

# Chinese New Year

## What is Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year is celebrated every year by millions of Chinese people and is the longest and most important holiday for a lot of Asian countries, such as China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. It has also become a very popular celebration for people all over the world with many visiting their local Chinatown to take part in the festivities.

Chinese New Year doesn't happen on the same day each year, nor is it on what you might know as New Year's Day (January 1<sup>st</sup>). It usually falls somewhere between 21<sup>st</sup> January and the 19<sup>th</sup> February. In 2021, Chinese New Year falls on Friday 12th February.

## Celebrations

There are certain traditions that are very likely to occur at a Chinese New Year celebration. Here are just a few:

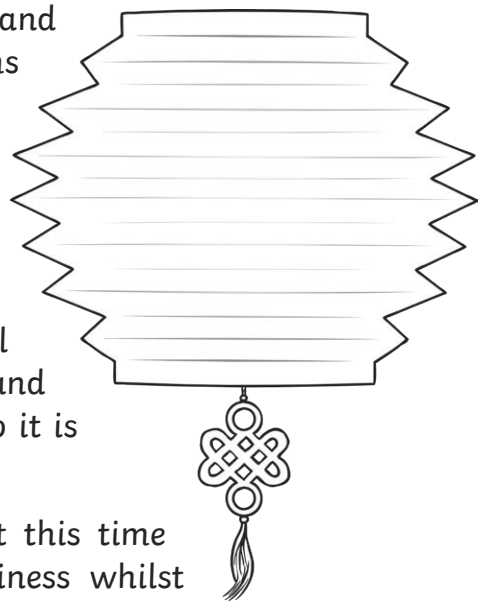
**Red Envelopes:** The colour red is very lucky to the Chinese as it represents fortune, good luck and joy. People give each other money in small, decorated red envelopes. It is usually older people who give them to the young in amounts of even numbers.

**Firecrackers:** Firecrackers are usually made of lots of red paper rolls strung together. When lit, they explode very quickly, one after the other, and create loud popping noises as well as a cloud of red paper shards in the air. However, they are quite dangerous and have been banned in a lot of countries, except for some villages in China.

**Lion and Dragon Dances:** These dances are often performed by skilled acrobats under the lion and dragon costumes. Loud music, consisting of drums and cymbals, is also played to chase away the evil spirits and bad luck. The dragon dance is often the highlight of a parade in a Chinatown and people flock to see the magnificent show.

**Spring Cleaning and Paying Back Money:** It is believed that spring cleaning your home will sweep away the bad fortune of the old year and any money should be paid back to anyone who it is owed to.

**Food and Families:** Food is very important at this time of year. Chicken and prawns represent happiness whilst



noodles represent long life. Dumplings are also eaten. Like Christmas, friends and family all gather together to eat and enjoy each other's company.

### Legends

It is said that Chinese New Year started a very long time ago when the Chinese people were being hounded by a strange beast called the 'Nian'. The Nian would visit every New Year's day to gobble up all their animals, crops and even people!

Scared and frightened, the villagers left food outside their houses for the Nian, in the hope that it would leave them be once it had been fed.

One day, the villagers noticed that the Nian was afraid of a small child wearing the colour red. From that day on, red lanterns, firecrackers and scrolls were used to frighten the Nian away and it never came back.

The Chinese Zodiac and its 12 animals all link to certain years of the Lunar calendar. Last year (2020) was the year of the rat, 2021 is the year of the ox and 2022 will be the year of the tiger.

In a very famous legend, these animals all came to be ranked by a race they all took part in by crossing a river. The rat won the race through trickery and people who are born in the year of the rat are said to be very clever.

From first to last, the animals finished in this order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.



# Comprehension

1. When is Chinese New Year in 2021? Tick one.

- 1<sup>st</sup> January
- 12<sup>th</sup> February
- 5<sup>th</sup> February
- 19<sup>th</sup> February

2. Name two countries where Chinese New Year is celebrated.

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3. What does the colour red represent in Chinese tradition?

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4. Why do you think people like to pay back any money that they owe before the start of a new year?

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5. Why are prawns, chicken and noodles eaten at Chinese New Year?

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6. How did the villagers stop Nian?

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7. According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2022 is the year of the...? Tick one.

