

Chinese New Year Lantern Festival

A festival is a celebration. Festivals take place all around the world for different reasons. They are fun and can be an opportunity for families and friends to spend time together.

The Chinese New Year Lantern Festival originated in China but is now celebrated in many places around the world. In London, it is called the Magic Lantern Festival. The festival is the final day of the Chinese New Year Celebrations and usually takes place in February or March.



Many people have different ideas about how this festival began. Here is one of them:

Long ago in ancient China, there lived a palace maid named Yuanxiao. The emperor didn't allow her to leave the palace which meant that she missed her family very much.

Yuanxiao had a friend called Dongfang Shuo. He told the emperor that the God of Fire had ordered the city to be set on fire on the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar year. The emperor needed to stop this from happening. Shuo told him that the only solution was to let off fireworks and hang red lanterns all around the city as the God of Fire liked to watch a fire show. When the time came, the people let off firecrackers and the lanterns shone brightly. Yuanxiao also helped by making dumplings for the god to eat; she hoped it would distract him and save the city from the fire.



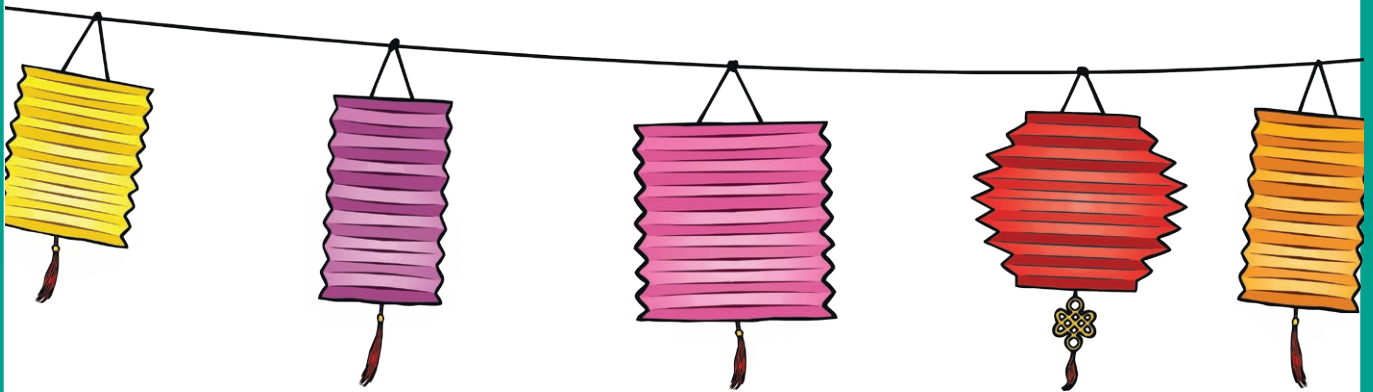
Luckily, the plan worked and the city was saved.

Yuanxiao was allowed to leave the palace and see her family. This is why the festival has become a time for families and friends to be together.

The emperor enjoyed the display so much that he announced that there would be a lantern festival every year. This meant that Yuanxiao could visit her family again.

Lanterns

Lanterns of various shapes, sizes and colours can be seen in homes, shopping centres, parks and streets. Most lanterns are red as this is believed to be a lucky colour. Some lanterns are decorated with pictures of birds, flowers or fruit.



Activities

During the festival, you may see firework displays. Tangyuan (sweet dumplings) are eaten and riddles are attached to lanterns. If you can solve a riddle, you could win a prize from the lantern owner.

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Riddles

Can you solve these riddles?



I'm an arch.
I am different colours.
Many believe you'll find a pot of gold at the end of me.
What am I?



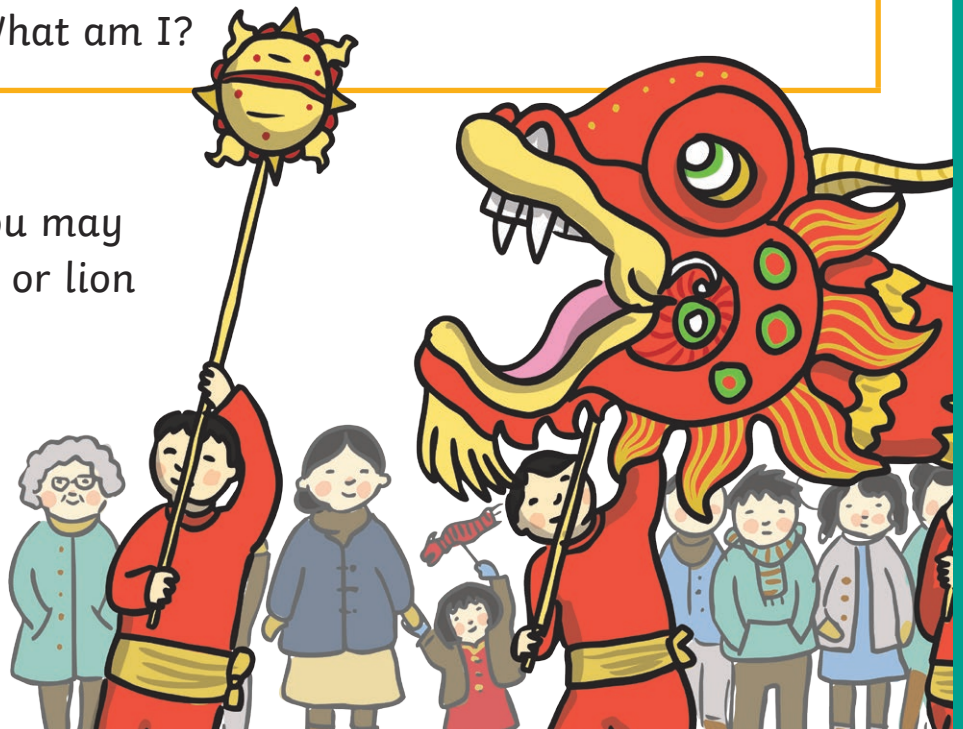
I live in a flock.
I eat grass.
My coat is fluffy and warm.
What am I?



I am many colours or only one.
I was a home but now I'm not.
You might hear the sea in me.
What am I?

At the festival, you may also see a dragon or lion dance.

The lion is a symbol of strength and bravery.



Questions

1. Using the text, give a synonym of the word 'festival'.

2. Why do you think different people have different ideas about how the festival first started?

3. Why was Yuanxiao sad at the beginning of the story?

4. What was the name of Yuanxiao's friend?

5. Why was she happy at the end of the story?

6. When does the festival usually take place?

7. What is a riddle?

8. What could have happened if the God of Fire hadn't been distracted by the fireworks, lanterns and dumplings?

9. Why are lanterns mainly red?

10. What does the lion symbolise?

Extension Task

Write your own riddle. Can a friend solve it?