



## MINIS AT HOME

volume 1, issue 20

Greetings kids, parents, grandparents, guardians, friends and neighbors!

Welcome to issue **20** of **Minis at Home** newsletter. Each newsletter features a special theme and offers pertinent information, one or more crafts, and recommended reading. Grownups: please work on projects together with your children. Your **participation** is important! We will offer hints and tips for ways to create art as a twosome or a family.

This week's theme = **Chinese New Year**

The Chinese New Year has given way to celebrations all over the world. If you don't live in or come from **China**, you may call this holiday the **Lunar New Year** (lunar means moon). These holidays are especially popular in Asian countries, such as **Korea**, **Vietnam**, and **Japan**. Can you find these countries on the map of Asia below?



The Lunar New Year holiday is a 15-day celebration that rings in the new year. The celebration began in ancient times to thank the Gods for the moon, sun and the changing seasons, as well as to welcome a new beginning. It is also known as the Spring Festival because this day marks the beginning of the spring season, even though it is still winter. In the U.S., we mark our first day of spring a little later in March, and we celebrate our New Year on January 1st. In ancient China, however, the calendar was not based on months or days of the week, but rather on the changing of the seasons and the phases of the moon and the sun. The first day of the Chinese New Year falls when there is a new moon (which happens to be Friday, February 12th, this year).

The holiday ends with the **Lantern Festival** 15 days later. This Lantern Festival is the final, and most important, celebration of the new year holidays. People celebrate by taking a walk outside at night and carrying lanterns. They also hang paper lanterns and other decorations all over their houses. New Year's decorations and lanterns are usually red, which means good luck and good fortune for the new year.



It's great to learn about people from other parts of the world and find out what's important to them. If you want to celebrate the Lunar New Year too, you can say "Gong hei fat choy" to wish someone a Happy New Year! If you want to hear a native Cantonese speaker pronounce this, here is a link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC8IAuG8DI>

Some traditions of the New Year holiday include eating a special meal with family and friends. Dumplings or “**jiaozi**” are a real treat. The shape of a dumpling looks the same as the silver and gold money that the ancient Chinese used. These were called **ingots**. If you ate a lot of dumplings, people believed you would have a good fortune and a lot of money.



People also eat cakes or “**niangao**,” make and decorate their houses with red and gold lanterns, blast off fireworks, and give money to each other in red paper envelopes.



Many people also eat fish as part of their special meals. Fish in Chinese is "yú" which sounds exactly like another word that means "extra." Eating fish during the New Year celebrations is thought to bring you extra luck, strength and health for the coming year. Children also make **carp** flags and kites. Carp are very important in China and other Asian countries because they are not only beautiful fish but very strong and brave swimmers.



### Activity: **Craft**

#### Festive Carp Flag



#### Materials:

- Construction paper (any color you like)
- Black marker
- Googly eyes (optional)
- Crayons, markers or paint for coloring the fish
- Ribbon, yarn, tissue paper cut into strips, or streamers
- Tape
- Scissors
- Shiny paper, foil scraps or sequins
- Aleene's Tacky Glue (for heavier decorations)

**Procedure:**

- Take a piece of construction paper and lay it out in landscape fashion.
  - Draw a half circle like a closing parenthesis on the left hand side of the paper.
  - Add 2 fish eyes inside the half circle for the eyes (or use googly eyes).
  - Using a black marker, draw fish scales all over the rest of the paper (sideways "u" shapes work great as fish scales).
  - Color or paint your fish, adding shiny sequins or scraps of shiny paper or foil.
- Tape ribbon or streamers all across the inside of the bottom of the end of the paper.
  - Turn the paper back over, fold it so the long edges meet, and tape it together into a cylinder shape.
  - Add a handle with ribbon or yarn.

Hang up your carp flag. Make several!

