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ACTIVITY

Readers' Theater: The Lantern Festival

A performable script about the Lantern Festival, which closes the fifteen-day celebration covered here.

chinesezodiac.com/teachers/readers-theater/lantern-festival

REFERENCE

Chinese New Year Guide

Deeper coverage of the traditions in the vocabulary table.

chinesezodiac.com/chinese-new-year

PRINTABLE

Chinese New Year Decorations

Lantern and banner templates to pair with the decoration vocabulary.

chinesezodiac.com/printables/decorations

English	中文	Pinyin	Notes
Spring Festival (Lunar New Year)	春节	<i>Chūnjié</i>	The Chinese name for the Lunar New Year holiday.
Happy New Year	新年快乐	<i>Xīnnián kuàilè</i>	The most common New Year greeting.
Wishing you wealth and prosperity	恭喜发财	<i>Gōngxǐ fācái</i>	A classic festive greeting hoping for prosperity.
Red envelope	红包	<i>hóngbāo</i>	A red packet of money given as a gift, often to children.

English	中文	Pinyin	Notes
Reunion dinner	年夜饭	niányèfàn	The family meal eaten on New Year's Eve.
Dumplings	饺子	jiǎozi	A traditional festive food, especially in northern China.
Spring couplets	春联	chūnlián	Paired good-luck verses on red paper pasted by the door.
Dragon dance	舞龙	wǔlóng	A dance with a long dragon figure held on poles.
Lion dance	舞狮	wǔshī	A performance by dancers in a lion costume to bring good luck.
Lantern	灯笼	dēnglóng	Red lanterns are hung as festive decorations. Often pronounced with a light (neutral) second syllable: dēnglong.
Firecrackers	鞭炮	biānpào	Set off to welcome the new year and drive off bad luck.
The character "fortune"	福	fú	Pasted on doors, often upside down, to invite good luck in.
Red color	红色	hóngsè	The lucky color of the festival, seen everywhere.
New Year's Eve	除夕	Chúxī	The last night of the old year, when families gather.

Bilingual Reading Passage

In China, the Lunar New Year is called the Spring Festival, or Chūnjié (春节). It is the most important holiday of the year, and families travel long distances to be together.

On New Year's Eve (除夕, Chúxī), the whole family shares a big reunion dinner (年夜饭). In the north, many people eat dumplings (饺子). Children receive a red envelope (红包) with money

inside, which is meant to bring luck.

Homes are decorated in the lucky color red (红色). People paste spring couplets (春联) beside the door and hang the character for fortune, fú (福), often upside down. In the streets, you may see a dragon dance (舞龙) or a lion dance (舞狮).

When you meet someone during the festival, you can say "Xīnnián kuàilè" (新年快乐), which means "Happy New Year." To wish someone wealth, you say "Gōngxǐ fācái" (恭喜发财). These greetings fill the air for days.

Practice Exercises

Exercise 1: Match the Word

Match each Chinese term to its English meaning.

1. 红包 a. Dumplings
2. 饺子 b. Spring Festival
3. 春节 c. Red envelope
4. 灯笼 d. Lantern

Exercise 2: Fill in the Greeting

Complete each greeting with the missing word.

1. To say "Happy New Year," you say: 新年 _____ (kuàilè).
2. To wish someone wealth, you say: 恭喜 _____ (fācái).
3. The lucky color of the festival is _____ (hóngsè).
4. The family meal on New Year's Eve is the _____ (niányèfàn).

Exercise 3: Speaking Practice

Practice these out loud with a partner, using clear tones.

Greet your partner with "Xīnnián kuàilè" and have them reply.

Name three festival foods or decorations in Chinese.

Tell your partner one thing your own family does for a holiday.

Answer Key

Exercise 1: 1-c (红包 = Red envelope), 2-a (饺子 = Dumplings), 3-b (春节 = Spring Festival), 4-d (灯笼 = Lantern).

Exercise 2: 1. 快乐 (kuàilè), 2. 发财 (fācái), 3. 红色 (hóngsè), 4. 年夜饭 (niányèfàn).

Exercise 3: Answers will vary; check for correct greetings and a clear attempt at tones.

Cultural Notes

- Red stands for luck and joy, which is why envelopes, couplets, lanterns, and clothing are all red during the festival.
- The fortune character 福 (fú) is often hung upside down on purpose. The Chinese word for "upside down" sounds like the word for "to arrive," so an upside-down 福 is a playful way to say "fortune has arrived."
- Dumplings are popular in the north partly because their shape resembles old gold ingots, a wish for wealth in the coming year. In the south, families may eat other lucky foods instead.
- The celebration lasts about fifteen days and ends with the Lantern Festival, when families hang lanterns and eat sweet rice balls under the first full moon of the year.

How to use this in class: Introduce a few terms at a time and have students practice the greetings as short dialogues. Read the passage together to see the words in context, then work through the exercises and check the answer key. Pair the vocabulary with images of the foods and decorations so learners connect each word to the tradition it names.

Vocabulary verified against standard Chinese references. We welcome corrections from native speakers and educators — please get in touch if you spot anything to improve.