# Chinese New Year

**Goals:**

The goal of this lesson is to expose students to some of the historical, mythological and cultural practice of China by learning about China’s most widely celebrated festivals, Chinese New Year. On a larger level, this lesson allows students to understand some of China’s cultural practices by relate the festival into their own lives (learn about Chinese Zodiac and talk about their own characters).

**Content Objectives:**

1. SWBAT recognize that different groups of people celebrate holidays unique to themselves.
2. SWBAT learn the festival of Chinese New Year that celebrated across China.
3. SWBAT identify the legends and features of Chinese New Year festival.
4. SWBAT locate the year they (and members of their family) were born on a Chinese Zodiac chart and learn about the characteristics of the animals.

**Language Objectives:**

1. SWBAT read the article of Chinese New Year: 2014 and analyze the Chinese New Year festival by comparing it to holidays in America (such as Christmas).
2. SWBAT learn about the historical and mythological practice of Chinese Zodiac through watching the video *Story of Chinese Zodiac*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iw0adpGLIdk>
3. SWBAT recognize the personality traits of the animal signs that they belong to and argue if the signs are accurate portrayals of their own personalities.
4. SWBAT write letters to their parents to introduce what they learned about Chinese New Year and invite them to celebrate the festival together.

**Lesson Procedure**

**Introduction:**

Ask students: What’s your favorite festival and why do you like it?

Through this question, students can think about the features of their favorite festivals. Students are given the chance to use their prior knowledge and understand the following lesson by linking Chinese New Year to their daily life.

**Reading:**

Explain to students that different groups of people celebrate different holidays. Talk to them about the New Year's holiday that we just celebrated on Jan. 31. Show students where China is on a map.

Read the article *Chinese New Year: 2014 – The year of the horse* to the students.

**Discussion: Compare Chinese New Year with your favorite festival:**

Give the handouts to students. Let them finish the handouts by themselves. Then divide students into small groups and discuss their ideas and feelings towards Chinese New Year festival.

**Handout:**

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| Festival Comparison Worksheet  Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Instructions: Choose your favorite festival from the list (or choose a festival that you are familiar with in your native country) and compare it with Chinese New Year Festival.    New Year’s Day (Jan. 1st)  April Fool’s Day (Apr. 1st)  Easter  Mother’s Day (Second Sunday in May)  Father’s Day (Third Sunday in June)  Halloween (Oct 31st)  Thanksgiving (Fourth Thursday in November)  Christmas (Dec. 25th) | | |
| Choice Festival: |  | Chinese New Year: |

**Chinese Zodiac:**

Watch the video *Story of Chinese Zodiac*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iw0adpGLIdk>

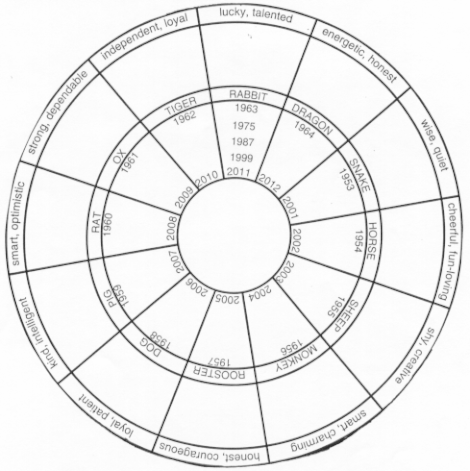
This year is the year of horse. Famous people such as Rembrandt, Harrison Ford, Aretha Franklin, Chopin, Sandra Day O'Connor, and President Theodore Roosevelt were born in the year of the horse (From the reading above).

Ask students: Do you want to know what is your animal?

**Activity 1: What Animal Are You?**

**1.** Introduce students to the Chinese New Year by having them explore the Chinese zodiac. Begin the activity by having each student write five to eight adjectives or phrases that describe his or her personality traits.

