


Year of the Tiger

Resources to help your school
celebrate Chinese New Year

Primary education pack

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Introduction

According to the Chinese Lunar Calendar, we enter the Year of the Tiger on February 1st, 2022. 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 story explaining why the lion is not one of the twelve animals in the Chinese zodiac and how the tiger got the markings on its forehead. You can also find out about endangered animals like the South China tiger, learn vocabulary linked to the environment and conservation in Chinese and get creative making indoor kites and film trailers!

Spring Festival Chūn Jié (春节)

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 *ya' suì qián*. These days the envelopes are just as likely to have cartoon characters on them as traditional symbols.





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The story of why there is no lion in the Chinese Zodiac

Share the title of this folk tale with your pupils, and ask them to work with a partner to come up with their own creative ideas to explain why the lion is not one of the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac. Then share their ideas with the rest of the class.

You probably all know the story of the great race that was organised long, long ago to decide which animals should be chosen to make up the Chinese Zodiac. You probably also remember how the clever Rat jumped off the Ox's head at the finishing line to come in first, and you may have heard some stories about why the Cat was not included in the final twelve. But there are other stories about the animals of the Zodiac, and one of them IS about a cat... of a kind.

In fact, it is a story about two cats, two big cats, the Lion and the Tiger. Way, way back, even before the Great Race took place, the Lion was the King of All the Beasts and if it had still been around when the race took place it would undoubtedly have won and taken first place in the Zodiac, because even the clever Rat would not have dared cheat the Lion. But before this could happen, the great Jade Emperor, supreme ruler of the Universe, grew angry with the Lion's cruel and arrogant ways, and decided it needed to be replaced. At that time, the Tiger did not live on the Earth, but up in the heavens where it was



the commander-in-chief of the Jade Emperor's army. It had originally been a timid creature living down on Earth among the other animals, but it had been taught martial arts and fighting skills by the Cat, the cleverest hunter of them all, and soon became so skilled that it could defeat anyone else – except, perhaps, its teacher the Cat, but they never fought so we will never know.