- tiger
- dog
- pig
- dragon

8. Would you like to experience Chinese New Year? Why?

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# Answers

1. When is Chinese New Year in 2021? Tick one.

- 1<sup>st</sup> January
- 12<sup>th</sup> February**
- 5<sup>th</sup> February
- 19<sup>th</sup> February

2. Name two countries where Chinese New Year is celebrated.

**Accept any two of China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia.**

3. What does the colour red represent in Chinese tradition?

**In Chinese tradition, the colour red represents fortune, good luck and joy.**

4. Why do you think people like to pay back any money that they owe before the start of a new year?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: 'I think people like to pay back money they owe before the start of a new year because then they can start fresh without anything owing from the previous year. They don't have any debt ready for the new year.'**

5. Why are prawns, chicken and noodles eaten at Chinese New Year?

**Chicken and prawns are eaten as they represent happiness and noodles are eaten because they represent long life.**

6. How did the villagers stop Nian?

**The villagers noticed that Nian was afraid of the colour red. Therefore, the next time the monster appeared they used red lanterns, firecrackers and scrolls to scare Nian away and it never returned.**

7. According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2022 is the year of the...? Tick one.

- tiger**
- dog
- pig
- dragon

8. Would you like to experience Chinese New Year? Why?

**Pupils' own responses, such as 'I would like to experience Chinese New Year because it sounds exciting and colourful. I would particularly like to see the lion and dragon dances in a parade as there is loud music and the text says it is 'magnificent' to see.'**

# Chinese New Year

## What is Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year is celebrated every year by millions of Chinese people. In addition, it has now become a very popular event for people of all cultures and races. Many communities flock to their local Chinatown to witness the joyful festivities and it is the longest and most important holiday for a lot of Asian countries, such as China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia.

Chinese New Year doesn't happen on the same day as the Western New Year's Day. This is because it is worked out according to the first day of the Chinese Lunar calendar, which means the year is determined by the movements of the sun and moon. The celebration falls between 21<sup>st</sup> January and the 19<sup>th</sup> February. In 2021, Chinese New Year falls on Friday 12th February.

## Celebrations

There are certain traditions that are very likely to occur at a Chinese New Year celebration. Here are just a few:

**Red Envelopes:** The colour red is very lucky to the Chinese as it symbolises fortune, good luck and joy. People give each other money in small, decorated red envelopes. It is usually older people who give them to the young in amounts of even numbers.

**Firecrackers:** Firecrackers are traditionally made of lots of red paper rolls strung together. When lit, they explode very quickly, one after the other, and create loud popping noises as well as a cloud of red paper shards in the air. However, they are quite dangerous and have been banned in a lot of countries, except for some rural villages in China.

**Lion and Dragon Dances:** These dances are often performed by skilled acrobats under the lion and dragon costumes. The dance is accompanied by loud music consisting of drums and cymbals to chase away the evil spirits and bad luck. The dragon dance is often the highlight of a parade in a Chinatown and people flock to see the magnificent show!

**Spring Cleaning and Debt:** It is believed that spring cleaning your home will sweep away the bad fortune of the old year and any debts should be settled before the new one.

**Food and Families:** Food is quite symbolic at this time of year. Chicken and prawns represent happiness whilst noodles represent long life. Dumplings are also eaten. Like Christmas, friends and family all gather together to eat and enjoy each other's company.

## Legends

It is said that Chinese New Year started in ancient times, when the Chinese people were hounded by a mythical beast called the 'Nian'. The Nian would visit every New Year's day to gobble up all their livestock, crops and even people!

Scared and tormented, the villagers left food outside their houses for the Nian, in the hope that it would leave them be once it had been fed.

One day, the villagers noticed that the Nian was afraid of a small child wearing the colour red. From that day on, red lanterns, firecrackers and scrolls were used to frighten the Nian away and it never came back!

The Chinese Zodiac and its 12 animals all link to certain years of the Lunar calendar. Last year (2020) was the year of the rat, 2021 is the year of the ox and 2022 will be the year of the tiger.

These animals all came to be ranked by a legendary race they all took part in by crossing a river. The rat won the race through trickery and people who are born in the year of the rat are said to be very cunning.

From first to last, the animals finished in this order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

## Your Celebrations

It is very likely that your local community will be holding some sort of celebration for Chinese New Year. Have you ever watched a dragon dance? If not, do you think you will this year?



# Comprehension

1. Name two countries where Chinese New Year is celebrated?

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2. What day of the week is Chinese New Year in 2021? Tick one.

- Monday
- Friday
- Wednesday
- Thursday

3. Look at the **Celebrations** section.

**Find** and **copy one** word which means the same as **talented**.

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4. Why is it a popular tradition to tidy your home for Chinese New Year?

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5. In your own words, explain the legend of how Chinese New Year began.

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6. According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2021 is the year of the...? Tick one.

- dragon
- pig
- dog
- ox

7. Why is Chinese New Year not on the same day as the Western New Year? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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8. Choose two Chinese New Year traditions and explain how they are symbolic.

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9. Would you like to experience Chinese New Year? Why?

