

# Chinese New Year

## Topic

Chinese New Year

## Aims

- To revise numbers 1-100 and dates
- To revise vocabulary of animals and names of family members
- To practise listening skills
- To encourage cultural awareness
- To practise the use of the future simple

## Age group

Primary

## Level

A1 - A2

## Time

60 minutes

## Materials

1. Flashcards for each of the animals (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog and pig) and a flashcard of a king and his daughter, the princess.
2. Blu tak or magnets
3. Red paper to make lanterns (optional)

## Introduction

The Chinese New Year is one of the many colourful events celebrated in our multicultural calendar. You are no doubt familiar, for example, with the Year of the Snake (2013), the Horse (2014) or the Goat (2015). But do you know the story of the Chinese New Year and how the years got named after animals? Below (in bold) is the story of the Chinese New year - this lesson is based on that story.

## Procedure

<b>1. Stage 1 – Before story-telling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise the numbers 1 – 12</li> <li>• Revise dates (see <a href="http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/calendar-based-activities">http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/calendar-based-activities</a> and talk about last year, the old year, 2014, and this year, the new year, 2015.</li> <li>• Write the date of 3 February on the board and ask pupils if they know what is special about this day. Depending on your class, elicit anything they know about the Chinese New Year in their first language if necessary or tell them it is Chinese New Year. Get children to locate China on a map. Find out if anyone knows the story of the Chinese New Year and elicit the names of the animals.</li> <li>• Elicit or introduce names of the animals by showing the flashcards one by one saying its name, getting pupils to repeat and then sticking them on the board. Introduce each animal in this way, revising the others as you do so.</li> <li>• Now play a few games with the flashcards to practice vocabulary, e.g., What's missing?; Listen and point, e.g., Show me the dog! Children point; Classifying: Give me the name of a reptile/mammal/bird, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Stage 2 – Storytelling</b>	<p>Tell the story making use of your classroom board with the flashcards stuck on it in the following sequence.</p> <p><b>'Long ago in China, there lived twelve animals.'</b> Count 1 - 12 encouraging pupil participation. <b>'There was a rat'</b> invite pupils to point to the picture of the rat and repeat, <b>'an ox,'</b> now point to the pictures only and invite pupils to say the name of the animal, <b>'a tiger, a rabbit, a dragon, a snake, a horse, a ram, a monkey, a rooster, a dog and a pig.'</b></p> <p><b>'When the old year was coming to an end, all the animals began to quarrel noisily. Each one wanted the New Year to be named after it'</b>. Mime quarrel or say the word in the L1 to convey meaning.</p> <p><b>'The animals made such a noise that even the king heard the quarrel from far away.'</b> Mime noise and introduce the flashcard of the King - you could put your hands over your ears pretending to be the King hearing all the noise.</p> <p><b>'The king had a clever daughter. She asked the animals why they were quarrelling.'</b> Introduce the flashcard of the daughter then pretending to be her speak</p>

directly to the animals and say "Why are you quarrelling?"

**"I want to have the New Year named after me", said the tiger.**

**"Me too", said the rat.**

**"Me too", said the ox.**

**"Me too", said the rabbit.**

**"Me too", said the dragon.**

**"Me too", said the snake.**

**"Me too", said the horse.**

**"Me too", said the ram.**

**"Me too", said the monkey.**

**"Me too", said the rooster.**

**"Me too", said the dog.**

**"Me too", said the pig.**

Point to the tiger as you say the word. Then say 'Me too said the ...' Point to the flashcard and get the pupils to say the name. Repeat a couple of times then point to the dragon and encourage pupils to say 'Me too' continue in this way.

**'The princess said, "We shall have a swimming race across this river. The winner will be named after the New Year.'**

**'The animals agreed. They lined up on the bank of the river. "One, two three, go!" shouted the princess.'**

Mime swimming if necessary and draw a river and the two banks on your board moving all the animal flashcards to one side to line up.