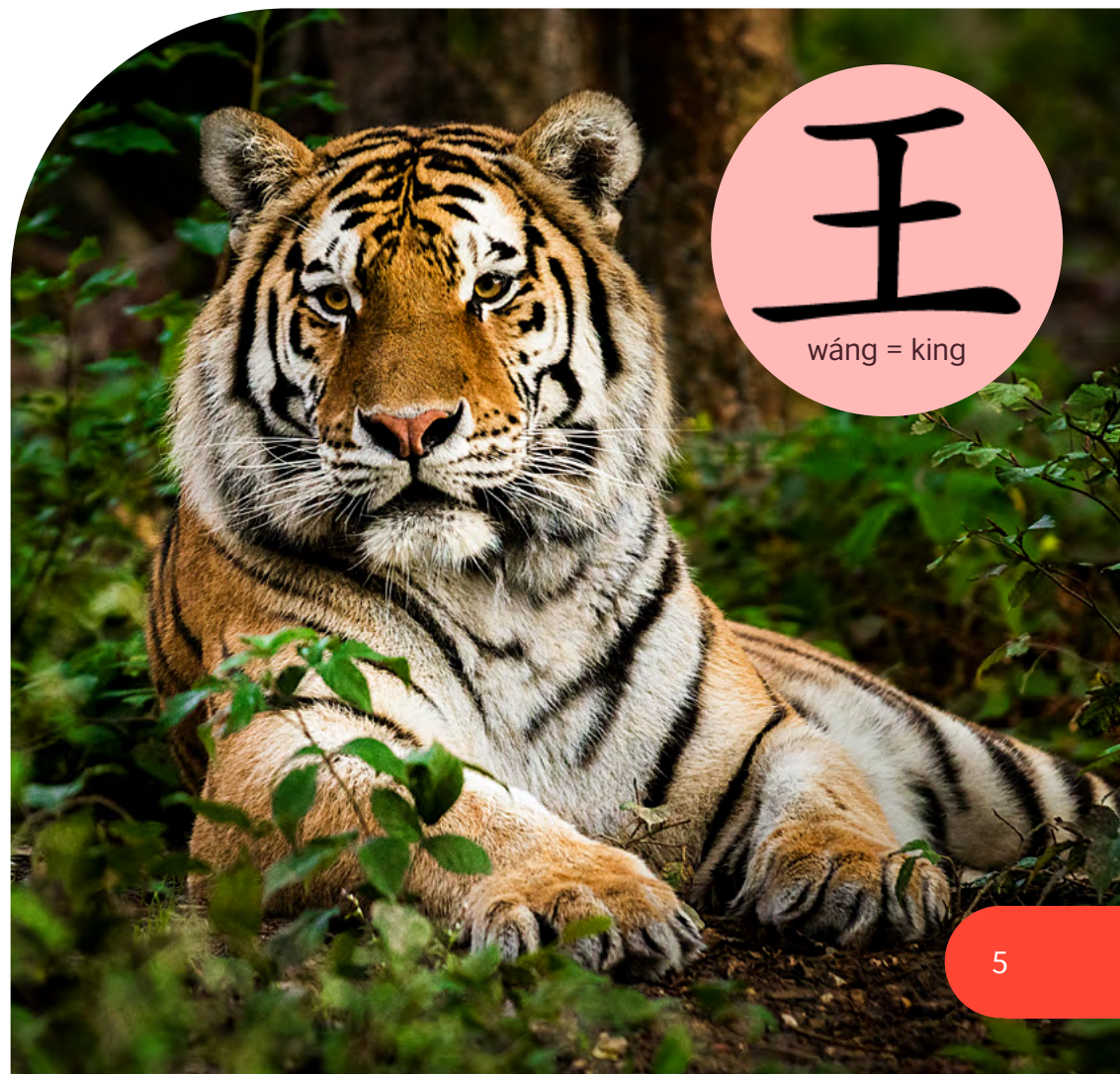
The Jade Emperor saw what a great warrior the Tiger had become and sent for him to come up into the heavens to take charge of the Celestial Army. The only trouble with that was that when the Tiger left, all the other animals, who had been scared of it, went out of control. They got everywhere, spoiling the humans' crops, stealing their food and even attacking them. The humans were at their wits' end and finally appealed to the Jade Emperor for help. The Jade Emperor looked down and saw what was happening. He decided things had gone too far and took pity on the humans. He sent the Tiger back to Earth to take control of the animals and restore order.

When the Tiger returned, he saw that there were three animals which were the ring-leaders of all the trouble: the Lion, the Bear and the Horse. He challenged each of them in turn to a fight and, of course, beat them all. He ordered the Lion and the Bear, for whom he had no use, to run far away and keep clear of humans from then on. But he ordered the Horse to stay and clear up the great mess the animals had made, and help the humans fill their food stores again.

After this, the Jade Emperor summoned the Tiger back up into the heavens, and to mark its victory over the three troublesome beasts, the Lion, the Bear and the Horse, he used his finger to paint three horizontal lines on the Tiger's forehead. But that was not the end of things. Sometime later (it is hard to say exactly how long, because time was different then), the humans once again appealed to the Jade Emperor for help, because a magic Turtle was thrashing around in the rivers and lakes and causing floods everywhere. The Jade Emperor sent the Tiger down to Earth to deal with the Turtle, and when the Tiger was again victorious, the Jade Emperor marked this final and greatest victory by adding a single vertical line to the three horizontal

ones on the Tiger's forehead. The markings now formed the character 王, which means "king" and that is how they have stayed ever since.

This time, the Jade Emperor decided that the Tiger should stay on Earth forever, just in case any more trouble came along, and should be the king of all the animals. And, in case you are wondering why, as the king, the Tiger did not automatically become the Number One animal in the Zodiac but let some of the others beat him in the Zodiac Race, it was because he was a very wise king indeed.



