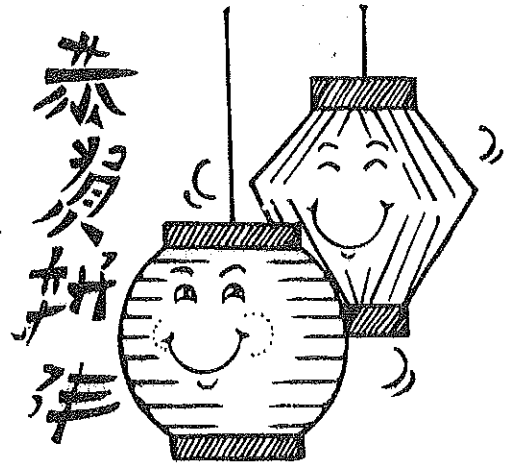


# Chinese New Year!

For the Chinese, the Chinese New Year is perhaps the most colorful and joyous event of the year. It marks the beginning of a new cycle of life and symbolizes both the end of winter and the coming of spring. This holiday is celebrated for about three weeks, beginning with the new moon of the lunar calendar. The New Year may fall anywhere between the middle of January and early March.



The last days of the old year are very busy for Chinese families. All of the food for the festive celebrations must be prepared in advance. It is considered bad luck to use a knife or sharp tool during the first few days of the New Year, for fear of "cutting" the New Year's luck. All debts must be paid and accounting books brought up to date before the end of the year.

Cleaning the house is especially important during this time. Evil spirits must be dusted and swept out of the house. After all of the evil spirits are chased away, it is time to say goodbye to the Kitchen God, Tsao Chuen, whose spirit has been residing in the home during the past year. He takes notes on the family and reports his finding to the Jade Emperor. On the twenty-third day of the twelfth month, the family honors the Kitchen God with a farewell dinner. The meal usually consists of sweet foods in hopes of encouraging him to report only kind things to the Emperor. After the ceremonial feast, children light firecrackers to keep evil spirits away until Tsao Chuen's return on New Year's Eve.

灶神?

On the eve of the New Year after all preparations are ready, the outer door to the house is sealed with red paper to prevent good luck from leaving the house.

New Year's Day is a time for the entire family to gather for a feast of rice pudding, vegetarian dishes and pastries. The New Year marks the birthday of every family member. Before midnight, children receive good luck money in even-numbered amounts, wrapped in small red envelopes. Everyone wears their newest clothes. Only kind words must be thought or spoken.

The Feast of the Lanterns is celebrated on the third day of the New Year. Lanterns of all shapes, sizes and colors decorate the streets and homes. Many cities hold fantastic parades led by a huge dragon, the symbol of good luck. The dragon is made of bamboo and covered with silk and paper. More than fifty people have been known to support dragon as it weaves up and down the streets. Musicians, dancers and acrobats accompany the dragon in the parade. The festive celebration ends with a great fireworks display.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Use your highlighter to mark interesting information in the article while you read about Chinese New Year and then answer the questions below.

? Solar calendar

1. When can the Chinese New Year celebrations happen (between what months)? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do people do to the outside of their houses on the eve of the New Year? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name two adjectives that the article uses to describe the Chinese New Year celebration. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

4. It is considered bad luck to do what in the first days of the New Year? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the third day called in the Chinese New Year and why is it so special? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Why do people hold dragons? \_\_\_\_\_

7. The dragons are covered in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_?

- a. water and ice
- b. paper and silk
- c. crayons and paper
- d. silk and rice

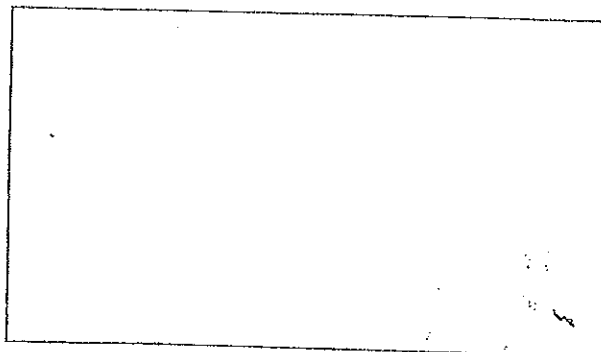
8. What ends the celebration?

- a. An ice cream party
- b. A piñata
- c. A fireworks display
- d. A quiet reading time

9. When do the children get to open their good luck money?

- a. In the morning
- b. After dinner
- c. Around lunchtime
- d. Before midnight

10. Design your own Chinese lantern in the box.















年

# GOOD FORTUNE



Each year of the Chinese lunar calendar is named after an animal. There are twelve different animals. (See chart below.) If you know the animal that rules the year in which you were born, the Chinese say that you will also know your horoscope (hahr-eh-skohp) — a description of what you are like and what might happen to you in the future.

Can you find the year in which you were born in the chart below (taken from the book *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year.*)

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  鼠<br><b>Year of the Rat</b><br>1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008<br>Rat people are very popular. They like to invent things and are good artists.   |  牛<br><b>Year of the Ox</b><br>1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009<br>People born in this year are dependable and calm. They are good listeners and have very strong ideas.      |  虎<br><b>Year of the Tiger</b><br>1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010<br>Tiger people are brave. Other people respect tiger people for their deep thoughts and courageous actions.            |  兔<br><b>Year of the Rabbit</b><br>1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011<br>People born in this year are nice to be around. They like to talk, and many people trust them.                          |
|  龍<br><b>Year of the Dragon</b><br>1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012<br>Dragon people have good health and lots of energy. They are good friends because they listen carefully to others. |  蛇<br><b>Year of the Snake</b><br>1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001<br>A person born in this year loves good books, food, music, and plays. He will have good luck with money. |  馬<br><b>Year of the Horse</b><br>1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002<br>People born in this year are popular, cheerful, and are quick to compliment others. Horse people can work very hard. |  羊<br><b>Year of the Sheep</b><br>1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003<br>People born in this year are very good artists. They ask many questions, like nice things, and are very wise.            |
|  猴<br><b>Year of the Monkey</b><br>1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004<br>Monkey people are very funny. They can always make people laugh. They are also very good at solving problems.    |  雞<br><b>Year of the Rooster</b><br>1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005<br>People born in this year are hard workers. They have many talents and think deep thoughts.          |  犬<br><b>Year of the Dog</b><br>1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006<br>Dog people are loyal and can always keep a secret. Sometimes dog people worry too much.                              |  猪<br><b>Year of the Boar</b><br>1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007<br>People born in this year are very good students. They are honest and brave. They always finish a project or assignment. |

Ask family members and friends what year they were born. Find their horoscope in the chart. You might have a party and invite everyone to come dressed as the animal that rules his or her year.



年



# The Chinese Calendar

In the Chinese calendar, each year is named after an animal. There are 12 animal names in all.

Cut out and paste each animal picture in the correct space.

Then cut out the circle.

Try to memorize the names of all 12 animals!

