

Lunar New Year



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Which month does Lunar New Year take place in?
2. Which animal represents the current year?
3. What is another name for Lunar New Year?
4. What symbols are associated with Lunar New Year?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. fixed | a) a fight, a disagreement |
| ___ 2. lunar | b) a very large meal |
| ___ 3. prosperous | c) a lot of money, riches |
| ___ 4. symbolize | d) family members from the past |
| ___ 5. sweep | e) to make certain |
| ___ 6. fortune | f) relating to the moon |
| ___ 7. debt | g) good or bad luck, chance, fate |
| ___ 8. argument | h) successful |
| ___ 9. wealth | i) something that is owed to someone |
| ___ 10. ancestors | j) to represent |
| ___ 11. feast | k) set, decided (as a date) |
| ___ 12. ensure | l) to clear away dirt with a broom |



Reading

1. Lunar New Year (also called “Chinese New Year” and “Spring Festival”) is the biggest and most important holiday of the year for Chinese people around the world. It is actually two celebrations in one. Lunar New Year is the beginning of the lunar year and the beginning of spring. It is also the most important time of the year for families to get together. Lunar New Year is celebrated in other Asian countries, including Vietnam and Korea.
2. Lunar New Year does not have a **fixed** date on the Western calendar because it is based on the **lunar** calendar. It always falls between January 20 and February 21. Each year, the Chinese calendar is represented by one of twelve animals from the Chinese zodiac. The signs include animals such as the ox, the rabbit, the snake, and the horse. For example, 1998 was the year of the Tiger. 2010 was also the year of the Tiger. The Chinese believe that people share the characteristics of the animal that represents the year of their birth. All of the animals are associated with different characteristics. Two people who are born in the year of the Rooster are thought to be similar.
3. There are many traditional activities associated with Lunar New Year, and many of these **symbolize** new life and new beginnings. Many are also related to the idea of good luck. Chinese people **sweep** and clean their houses before New Year’s Day and then put away their brooms so good **fortune** will not be swept away. They always pay off their **debts** before New Year’s Day because it is bad luck to begin the new year if you owe money. People also buy new clothing and new shoes because they believe that bad luck will come to those who step on the ground in old shoes on New Year’s morning. It is also important to settle old **arguments**.
4. The colour red is seen everywhere on Chinese New Year because it represents fire, which can drive away bad luck, according to legend. Gold is also an important colour at this time. It represents **wealth** and good fortune. Families decorate their homes with flowers and paper decorations.
5. Exchanging gifts is an important tradition, and children always receive red envelopes containing “lucky money.” The traditional New Year’s greeting is “Kung Hei Fat Choi,” which means “I wish you a **prosperous** New Year.”
6. Food is a very important part of the Lunar New Year celebrations. Families and friends get together for large **feasts** and many of the foods that are eaten have special meanings. Fish is eaten to **ensure** long life and good fortune. Red dates bring prosperity, lotus and melon seeds will bring many children, and oranges symbolize wealth. **Ancestors** are remembered with offerings of food. The table is usually covered with a red cloth and red candles, and often there are 12 courses to represent the 12 animals of the zodiac.
7. The dragon and the lion are other popular symbols of Lunar New Year. Many Chinese communities around the world celebrate with dragon and lion dances and parades through the streets with people dressed in brightly coloured costumes. Of course, a Lunar New Year celebration would not be complete without loud and colourful fireworks.
8. In many Chinese communities, the new year is celebrated as an official holiday for three or four days, but often the celebrations continue until the Festival of Lanterns, which is on the 15th day of Lunar New Year.



Comprehension

Practise asking and answering the following questions with your partner.
Then write the answers below or in your notebook.
Use full sentences.

1. Why is Lunar New Year two celebrations in one?

2. Why does Lunar New Year not have a fixed date on the Western calendar?

3. What is the Chinese zodiac represented by?

4. How do Chinese babies become associated with certain animals?

5. Why do Chinese people put away their brooms on New Year's Day?

6. What two colours are often seen on Lunar New Year?

7. What do children receive on Lunar New Year?

8. Why do New Year's meals often consist of 12 courses?

9. Why is fish an important dish on Lunar New Year?

10. When does the Festival of Lanterns take place?



Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Choose the correct words from the vocabulary list on page 1 to complete the following sentences.