Class activity

Ask your pupils to work with a partner to answer the following questions about the story; then come up with three more questions to ask another pair.

- What does the story tell us was the Tiger's first job?
- Pick out some words or phrases used by the writer to describe the Lion in the story.
- Why did the Jade Emperor send the Tiger down to Earth?
- Can you name the three animals who first caused the trouble on Earth? What were the punishments given to them?
- Summarise the events in your own words that led to the Jade Emperor giving the Tiger his distinctive markings on his head.
- What Chinese character do the markings resemble?
- The story tells us that the Tiger "let some of the others beat him in the Zodiac Race, because he was a very wise king indeed." What do you think the writer means by this sentence?
- Do you know any other examples of stories that explain why animals look or behave in the way that they do?
- What 3 questions would you ask the character of the Jade Emperor?

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

Curriculum Links: English

Core and transferable skills: Communication and collaboration, digital literacy, creativity and imagination.

Preparation and resources: You will need copies of the story, film making equipment such as phones or iPads and editing software.



In the hotseat

Either take the 'hotseat' yourself and respond to the questions from the rest of the class 'in role' as the Jade Emperor or choose a confident member of the class to do this in your place.

Make a movie trailer

Why not set your class the challenge of making a short movie trailer to inspire others to engage with this story for The Year of the Tiger? Remember the best trailers are simple and have a cliff hanger at the end leaving the audience wanting to find out more.

Put your class into small groups. They could all work together or choose different roles such as performers, writers, costume and prop makers, camera people and editors for their trailer, which will be no longer than two minutes long.

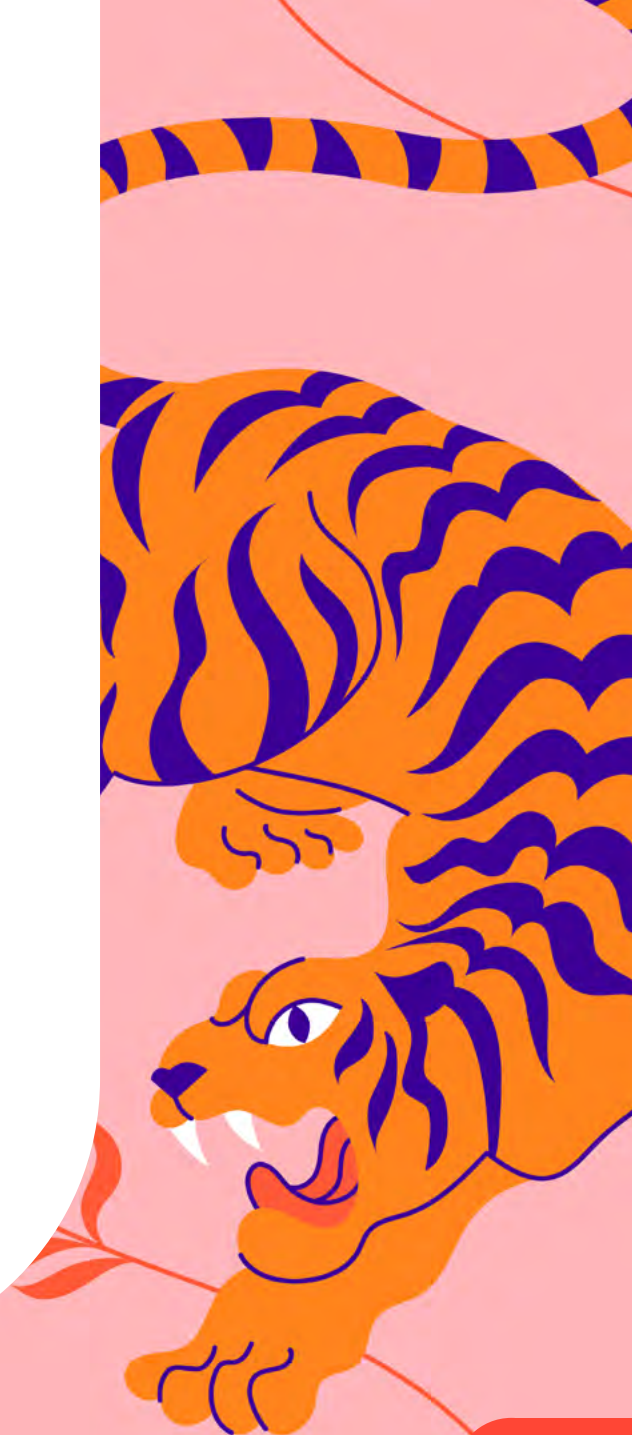
Ask them to decide on a genre for their trailer such as action or adventure and write an engaging script of just 6 sentences.