**'All the animals jumped into the river and began to swim to the opposite bank. Very soon the ox was in the lead. But he didn't see the crafty rat who climbed up his tail and onto his back.'**

Move the animals into the river and put the ox in the lead and then the rat on his tail and back.

**'When the ox was near the bank, the rat ran along the ox's head and jumped onto the grass. "I am the winner!" said the rat." Well done", said the king. "The New Year will be named the Year of the Rat".**

Using the flashcards show the rat running along the ox's head and jumping onto the grass.

**'The princess felt sorry for the other animals as, one by one, they finished the race. "The next eleven years can be named after the other animals", she said. And so the order is, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.'**

Using the flashcards show the other animals finishing the race in the sequence above.

**3. Stage 3 –  
Second telling**

Tell the story again. This time give the animal, king and princess flashcards to pupils and get them to participate in the story as above and by moving and sequencing the flashcards in response to the story. Pupils without cards will continue participating in the storytelling. Give all pupils the opportunity to have a flashcard role in subsequent retellings.

**4. Stage 4 –  
Acting out the  
story**

This story can easily be acted out by the children using the simple props of the classroom board and flashcards as rehearsed. Pupils could act out the story for another class or parents

**5. Stage 5 –  
After story  
follow-up  
suggestions**

**1. Which animal are you?**

Revise numbers and the names of the animals and stick each flashcard on the board.

Introduce dates by saying and writing the dates as follows encouraging children to supply the date as they get used to how they are said,  
E.g. nineteen seventy two, two thousand and one etc.

You can print out the following chart that shows the years and the animals, or Project it from the internet.

Rat: 1984, 1996, 2008

Ox: 1985, 1997, 2009

Tiger: 1986, 1998, 2010

Rabbit: 1987, 1999, 2011

Dragon: 1988, 2000, 2012

Snake: 1989, 2001, 2013

Horse: 1990, 2002, 2014

Ram: 1991, 2003, 2015

Monkey: 1992, 2004, 2016

Rooster: 1993, 2005, 2017

Dog: 1994, 2006, 2018

Pig: 1995, 2007, 2019

Ask a pupil, 'When were you born?' Pupil replies, e.g. 'Nineteen ninety four.' Ask, 'What animal are you?' Help the pupil find the animal as necessary and introduce the reply, 'I am the dog'. Repeat with the other pupils.

If you would like the children to write provide the following model for them to copy:

*I was born in .....*

*I am the .....*

If you wish, depending on time available and level, you could extend this to the child's family:

*My brother/sister/mother/father was born in .....*

*He/she is the .....*

## 2. Craft activities

You may be able to do these activities in collaboration with the regular class teacher or an art teacher. Remember that they can sometimes be time-consuming and require specific materials and preparation for them to be successful.

Do not lose sight of the language opportunities craft activities offer for giving instructions in English, checking, praising etc. Use English all the time and demonstrate each step clearly ensuring that all children are following.

### *Make a Chinese lantern*

Children may like to make lanterns to decorate their classroom or take home. See [www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/lantern/](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/lantern/) Red is the traditional colour which is meant to ward off evil spirits so try to use red paper.

### *Make a fortune cookie.*

This activity will practise the future using 'will'. You can simplify the craft activity using paper for the cookies instead of felt. The objective is to get children to write fortunes as they would in a fortune teller.

E.g. *You will be happy. You will have good luck. You will have a long life. You will be rich etc.*

### *Make a Red Packet*

This involves married couples giving children and unmarried adults money in red envelopes. Get children to make an envelope out of red paper and draw a picture of the animal for this year on the front. You may like to introduce Chinese currency, the Yuan, and use this as another opportunity to practise numbers. Children could draw their own Chinese notes to put in their envelopes see [www.chinatoday.com/fin/mon/](http://www.chinatoday.com/fin/mon/)

## Contributed by

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