Chinese New Year

Red paper envelopes for sale

The most important Chinese holiday is the Chinese New Year. In China it is also known as the Spring Festival and begins on the 10th February 2013. This marks the start of the Year of the Snake. The festival lasts for 15 days and ends with Lantern Festival. Chinese New Year is not a religious event, it is a time to celebrate, remember family members and to wish everyone happiness, peace and prosperity in the coming year.

Chinese New Year is celebrated in Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and also in Chinatowns around the world.

Families spend lots of money buying decorations, presents, food and new clothes. People also have their hair cut. Houses are decorated with lights and cleaned from top to bottom to get rid of any bad luck from the old year and to make way for good luck.

On the Eve of Chinese New Year, families get together and have a large feast. Chicken, pork, duck and sweet things are eaten at the feast and the night is ended with firecrackers which are meant to scare away evil spirits. The next morning, children wish their parents a healthy and happy new year and are given red paper envelopes called 'Hong Bao' with money or sweets inside.

Myths and Legends

Tales and legends say that the Chinese New Year is started with the fight against Nian, a mythical monster. On the first day of New Year, Nian would come to the village and eat people's livestock, crops and even children! Villagers put food outside their homes to protect themselves. They believed that if the Nian ate the food, it wouldn't attack any more villagers. One day, people saw that the Nian was scared away by a child wearing red. People then started hanging red lanterns on their windows and doors when the New Year was about to come. Nian stopped coming to the village and was eventually caught by Hongjun Laozu, an ancient Taoist monk.

The Chinese calendar is made up of a cycle of 12 years. Each year is named after an animal. Below are the animals that make up the Chinese zodiac.

1	zi (rat)	7	wu (horse)
2	chou (ox)	8	wei (goat)
3	yin (tiger)	9	shen (monkey)
4	mao (hare, rabbit)	10	you (rooster)
5	chen (dragon)	11	xu (dog)
6	si (snake)	12	hai (pig)

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Name: _____ Subject: Themes - Holidays and months

Date: _____ Sheet: Chinese New Year

Read the information sheet about the Chinese New Year on the previous page and answer the questions.

a) In China, what is the Chinese New Year also known as?

_____

b) How many days does the festival last? _____

c) Name three places that Chinese New Year is celebrated.

_____

d) Why are houses cleaned from top to bottom before the New Year?

_____

e) Why do Chinese people set off firecrackers?

_____

f) What is Hong Bao?

1. Red lanterns **2.** Red paper envelopes

3. Red scrolls **4.** Firecrackers

g) What is Nian?

_____

h) When did the Nian come to the village?

_____

i) What colour is believed to have scared away the Nian? _____

j) Write down five animals that make up the Chinese zodiac.

_____

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