Your pupils could then create a short storyboard to go with these sentences with ideas for the types of shot to use and royalty free music to go with each picture. They could then film and edit the trailer themselves or if they have access to pre-prepared free software such as iMovie or Windows Video Editor use the templates to create their short film trailer.

Take a look at this short video tutorial produced by Aaron Child from Painted Life Productions in partnership with pupils from Mount Pleasant Primary School for the Shropshire Bookfest competition to inspire you and give you some ideas:

<https://www.shropshirebookfest.co.uk/film-trailer-competition-2/>

Share your storyboards or trailers on social media using #YearOfTheTiger and tagging @Schools_British on Twitter.



Endangered Species

The South China Tiger

Background information to share with pupils

The South China tiger is the smallest tiger in mainland Asia, but male tigers can still measure 6 to 6.5 feet long and weigh 330 pounds. They are strong, fast and solitary carnivores who can travel at speeds of up to 60 miles per hour. They are able to climb trees and swim and are able to hunt large mammals in water as well as on land.

Like all tigers, the South China Tiger has distinctive black stripes over a bright orange coat, which allows them to stay camouflaged when moving in dense tropical forests. Did you know that every tiger's stripes are unique like a fingerprint, so no two tigers have the exactly the same patterns?

According to the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species the South China tiger has been critically endangered for many years for a variety of reasons including deforestation and hunting. Sadly, although some of these tigers remain in zoos, they are now probably extinct in the wild. There have been no confirmed sightings for many years and a study in 2001 found no evidence of these tigers living in their previous habitats.

Tiger conservationists are now working to save the South China Tiger from total extinction with plans to try and return tigers born in captivity back into the wild.



Learning Objectives: To find out about the South China Tiger and carry out research into endangered species.

Curriculum Links: Geography and Science

Core skills and attributes: Communication and collaboration, digital literacy, student leadership

Preparation and resources: You will need internet access and reference books.

Class activity

Share pictures of the South China Tiger with your pupils and discuss its plight as an endangered species.

- What are endangered species?
- Can you name any endangered animals?
- Can you think of any animals that have become extinct?
- What do you think are the things that cause animals to become endangered?
- What is being done to protect endangered animals?
- What can you do to help?
- What is ecotourism?

Gather the class together to discuss their thoughts and ideas. Discuss the main reasons that can cause species to become endangered such as the destruction of habitats, pollution, hunting and the introduction of new species into an existing habitat. Ask pairs to choose an endangered animal that they would like to find out more about from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and then go on to create an illustrated fact file for the animal of their choice. Their research should answer the following questions:

- Where does the animal live? Find out about its country and habitat and include a map.
- What group of animals does it belong to and what are its main physical characteristics?
- What is its scientific name?
- What does it eat?
- Why is it endangered?
- What is being done to protect it?

The completed documents can be compiled into a whole class illustrated book about endangered animals with a contents page and glossary. This can be a hard copy for the school library or a digital version for download.

What can I do about this?

Explain to the class that some governments have passed laws to stop certain animals from being hunted and organisations like the World Wildlife Fund campaign to save animals under threat from extinction.

Perhaps invite a representative from one of these organisations to talk to your pupils.