**2.** Then, have students look at the Chinese calendar to find what animals are they.



**3.** Find their Animal Card and find out what are the traits of their own animals.

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| ****鼠Rat****  The Real Thing:  Most rats are highly adaptable. They can live just about anywhere and eat just about anything. Before brown rats leave their underground burrows, these clever creatures send one rat ahead to make sure danger isn't lurking outside.  Born a Rat?  You welcome challenges and enjoy learning about new things. Funny and smart, you are generous and will protect your pack of friends.  Other Rat Years: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020 | ****牛Ox****  The Real Thing:  Oxen have been known to pull loads of 11,284 pounds (5,118 kilograms). People value their strength as well as their work ethic. An ox's horns can grow to be more than 20 inches (51 centimeters) long.  Born an Ox?  You approach projects in a step-by-step manner, wanting to do things right the first time. Shy but dependable, you are caring and trustworthy and never lose sight of your goal.  Other Ox Years:  1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021 |
| ****虎Tiger****  The Real Thing:  The largest of the big cats, tigers hunt alone. They secretly stalk prey, then leap and attack when the time seems right. Dinner still escapes most of the time.  Born a Tiger?  You're a natural leader but often like to do things by yourself. (That's how you stay in charge!) You believe in fighting for what's right, even if you'll lose in the end.  Other Tiger Years: 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022 | **兔Rabbit**  The Real Thing:  Rabbits normally give birth to about six babies at once and often live in groups. Their long ears help them cool off by lowering the temperature of the blood that circulates through them.  Born a Rabbit?  Well-liked and popular, you have a large circle of family and friends. You are very protective of them, and they protect you back. You tend to keep your cool and avoid conflicts.  Other Rabbit Years: 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023 |
| ****龙Dragon****  The Real Thing:  The mythical dragon is a symbol of power and good fortune in Chinese culture. One of the most popular figures in Chinese art, the dragon is believed to be a combination of nine animals, including a frog, a tiger, an eagle, and a fish.  Born a Dragon?  You go out of your way to help your friends, who often seek you out for advice. Your outgoing personality helps you get along with many types of people.  Other Dragon Years: 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024 | **蛇Snake**  The Real Thing:  Snakes have great instincts. Some "play dead" to fool predators, and most sense prey by detecting ground vibrations. They can take more than an hour to swallow a meal, and they become inactive for up to two weeks before they shed their skin.  Born a Snake?  You rely on your instincts before asking others their opinions. At times you want to take a break from the action. It's not that you're lazy—sometimes you just like to think.  Other Snake Years: 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013 |
| ****马Horse****  The Real Thing:  A horse sleeps only about three hours a day. Intelligent, most can sense nervousness in people.  Born a Horse?  You have loads of energy and love adventure. You take charge and understand people, so you know how to work a crowd.  Other Horse Years: 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014 | **羊Sheep**  The Real Thing:  Timid sheep graze in flocks to guard against predators. Most are raised for their wool.  Born a Sheep?  At your best when people who admire you flock to your side, you stick by your friends. You are artistic, creative, and like to look good.  Other Sheep Years: 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015 |
| ****猴Monkey****  The Real Thing:  Social and playful, monkeys show affection and friendship by picking bugs and dirt out of each other's fur. These animals use their hands and feet to grip objects and climb trees. Some even have tails that can grab items as small as peanuts.  Born a Monkey?  Swinging from one group of friends to another, you love to have a good time. You like to entertain your friends by showing off your talents, and they appreciate your cleverness and sense of humor.  Other Monkey Years: 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016 | **鸡Rooster**  The Real Thing:  The rooster's loud cock-a-doodle-doo attracts females and warns other males to stay away. The red comb on his head may help other roosters identify him, and it also sets him apart from other bird species.  Born a Rooster?  You are practical and resourceful, and you use what you have to succeed without taking a lot of risks. A hard worker, you say what's on your mind and have a sense of style that sets you apart.  Other Rooster Years: 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017 |
| ****狗Dog****  The Real Thing:  A dog's supersensitive ears can hear a noise about 100 yards (91.44 meters) away that a person couldn't hear more than 25 yards (22.86 meters) away. Its strong sense of smell helps it do things like find lost people or sniff out bad guys.  Born a Dog?  You're a great listener who can keep a secret. Loyal to your friends, you have a keen sense of right and wrong and stick to what you believe in.  Other Dog Years: 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018 | **猪Pig**  The Real Thing:  Domesticated pigs have been helping humans for about 9,000 years. Incredibly intelligent, a pig shows its smarts by rolling in mud and sticking its snout in dirt. Why? The mud keeps it cool, and rooting in the dirt provides important vitamins.  Born a Pig?  Smart and caring, you live to help other people. You have great taste and love to wallow in the nicer things in life.  Other Pig Years: 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019 |