1. John was born in Canada, but his _____ came from China a long time ago.
2. The floor is very dirty. Could you please _____ it for me?
3. The date for the annual meeting is already _____. I can't change it.
4. He borrowed a lot of money from his friends over the past few years, and he still has a lot of _____.
5. Do you believe that people can really tell your _____ by looking into a crystal ball or reading your tea leaves?

B. Choose the Closest Meaning

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word in the following sentences.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families <u>decorate</u> their homes with flowers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) fill b) make beautiful c) buy 2. Red dates bring <u>prosperity</u>. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) success, good fortune b) many children c) happiness, laughter 3. Chinese people put away their <u>brooms</u> on New Year's Day. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) problems b) pictures on the wall c) long-handled brushes for sweeping | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Many traditions are <u>related</u> to the idea of good luck. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) connected b) family c) real 5. There are often 12 <u>courses</u> in the New Year's feast. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) something you study b) red cloth c) part of a meal |
|---|---|



Pair Work (Student A)

A. Sharing Information

You and your partner each have different information on the animals in the Chinese zodiac. Read your information and then share it with your partner. You may need to use your dictionaries for some of the words related to the characteristics of the animals.

Parts of the Chinese Zodiac

Animal Signs and Corresponding Years

Rat	Ox	Tiger	Rabbit	Dragon	Snake
1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917
1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941
1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025

Parts of the Chinese Zodiac

Characteristics of the Animals and People Born in Their Year

Rat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hard-working, clever, charming, have big ambitions, usually successful loyal to people who are close to them
Ox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> patient, calm, trustworthy, easygoing do not speak a lot, but when they do, they speak very well
Tiger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> courageous, proud, powerful, natural leaders, well-respected sometimes cannot make up their minds
Rabbit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gentle, shy, sensitive, kind, love to entertain, love to gossip often lucky with money
Dragon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> healthy, powerful, brave lots of energy, like to be leaders
Snake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generous try to help others who are less fortunate



Pair Work (Student B)

A. Sharing Information

You and your partner each have different information on the animals in the Chinese zodiac. Read your information and then share it with your partner. You may need to use your dictionaries for some of the words related to the characteristics of the animals.

Parts of the Chinese Zodiac

Animal Signs and Corresponding Years

Horse	Sheep (Ram)	Monkey	Rooster	Dog	Pig (Boar)
1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031

Parts of the Chinese Zodiac

Characteristics of the Animals and People Born in their Year

Horse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lots of energy, popular, like large crowds want freedom, like to travel
Sheep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creative, imaginative, artistic often shy and usually religious
Monkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> like to have fun, like a lot of stimulation skillful, have good memories
Rooster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tell the truth, quick thinkers like traditional things, like to keep busy
Dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> physically active, honest, very faithful excellent at business
Pig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> intelligent, have good manners, enjoy learning enjoy helping others, sometimes wasteful



Pair Work cont.

B. Ask & Answer

Work with your partner to complete the following questions and statements.

- 1. This is the year of the _____ .
- 2. Last year was the year of the _____ .
- 3. The year 1950 was the year of the _____ .
- 4. Which animal represents the year of your birth?

- 5. Which animal is often lucky with money?

- 6. Which animal is usually religious?

- 7. Which animal loves to gossip?

- 8. When will the next year of the Sheep occur?

- 9. Which animal is very successful at business?

- 10. Which animal has a good memory?

- 11. Which animal is a natural leader?

- 12. Which animal enjoys learning?

- 13. Which animals are shy?

- 14. If you were born in the year 1959, what is your animal sign?

- 15. Which animal likes to help less fortunate people?

- 16. What are the characteristics of the animal that represents your birth year?

- 17. Do you think these characteristics accurately describe you? Explain.

- 18. Name the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. Then discuss the characteristics of each with your partner.