Remind them that every individual can make a difference and there are simple ways in which they can help to protect the environment. Ask your pupils to devise a campaign to promote one of the following behaviours:

- Be careful with litter to prevent rubbish being washed into rivers and seas.
- Encourage recycling and upcycling and buying sustainable products.
- Learn about endangered species in your area and encourage people to get involved to prevent more animals becoming endangered.
- Make your home and school area wildlife friendly.

Partner School Activities

If you have a partner school you could

- share your fact files.
- compare endangered species in each country and measures being taken to protect them.

Information sheet Vocabulary

Chinese people talk about protecting the environment and climate change in just the same way that we do and are just as concerned about it. We use the colour “green” when we are describing things that are environmentally friendly and so do Chinese people, except of course they say 绿色的 (lǜ sè de); recycling is 回收 (huí shōu) which means “returning and collecting” and global warming is 全球变暖 (quán qiú biàn nuǎn) which literally means “the whole world becoming warm”.



Tiger Vocabulary

Tiger

虎; 老虎

hǔ; láohǔ



South China Tiger

华南虎

huá nán hǔ



Environment Vocabulary

Natural
environment

自然环境

zì rán huán jìng



Protect

保护

bǎo hù



We need to protect the natural environment

我们需要保护自然环境

wǒ men xū yào bǎo hù zì rán huán jìng



Environment Vocabulary

Endangered animals

濒危动物

bīn wēi dòngwù



Green

绿色的

lǜ sè de



The future

未来

wèi lái



Wildlife Reserves

野生动物保护区

yě shēng dòngwù
wù bǎo hù qū



Recycle

回收

huí shōu



Climate change

气候变化

qì hòu biàn huà



Eco-friendly

环保的

huán bǎo de



Pollution

污染

wū rǎn



Global warming

全球变暖

quán qiú biàn nuǎn



Lesson plan

Chinese kites

Background Information to share with your pupils

Flying kites is a popular pastime in China and it is thought that kites were first invented there over 2000 years ago. The earliest versions were flat and made from materials that were readily available such as bamboo, silk and paper. Ancient Chinese sources describe kites being used for a variety of purposes including measuring distances, sending messages and signalling, and for use in military operations. Some were even large enough to carry people. During the Chu-Han War of 203 - 202 BCE, it is said that the general of the Han troops Zhang Liang ordered his soldiers to fly large kites in the heavy fog around the opposing troops with children sitting in them playing tunes from their homeland on flutes. Hearing the melodies, the Chu soldiers began to be homesick and fled without fighting!

Kites were decorated with hand painted mythological motifs and figures and in some areas fitted with strings and whistles to make musical sounds while flying. Originally regarded as a form of technology, they began to be considered to have unique artistic value and feature in art collections.

Kite flying was spread by traders from China to Korea and across Asia to India and the rest of the world. Each area developed a distinctive style and cultural purposes for them. Today you will find kite festivals all over China and kites in a variety of amazing shapes including insects, birds, goldfish and clouds and decorated with designs such as flowers, bats, patterns and messages to bring their owner good fortune. Swallow-shaped kites are popular in Beijing, whilst in Nantong they are often flown with whistles and rings.

Try making a decorative Chinese indoor kite of your own using the instructions on the activity sheet.

Learning Objectives: To learn about the history of Chinese kite making and flying and make your own decorative indoor kite.

Curriculum Links: Art and design, Design Technology, History.

Core Skills and attributes: Creativity and imagination, collaboration and communication, critical thinking and problem solving, citizenship.

Preparation and resources: You will need: tissue paper, thin card, scissors and glue, a paper clip, cotton, inks or paints and a thin brush for decoration, recycled materials such as plastic bags, garden canes, string and masking tape.



Kite flying spread quickly across Asia from China

Activity sheet

Make a Chinese indoor kite

You will need:

Tissue paper, thin card, scissors and glue, a paper clip, cotton, inks or paints and a thin brush for decorating.

