

# Turning Over a New Leaf-Chinese New Year

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## Grade Level/Discipline

This lesson plans was created for high school social studies classes. parts of the activities listed in the procedure could be applied to art classes.

## PASS Standards/Social Studies

Standard 7: The student will describe, compare and contrast selected civilizations in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

1. Analyze India's caste system, the traditions, customs, beliefs, and significance of Hinduism, and the conquest by Muslim Turks and Mongols.
2. Describe China under the Qin, Han, T'ang, and Sung dynasties; the traditions, customs, beliefs, and significance of Buddhism; the impact of Confucianism and Taoism; and the construction of the Great Wall.

## Introduction

Chinese New Year is a traditional Chinese festival that typically lasts one week long. It is celebrated on the first day of the First Moon of the lunar calendar. On our solar calendar, Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year, varies from as early as January 21<sup>st</sup> to as late as February 19<sup>th</sup>. It is a time of year for the Chinese and other Southeast Asian cultures to congratulate each other, "tie up loose ends," give red envelope (hung bau), and welcome in the new year.

## Objectives

### Knowledge-

1. Students will learn about many of the old and modern traditions observed during the Chinese New Year.
2. Students will learn about the deeply rooted symbolism that is found in the celebration of this holiday.
3. Students will learn about the Chinese Zodiac; the Twelve Animal Signs.

## Attitude

1. Like many Western holidays, Chinese New Year has been simplified and shortened compared to the traditional observance of this holiday.

2. In traditional China, an individual's birthday was not considered as important as the New Year's date. The Seventh Day of the New Year was called "everybody's birthday." So, we see from this example that The group is more important than the individual in the Chinese culture.

#### Time Allotment

Two class periods

#### Resources Needed

A copy of the lunar calendar will be provided to the students. You can print a monthly calendar at [chinapage.com/newyear.html](http://chinapage.com/newyear.html). Instructions and the material needed to make a paper lantern will be provided in the appendix.

#### Procedure

1. Ask the students when they celebrate the New Year, and what does it mean to them.
2. Do they know when Chinese New Year is; what do they know about it.
3. Let the students know that Chinese New Year is a very important holiday to the Chinese and many other Southeast Asians.
4. Introduce Chinese New Year and some of the old and new traditions celebrated.
5. Handout a copy of the lunar calendar. Copy only the necessary months of January and February of this year or coming year.
6. Discuss the lunar calendar and how it differs from the solar or Gregorian calendar used by the West.
7. Sweeping the Grounds- Discuss the annual housecleaning that takes place and why.
8. Kitchen God(Zao Wang)-Discuss this tradition of giving food items compared to the Christmas tradition of giving presents.
9. Family Celebration-Discuss the importance of celebrating together as a family. What holidays do your family feel are important and what traditions do you have?
10. Lantern Festival- Discuss why people carry lanterns into the streets on this day.
11. If you have time, you can make lanterns(see Appendix).
12. Introduce some of the symbols that can be found in the celebration of Chinese New Year. What symbolism can be found in the celebration of some of our own holidays.
13. Provide a handout of the Chinese Zodiac with the corresponding years provided.
14. Give the students time to find their animal sign and read over the information provided concerning the attributes each sign

provides, discuss the students findings.

#### Resource List

Cheng Hou-Tien. *The Chinese New Year*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1976(primary source).

Yen Liang. *Happy New Year*. California: Bowmar, 1961.

<http://www.chinapage.com/newyear.html>

[http://www.educ.uvic.ca/faculty/mroth/438/CHINA/chinese\\_new\\_year.html](http://www.educ.uvic.ca/faculty/mroth/438/CHINA/chinese_new_year.html)

#### Assessment

Students will be given a short test on symbolism found in Chinese New Year. Students will be asked to write a 2 page paper on the most interesting part of Chinese New Year. Also students will be required to check out a book in the library and do research on superstitions(This is optional).

#### Appendix

Instructions for making the paper lanterns can be found at  
<http://teacherlink.edu.usu.edu/t1resources/units/Byrnes-celebrations/johnkjar.html>