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# Answers

- Name two countries where Chinese New Year is celebrated?  
**Accept any two of China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia.**
- What day of the week is Chinese New Year in 2021? Tick one.
  - Monday
  - Friday**
  - Wednesday
  - Thursday
- Look at the **Celebrations** section.  
**Find and copy one word which means the same as talented. skilled**
- Why is it a popular tradition to tidy your home for Chinese New Year?  
**In Chinese tradition, it is believed that cleaning your home for New Year will sweep away any bad fortune of the previous year.**
- In your own words, explain the legend of how Chinese New Year began.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as 'According to Chinese legend, a village was attacked by a monster called the Nian, which ate their food, livestock and people. The villagers left food out for it but noticed that it was scared of a child wearing red. They then used red lanterns, scrolls and firecrackers to scare away the Nian and it never returned.'**
- According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2021 is the year of the...? Tick one.
  - dragon
  - pig
  - dog
  - ox**
- Why is Chinese New Year not on the same day as the Western New Year? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as 'Chinese New Year is not on the same day as the Western New Year's Day because it is worked out according to the first day of the Chinese Lunar calendar. This means the year is determined by the movements of the sun and moon.'**
- Choose two Chinese New Year traditions and explain how they are symbolic.  
**Any two from:**
  - **Giving red envelopes containing money – symbolises good luck, fortune and joy.**
  - **Lion and dragon dances – the music is to scare away any evil spirits and bad luck.**
  - **Spring cleaning your home – gets rid of any bad fortune from the previous year.**
  - **Food – chicken and prawns represent happiness and noodles represent long life.**
- Would you like to experience Chinese New Year? Why?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as 'I would like to experience Chinese New Year because it sounds exciting and colourful. I would particularly like to see the lion and dragon dances in a parade as there is loud music and the text says it is 'magnificent' to see.'**

# Chinese New Year

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Chinese New Year doesn't happen on the same day as the Western New Year's Day. This is because it is worked out according to the first day of the Chinese Lunar calendar, which means the year is determined by the movements of the sun and moon. The celebration falls between 21<sup>st</sup> January and the 19<sup>th</sup> February. In 2021, Chinese New Year falls on Friday 12th February.

## Celebrations

There are certain traditions that are very likely to occur at a Chinese New Year celebration. Here are just a few:

**Red Envelopes:** The colour red is very lucky to the Chinese as it symbolises fortune, good luck and joy. People give each other money in small, decorated red envelopes. It is usually older people who give them to the young in amounts of even numbers. The Chinese think that even numbers are luckier than odd numbers. But, the even number 4 is also thought of as bad luck.

**Firecrackers:** Firecrackers are traditionally made of lots of red paper rolls strung together. When lit, they explode very quickly, one after the other, and create loud popping noises as well as a cloud of red paper shards in the air. However, they are quite dangerous and have been banned in a lot of countries, except for some rural villages in China.

**Lion and Dragon Dances:** These dances are often performed by skilled acrobats under the lion and dragon costumes. Like lions and dragons, these costumes are enormous, and lots of people can fit underneath them. The dance is accompanied by loud music consisting of drums and cymbals to chase away the evil spirits and bad luck. The dragon dance is often the highlight of a parade in a Chinatown and people flock to see the magnificent show!

**Spring Cleaning and Debt:** It is believed that spring cleaning your home will sweep away the bad fortune of the old year and any debts should be settled before the new one ready for a fresh start to the new year.

**Food and Families:** Food is quite symbolic at this time of year. Chicken and prawns represent happiness whilst noodles represent long life. Dumplings are also eaten. Like Christmas, friends and family all gather together to eat and enjoy each other's company.