1. Take a piece of A4 tissue paper and fold it in half lengthways.
2. Cut off two triangles.
3. Open up the paper to reveal a traditional kite shape and put the spare paper to one side.
4. Measure and cut two thin pieces of card. Stick them at right angles onto the paper to give the kite a more rigid structure.
5. Cut out a small rectangle of card about 6cm x 2cm. Make 2 small cuts and fold the card back to create the kite's bridle.
6. Attach a paper clip with a long piece of cotton attached to the bridle and stick onto the centre of the kite where the card is joined.
7. Use the remaining tissue paper to make the kite's tail and stick onto the bottom of the kite.
8. Turn your kite over and carefully paint on a design with a thin brush. To celebrate the year of the Tiger, perhaps paint the Chinese character for king that you learnt about in the story, or your own picture of a tiger!

Additional activities

Ask your pupils to find out about some of the many different types of kite such as flat, bowed, box kites and air-inflated. Explain the scientific principles of lift, gravity, and drag, which enable objects like kites that are heavier than air to fly and why the tail is such an important feature. Encourage groups to experiment with different shapes and recycled materials such as plastic bags, string and garden canes to design and create their own outdoor kite. Organise a class kite flying festival to see which flies the best.

Partner School Activities

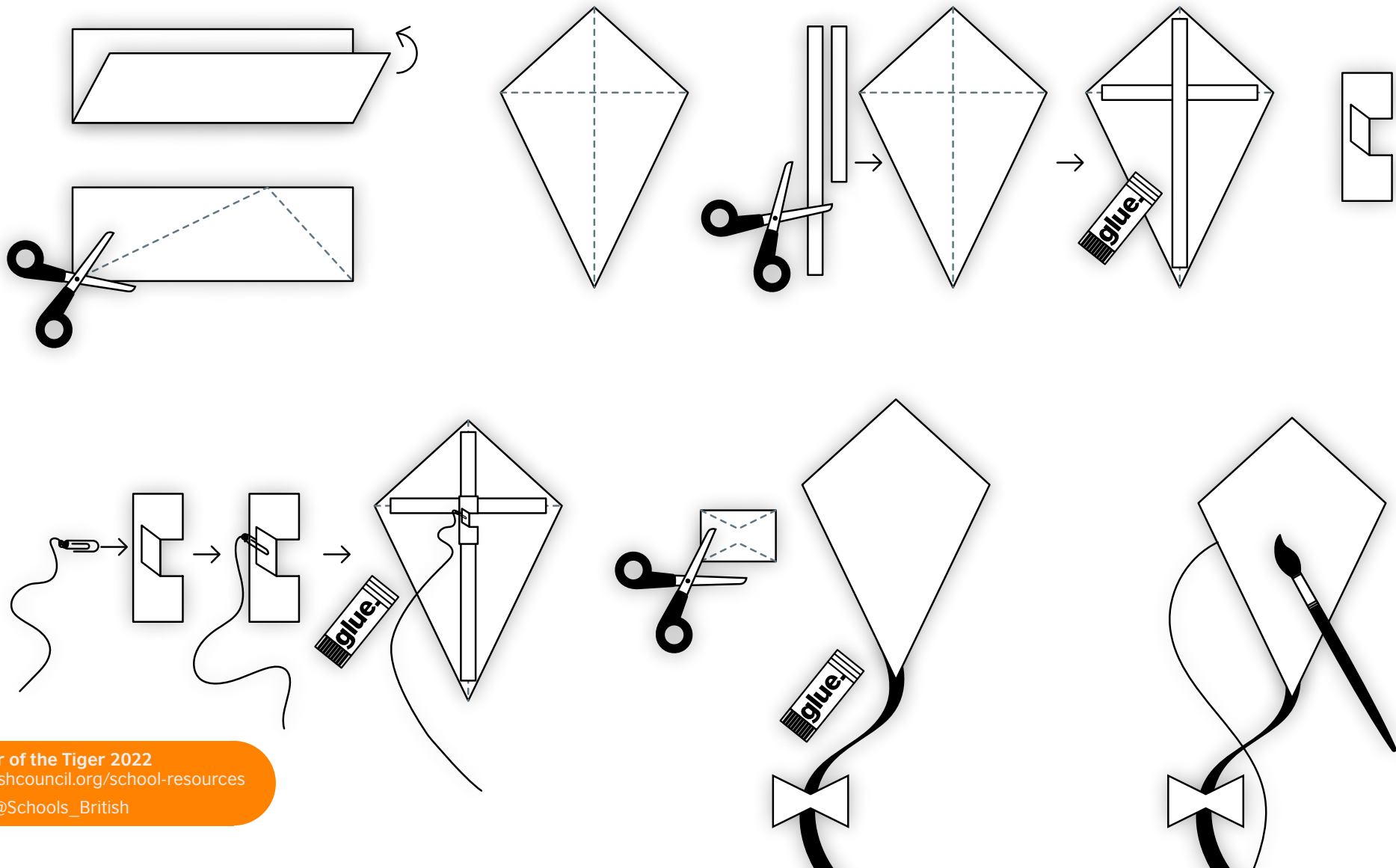
If you have a partner school, you could:

