy dinner with my family. That will be my favourite moment because I can earn lots of lucky money, which we called "ya sui qian", from elders! Then, we look forward to the New Year's coming together. A feeling of happiness always fills every cell of my body on that moment. This is my New Year's Eve. My dear friends, how do you welcome the New Year?

Good luck, my dear friends!
Donny Jay



Dear friend,

Hello! My name is Amber Zhou. I live in Beijing, the capital city of China. I go to Peking University Elementary School. I want to introduce a Chinese holiday to you. It's called Duanwu Festival, also known as the Dragon Boat Festival. It is on May Fifth in the Lunar Calendar.

There are various ways to celebrate Duanwu Festival. For example, my family always eat a food called zongzi (rice dumpling). It is made of steamed rice wrapped in leaves. My grandma usually prepares a lot of them by wrapping them in green leaves of reed or lotus in a pyramid shape and boils them in a big pot for the whole family. There are many flavors and choices of zongzi's filling. I love sweet zongzi, like red bean paste or nuts for fillings. My little brother, on the other hand, likes salted zongzi, like marinated pork or sausage fillings. I like bean paste zongzi most.

Celebrations for Duanwu Festival also include dragon boat racing. Every year, at Peking University Weiming Lake, teams compete with each other on dragon boats. My friend and I have attended this year's kids' race. Our boat wasn't very fast, but it was still a lot of fun! The legend of the dragon boat racing started with the story of a great poet in Chu, one of the seven Warring States. His name was Qu Yuan. He wrote great poems showing his care and love of the country. Once, he had been banished by Chu's king. He was so disappointed that he drowned himself instead of witnessing his country invaded by another state Qin. People rushed to the river to try to retrieve Qu Yuan's body by boat. And in memory of him, Chinese people hold the dragon boat race every year on the Duanwu Festival.

I hope you'd have the chance to come to China and experience the dragon boat race as well as try some zongzi.

Yours sincerely,

Amber Zhou (周墨谙泊)

Peking University Elementary School

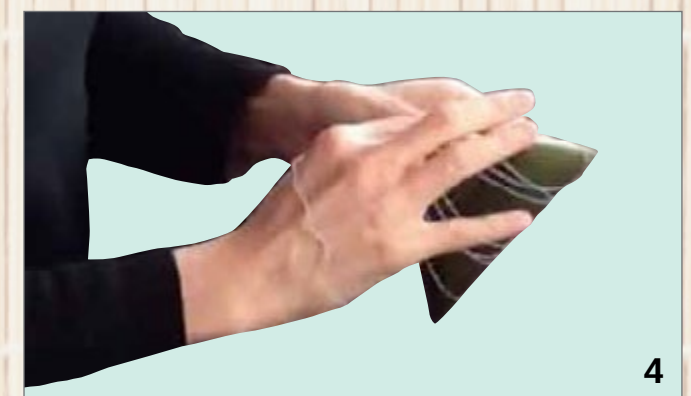


Recipe for 粽子 Zòngzi – Leaf-wrapped Rice Dumplings

As we heard in Amber's letter, steamed rice dumplings 粽子 are the snack-food traditionally associated with the 端午节 (Duān Wǔ Jié) Dragon Boat Festival. They take several different forms, wrapped in either reeds or bamboo leaves, with either a savoury pork filling or a sweet one using red bean paste.

This recipe is for the sweet version, which is more common in the north of China. Just as with making dumplings at New Year, assembling 粽子 can be a fun family activity in preparation for the festival.

The mainstay of the traditional sweet 粽子 filling is red bean paste which can be found ready-made in tins in Asian supermarkets and some western supermarkets. It can be a little bland for western tastes, so we have suggested you include some Chinese red dates or ordinary dates as well. Bamboo leaves, both fresh and dried, are readily available in Asian supermarkets.



The main challenge of making 粽子 is the wrapping process, but it is not as hard as it looks, especially if you have two pairs of hands doing it. Your first few dumplings may not be perfect, but you will soon get the

hang of it. A description of the process is given in the recipe below, but you may find it easier to watch it on a video. Just enter 'making zongzi videos' in your preferred search engine online.

Ingredients (for 12 dumplings)

12-24 (depending on size) fresh or dried bamboo leaves
600g glutinous rice (ordinary rice will not work)
6-8 tbs red bean paste
12 Chinese red dates or western-style dates (pitted)
Kitchen string for tying

Method

1. Rinse the rice two or three times in cold running water, then soak overnight in a large bowl of cold water.
2. If using dried bamboo leaves, soak overnight in cold water, then boil for 2-3 minutes before use.
3. If using fresh bamboo leaves, no need to soak overnight, but dip in very hot, but not boiling, water for 1-2 minutes. Make sure you have an adult to help with this bit.
4. Unless the bamboo leaves are very wide, overlap two by about 50-60%, then twist one end round to form a cone at that end. At this point, you may want to refer to an online video to clarify the process.
5. Place a date at the bottom of the cone, followed by enough soaked rice to cover it. You can spoon the rice directly from its soaking water – this helps to keep the packing loose and excess water will drain out of the leaves. Press it down gently then add half a tablespoon of red bean paste. Cover with another layer of rice.

6. Fold the long end of the leaf/leaves over the top of the cone, then continue wrapping until you have a fairly tightly wrapped pyramid (not too tight as the rice will expand during cooking). Tie with string, using a few more turns than seems strictly necessary (again, refer to online videos for clarity).
7. Transfer the assembled dumplings into a large pot. Almost cover with cold water and weigh down with a heavy plate. Cover the pot, bring to the boil, then simmer gently for 3 hours.
8. Transfer the cooked dumplings to a plate. Unwrap and serve as soon as they are cool enough to handle or wait until completely cold. They will keep a couple of days in the fridge or can be frozen for up to 2 months.
9. If you have a sweet tooth, serve with sugar, syrup or honey for dipping.

Hold a Year of the Rat Celebration Event

To celebrate Chinese Spring Festival and the start of the Year of the Rat why not invite friends and family to school. They could watch your pupils retelling the story of The Rat Wedding, read letters from Chinese pupils and try some delicious steamed dumplings. Your students could also challenge them to make some tangram pictures and help them to make their own celebration greetings cards.



Find out more

We hope your pupils enjoyed the activities in this pack. There are lots more ways you can get involved in international work with China and other countries:

Find a partner school

International school partnerships can inspire pupils by bringing the world into the classroom through joint learning activities which bring language learning to life. They also offer teachers the chance to share experiences and learn new practices from colleagues in other countries. Our Partner Finder site gives you the tools you need to find and work with like-minded schools around the world.

<https://school-partner-finder.britishcouncil.org/>

Access resources

Check out our global learning resources, including classroom activities and lesson plans:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom>

Learn Chinese

Host a Chinese Language Assistant. It's easy to organise and you can share the assistant with other local schools. Information about the Primary Programme of Study at the Confucius Institute can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/2cVRnkl>

To find out more about implementing Chinese teaching in your school contact the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools at chinesenetworks@ucl.ac.uk



Get recognition

Sign up to our prestigious British Council International School Award scheme to earn accreditation for your international work: <https://bit.ly/383onFp>

Information about China

Chinese history

- <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/china-and-south-asia>

Chinese culture

- <http://bit.ly/1f1pj0A>

Introduction to Chinese language and support for Chinese language learning

- <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/year-pig-education-pack>
- <https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/teaching-materials/primary-materials-2/>

You can find an animated version of The Rat Marriage at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sld06lVwZc>



And don't forget, next year is the Year of the...



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The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

Download additional copies of this pack in English and Welsh at
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/year-of-the-rat>

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