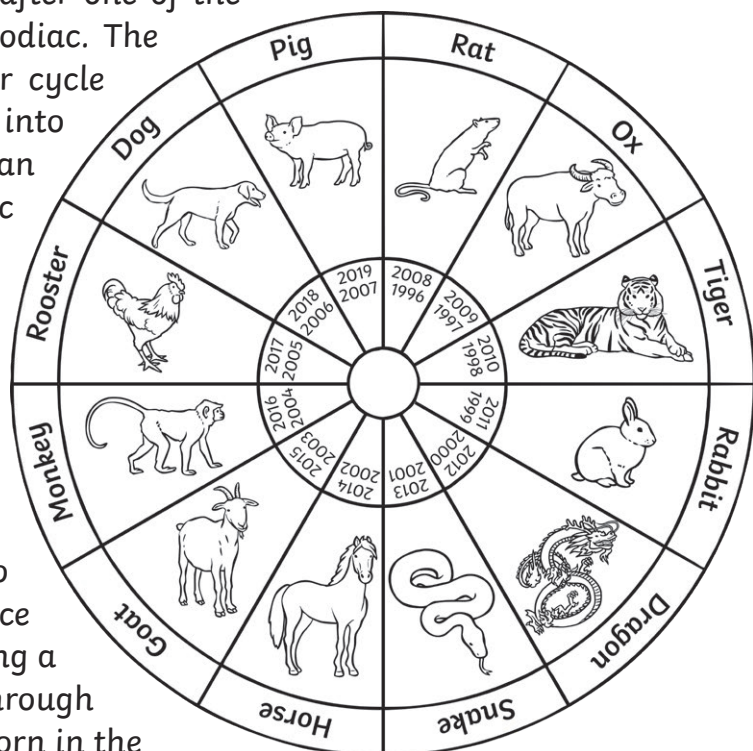
## Legends

It is said that Chinese New Year started in ancient times, when the Chinese people were hounded by a mythical beast called the 'Nian'. The Nian would visit every New Year day to gobble up all their livestock, crops and even people!

Scared and tormented, the villagers left food outside their houses for the Nian, in the hope that it would leave them be once it had been fed.

One day, the villagers noticed that the Nian was afraid of nothing but a small child wearing the colour red. From that day on, red lanterns, firecrackers and scrolls were used to frighten the Nian away and it never came back!

Each Chinese year is named after one of the 12 animals on the Chinese Zodiac. The zodiac is a repeating 12-year cycle and is shown as a wheel, split into 12 sections, each containing an animal. The Chinese Zodiac and its 12 animals all link to certain years of the Lunar calendar. Last year (2020) was the year of the rat, 2021 is the year of the ox and 2022 will be the year of the tiger.



These animals all came to be ranked by a legendary race they all took part in by crossing a river. The rat won the race through trickery and people who are born in the year of the rat are said to be very cunning.

From first to last, the animals finished in this order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

## Your Celebrations

It is very likely that your local community will be holding some sort of celebration for Chinese New Year. Have you ever watched a dragon dance? If not, do you think you will this year?



# Comprehension

1. Which dates does Chinese New Year fall between? Tick one.

- 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February
- 21<sup>st</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> February
- 21<sup>st</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> February
- 1<sup>st</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> February

2. Why is Chinese New Year not on the same day every year?

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3. Why is red a significant colour in Chinese culture? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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4. Why is money given in even amounts?

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5. Why do you think lions and dragons are used for the dance in the parade rather than animals such as rabbits, cats and dogs?

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6. In your own words, explain the legend of how Chinese New Year began.

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7. According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2021 is the year of the...?

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8. What personality trait are people who are born in the year of the rat said to have? Tick one.

- cunning
- kind
- unkind
- energetic

9. Using the illustration of the Chinese zodiac, what animal was the year you were born in?

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10. Which part of Chinese New Year would you most like to experience? Why?

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# Answers

1. Which dates does Chinese New Year fall between? Tick one.

- 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February
- 21<sup>st</sup> January and 5<sup>th</sup> February
- 21<sup>st</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> February**
- 1<sup>st</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> February

2. Why is Chinese New Year not on the same day every year?

**Chinese New Year is not on the same day every year because it is worked out according to the first day of the Chinese Lunar calendar. This means the year is determined by the movements of the sun and moon.**

3. Why is red a significant colour in Chinese culture? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**The colour red is very lucky to the Chinese as it symbolises fortune, good luck and joy. It is also the colour that, according to legend, scared away the Nian beast, ensuring the safety of the village.**

4. Why is money given in even amounts?

**Money is given in even amounts because odd numbers are believed to be bad luck in Chinese culture.**

5. Why do you think lions and dragons are used for the dance in the parade rather than animals such as rabbits, cats and dogs?

**Lions and dragons are the most commonly used animals as part of the Chinese New Year parade dance as these costumes are bigger allowing more people to fit underneath them. Lions and dragons are big, fierce creatures, they can scare away evil spirits and bad luck.**

6. In your own words, explain the legend of how Chinese New Year began.

**Pupils' own responses, such as 'According to Chinese legend, a village was attacked by a monster called the Nian, which ate their food, livestock and people. The villagers left food out for it but noticed that it was scared of a girl wearing red. They then used red lanterns, scrolls and firecrackers to scare away the Nian and it never returned.'**

7. According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2021 is the year of the...?

**2020 is the year of the ox.**

8. What personality trait are people who are born in the year of the rat said to have? Tick one.

- cunning**
- kind
- unkind
- energetic

9. Using the illustration of the Chinese zodiac, what animal was the year you were born in?  
**Pupils answers will vary depending on date of birth.**
10. Which part of Chinese New Year would you most like to experience? Why?  
**Pupils' own responses, such as 'I would like to experience the lion and dragon dances at Chinese New Year because I think it would be wonderful to see the costumes as well as hear the loud music. The text says that the parade is a 'magnificent show.'**