- photograph your kites and share them using the hashtag #YearoftheTiger



Instructions

Make a Chinese indoor kite



Lesson plan

Letters from China

Learning Objectives: To learn how children across China celebrate the Spring Festival and Chinese New Year.

Curriculum Links: English, PSHE and Citizenship.

Core Skills and attributes: Communication and collaboration, Citizenship, Digital literacy.

Preparation and resources: You will need: copies of the letters from children in China, cameras or iPads.

Explain that you have a selection of letters from children living in China, telling us about their lives and how they and their families celebrate Chinese New Year. Divide the class into small groups, and give each group copies of some of the letters. Use your judgment to select which will be most appropriate for your children's reading levels.

Ask your pupils to read the letters as a group and discuss and record their responses to the following questions, before reporting back to the rest of the class.

- What are the names of the children who wrote the letters and where do they live in China?
- What do they particularly enjoy about Chinese New Year and Spring Festival?
- What similarities and differences can you see in their lives and yours?
- What is the most interesting or surprising piece of information you read in the letters?
- If you could ask one of the letter-writers a question, what would it be?

Invite your pupils to work together to find the location of the letter writers and write a reply or make a short digital presentation or film about where they live and how they celebrate a particular festival to share with the rest of the class. They could use presentation software, such as PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slides or Photo Story, to show their images and information.



Letters from China

Letters from children living in China



Dear friends,

My name is Hu Qingyang and my English name is Judy. I am a Chinese girl. I live in Beijing, the capital of China. I study in Haidian Minzu Primary School. I study in class 3 grade 6.

I have a colourful life. In school I have many friends. We always study and play together. We are a friendly team. After school my mum prepares a delicious dinner for us. I have a family full of love. We love each other very much.

In China the most important holiday is Spring Festival. I like it very much. Why? Because during Spring Festival my family will stay together. We talk, we have delicious food and we feel very happy. On New Year's Eve, the family sits on the sofa and watches the Spring Festival Gala on TV. When the New Year's bell rings the people eat dumplings and set off fireworks. As a child, the most anticipated thing is that I can get a lot of red envelopes and gifts. Inside the red envelopes is lucky money from relatives. Usually I like to exchange it for sweets, toys and lots of other things I want.

I love my life. I love China!

Yours sincerely,
Judy



Dear English friends,

How are you? I go to Haidian District Ethnic Minority School, in Beijing where I like to play Go, do calligraphy with a brush and enjoy Art, reading and studying English. When I leave school I go to the park or go to play at my friends' houses.

The end of the year is coming and every household is decorated with lanterns and full of festive spirit. On New Year's Eve, which is the thirtieth day of the last month of the traditional Chinese lunar calendar, we all have Spring Festival related paper cuts, 福 the Chinese character for fortune and red lanterns hung as decorations.

People never tire of seeing the deep red paper with its dark black letters hung on the door frames and the beautiful, meticulously crafted paper cuts all have their own meanings.