**4.** Once students have read their animal cards, have them explain how the animal does or does not seem to represent them. They should use specific examples from their own experiences to support what they say. Students can look through the other animal signs to see which one best represents them and write a persuasive piece describing why that sign fits them best.

**Exit Ticket: A Letter to your Parents**

* + Give each student two blank cards, one blank paper and one envelope.
  + Ask the students to make zodiac cards for their parents.
  + Give an example to the students. Show them a card made by the teacher for my parents.
  + Students can write down the traits of the animal and the characters they think their parents have on the cards. Then draw the animal on the back.
  + Write a letter to your parents introduce them what you learned about China from this lesson. Invite parents to celebrate Chinese New Year.
  + Put the cards and letter in your envelope. Take it home for your parents.

**Appendix**

# Article:

# Chinese New Year: 2014

# *The Year of the Horse*

Chinese New Year is the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar. This year’s Chinese New Year begins on Jan. 31, 2014.

Chinese months are reckoned by the lunar calendar, with each month beginning on the darkest day. New Year festivities traditionally start on the first day of the month and continue until the fifteenth, when the moon is brightest. In China, people may take weeks of holiday from work to prepare for and celebrate the New Year.

**A Charming New Year**

Legend has it that in ancient time, the Jade Emperor asked all the animals to meet him on Chinese New Year. Twelve came, and the Jade Emperor named a year after each one. He announced that the people born in each animal's year would have some of that animal's personality. Those born in horse years are cheerful, skillful with money, perceptive, witty, talented and good with their hands. Rembrandt, Harrison Ford, Aretha Franklin, Chopin, Sandra Day O'Connor, and President Theodore Roosevelt were born in the year of the horse.

**Fireworks and Family Feasts**

At Chinese New Year celebrations people wear red clothes, decorate with poems on red paper, and give children "lucky money" in red envelopes. Red symbolizes fire, which according to legend can drive away bad luck. The fireworks that shower the festivities are rooted in a similar ancient custom. Long ago, people in China lit bamboo stalks, believing that the crackling flames would frighten evil spirits.

**The Lantern Festival**

In China, the New Year is a time of family reunion. Family members gather at each other's homes for visits and shared meals, most significantly a feast on New Year's Eve. In the United States, however, many early Chinese immigrants arrived without their families, and found a sense of community through neighborhood associations instead. Today, many Chinese-American neighborhood associations host banquets and other New Year events.

The lantern festival is held on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. Some of the lanterns may be works of art, painted with birds, animals, flowers, zodiac signs, and scenes from legend and history. People hang glowing lanterns in temples, and carry lanterns to an evening parade under the light of the full moon.

In many areas the highlight of the lantern festival is the dragon dance. The dragon—which might stretch a hundred feet long—is typically made of silk, paper, and bamboo. Traditionally the dragon is held aloft by young men who dance as they guide the colorful beast through the streets. In the United States, where the New Year is celebrated with a shortened schedule, the dragon dance always takes place on a weekend. In addition, many Chinese-American communities have added American parade elements such as marching bands and floats.