Vocabulary, Idioms & Expressions

A. Reference

VOCABULARY, IDIOM, OR EXPRESSION	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
red (<i>adjective</i>)	the colour of blood	She is wearing a beautiful red sweater.
redde (<i>verb</i>)	to make something red or become red	His face reddened when he made that foolish mistake.
see red (<i>idiom</i>)	to become angry	The boss is really going to see red when he finds out that the work was not finished on time.
redhead (<i>idiom</i>)	a person with red hair	Joan's hair is naturally brown, but she has always wanted to be a redhead , so she is going to dye it.
be in the red (<i>idiom</i>)	to be in debt, losing money	Last year our business was still in the red , but we hope to start making money this year.
red tape (<i>idiom</i>)	a lot of difficult official rules and procedures	If you want to immigrate to a new country, you have to go through a lot of red tape .
paint the town red (<i>idiom</i>)	to go to restaurants, bars, dancing, etc. and have a great time	It's my birthday on Saturday. I want to paint the town red .
roll out the red carpet (<i>idiom</i>)	to welcome someone in a very special way	When the Queen comes to our city, we really roll out the red carpet for her.
red-letter day (<i>idiom</i>)	a very special day, a day to remember	This is going to be a red-letter day for me. I'm going to see my new grandchild for the first time.
be caught red-handed (<i>idiom</i>)	to be caught while doing something bad	Mother told Jimmy not to eat any more cookies, but he was caught red-handed with his mouth full of cookies and his hand in the cookie jar.
not worth a red cent (<i>idiom</i>)	worthless	My car is almost 20 years old. I can't sell it. It's not worth a red cent .



Vocabulary, Idioms & Expressions cont.

B. Practice

Now write your own sentences using the vocabulary, idioms, and expressions on the previous page.



Class Activity

Walk around the classroom and ask your classmates questions. Write the questions in the spaces provided below, and write your classmate's name on the right if he/she answers "yes."

#	Find someone...	Question	Classmate
1	who was born in the year of the Monkey.		
2	who can name all 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac.		
3	who would like to be a redhead.		
4	who has experienced a lot of red tape in the past month.		
5	who can tell you what animal his or her grandmother is.		
6	who has had a red-letter day recently.		
7	who knows why the Chinese put away their brooms on New Year's.		
8	who likes to paint the town red.		
9	who was born in the year of the Dragon.		
10	who can tell you the traditional Lunar New Year greeting.		



Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

1. Lunar New Year (also called “Chinese New Year” and “Spring Festival”) is the biggest and _____ holiday of the year for Chinese people around the world. It is actually two celebrations in one. Lunar New Year is the beginning of the lunar year and the beginning of spring. It is also the most important time of the year for families to _____. Lunar New Year is celebrated in other Asian countries, including Vietnam and Korea.
2. Lunar New Year does not have a fixed date on the Western calendar because it is based on the lunar calendar. It always falls between January 20 and February 21. Each year, the Chinese _____ is represented by one of 12 animals from the Chinese zodiac. The signs include animals such as the ox, the rabbit, the snake, and the horse. For example, 1998 was the year of the Tiger. 2010 was also the year of the Tiger. The Chinese believe that people share the _____ of the animal that represents the year of their birth. All of the animals are _____ different characteristics. Two people who are born in the year of the Rooster are thought to be similar.
3. There are many traditional activities associated with Chinese New Year, and many of these symbolize new life and new _____. Many are also related to the idea of good luck. Chinese people sweep and clean their houses before New Year’s Day and then put away their brooms so good fortune will not be swept away. They always _____ their debts before New Year’s Day because it is bad luck to begin the new year if you _____ money. People also buy new clothing and new shoes because they believe that bad luck will come to those who step on the ground in old shoes on New Year’s morning. It is also important to _____ old arguments.
4. The colour red is seen everywhere on Chinese New Year because it _____ fire, which can drive away bad luck, according to legend. Gold is also an important colour at this time. It represents wealth and _____. Families decorate their homes with flowers and paper decorations.





Listening cont.

5. Exchanging gifts is an important tradition, and children always receive red _____ containing "lucky money." The traditional New Year's greeting is "Kung Hei Fat Choi," which means "I wish you a prosperous New Year."
6. Food is a very important part of the Lunar New Year celebrations. Families and friends get together for large feasts and many of the foods that are eaten have special meanings. Fish is eaten to ensure long life and good fortune. Red dates bring prosperity, lotus and melon seeds will bring many children, and oranges _____ wealth. Ancestors are remembered with offerings of food. The table is usually covered with a red cloth and red candles, and often there are 12 courses to represent the 12 animals of the _____ .
7. The dragon and the lion are other popular symbols of Chinese New Year. Many Chinese communities around the world celebrate with dragon and lion dances and parades through the streets with people dressed in _____ costumes. Of course, a Lunar New Year celebration would _____ without loud and colourful fireworks.
8. In many Chinese communities, the new year is celebrated as an official holiday for three or four days, but often the celebrations continue until the Festival of Lanterns, _____ is on the 15th day of Lunar New Year.