In the evening everyone gathers together and eats, everywhere is the fragrance of meat and wine. And of course you can't forget the fireworks. After you light the fuse, the fireworks explode into life, some are shaped like a bunch of giant flowers, some of them leave a trail of fire and some of them jump about so fast you can hardly keep up. On the evening of New Year's Day we all go to pay our respects to the people of the neighbourhood and everyone gives their guests a hearty welcome.

Finally, I wish you health and longevity. Happy New Year!

Ma Yueming

Letters from China



Dear friend,

Ni Hao! (你好, which means “Hello!” in Chinese). My name is Rebecca Wang. I’m a student from Shanghai, China. I am in Grade 8 of a middle school in Shanghai. You must be curious about Chinese students’ daily life.

Every day, we have eight lessons, which are all colourful and interesting. We can take part in various extracurricular lessons as well, such as calligraphy classes, Chinese traditional instruments lessons, drama clubs, sports clubs and so on. Besides English, we also learn other languages like French and Russian at school.

We celebrate the Chinese New Year, which is also called “The Spring Festival”. It is our custom to have a big family dinner on the eve of the Chinese New Year, a bit like you do at Christmas. We have it in a restaurant or at home. All the extended family members gather together and enjoy delicious food. After dinner, dumplings are waiting for us! If you go to China, you must try dumplings because they are a traditional Chinese food and they taste very good.

Besides family dinners, we also set off fireworks and firecrackers. There is a story behind this custom. Once upon a time, there lived an evil monster called “Year”. On New Year’s Day, it slipped into people’s backyards and ate their farm animals, even small children! People decided to drive him away, so they set off fireworks and firecrackers. The big noise and dazzling flashes frightened “Year” and it fled and never came back. Since then, people started to set off fireworks and firecrackers at the Chinese New Year.

The symbol colour of the Chinese New Year is red. Children like to wear red clothes and red shoes during the festival. They can also get “red packets” from their relatives on that day. There is some money in the packet showing good wishes from relatives.

If you visit China someday, I will be glad to be your guide. Welcome to China!

Yours sincerely,
Rebecca

Letters from China



Hi, hello everyone, I am Liu Haoran from Haidian District in Beijing. I am a fourth year grade five student.

In a few months it will be Spring Festival. Chinese New Year is referred to as Spring Festival on the mainland. In China we have a twelve year cycle, with each sign representing a year. The twelve Chinese zodiac signs are 'Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig'. I was born in 2006, which was the Year of the Dog, so my sign is Dog.

I will spend this important festival with my family. During this time we are very happy. We set off fireworks and firecrackers, gather together to eat ji'aozi (traditional Beijing dumplings), and make calls on the neighbours. It always leaves me with such a strong impression. I wake up early in the morning to the sound of firecrackers. The first thing I see is the character 福 hung upside down on the door, which represents a peaceful and prosperous New Year. This is a bit difficult to explain. The character fú means fortune. An upside down fú is called a fúdào which sounds like 'fortune comes', so it is thought that hanging it on the door brings luck. Finally at lunchtime on New Year's Eve we have the ji'aozi. They are absolutely delicious and everyone loves to eat them.

Setting off fireworks is a really interesting activity. Traditionally fireworks and firecrackers are to drive away the demons which came on New Year's Eve to prey on humans. Nowadays when everyone in the city sets off fireworks it looks like a huge blossoming of scarlet sparks - as beautiful as anything you could imagine.

Spending time with friends and family is good. Whenever adults give me New Year gifts I feel an inexplicable sense of happiness.

I would welcome you to come to China and join in our Spring Festival.

Liu Haoran



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>

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://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/accreditation/international-school-award>

Find out how the Mandarin Excellence Programme works in secondary schools in England: <https://bit.ly/30JDKDT>

Find out more about the Shropshire Bookfest at: <https://www.shropshirebookfest.co.uk/>

And don't forget
next year is the

Year of
the _____?