**What Chinese Zodiac Animal Are You??**

There are 12 animals in the Chinese **zodiac** (calendar), each representing specific years. These animals are **Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig**. It is said that the Buddha, a spiritual leader, invited all the animals to come celebrate the New Year, but only 12 animals showed up. Each year is named for one of the animals, rotating every 12 years, and if you are born in the year of a certain animal, you are said to have traits like that animal. This is the year of the **Ox**. Oxen help farmers pull ploughs for their fields, so they are associated with being hard-working, helpful, strong and calm.



What animal would you be? You can look at the chart below to see: Do you think you have any of the characteristics of your animal? Ask your grown ups if they have any characteristics of their animal.

### **RAT**

**Birth years:** 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020

**Personality traits:** Ambitious, charming, talkative, resourceful, private, frugal, critical

### **OX**

**Birth years:** 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021

**Personality traits:** Diligent, gentle, hardworking, reliable, patient, materialistic, stubborn

### **TIGER**

**Birth years:** 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010

**Personality traits:** Confident, brave, magnetic, idealistic, thrill-seeking, arrogant, selfish

### **RABBIT**

**Birth years:** 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023

**Personality traits:** Kind, sensitive, artistic, romantic, judgmental, timid, refined

### **DRAGON**

**Birth years:** 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024

**Personality traits:** Outspoken, energetic, generous, intelligent, perfectionistic, egocentric, impatient

### **SNAKE**

**Birth years:** 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025

**Personality traits:** Clever, curious, alluring, wise, anxious, calculating, jealous

### **HORSE**

**Birth years:** 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026

**Personality traits:** Amusing, enthusiastic, independent, persuasive, irresponsible, moody, opportunistic

### **GOAT / SHEEP**

**Birth years:** 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027

**Personality traits:** Easygoing, empathetic, creative, cheerful, disorganized, impulsive lazy

## MONKEY

**Birth years:** 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028

**Personality traits:** Entertaining, intelligent, optimistic, sociable, fickle, secretive, unpredictable

## ROOSTER

**Birth years:** 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029

**Personality traits:** Adventurous, charitable, funny, loyal, argumentative, boastful, self-involved

## DOG

**Birth years:** 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030

**Personality traits:** Helpful, honest, trustworthy, unselfish, pessimistic, anxious, timid

## PIG

**Birth years:** 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

**Personality traits:** Caring, generous, smart, outgoing, fearful, impatient, materialistic

(adapted from [oprahmag.com](http://oprahmag.com))

## Activity: Paper Lantern Craft



### Materials:

Watercolor paper

Brush

Red Paint

Markers

Shiny paper, foil scraps, sequins or gold glitter

Ruler or straight edge

Scissors

Tape

Gold ribbon or yarn for handle

**Procedure:**

Paint the paper red, adding your own gold and black decorations such as swirls and stars or attaching scraps of ribbon or shiny paper. You may add glitter if you want.

When the paper is dry, fold it in half lengthwise.

Draw pencil lines about an inch apart from each other, beginning at the folded edge and stopping at about 1 inch from the open edge (this is only if you want a guide for your child to follow when cutting).

Cut along the pencil lines, being careful **not** to cut all the way through to the open edge.

Open up the paper and tape the short sides together.

Once taped, and you have a tube shape, you can gently press down on the top and bottom of lantern to allow the slits to open so you have a lantern shape.

Tape a handle inside the top so you can hang up your lantern.

Many New Year's celebrations include dances with people dressed in dragon or lion costumes. The dragon and lion dances were supposed to scare away any evil spirits left over from the past year to "clean" up for the new year for a fresh start!

**Activity: Move and Dance****New Year's Dance:** (from [kidsparkz.com](http://kidsparkz.com))

(use your whole body)

Firecracker, firecrackers,  
 Boom-boom, boom-boom,  
 Red lanterns, red lanterns,  
 Swing-swing, swing-swing,  
 Dragon dance, dragon dance,  
 Stomp-stomp, stomp-stomp,  
 New Year, New Year -  
 Open the door and COME IN!





### Lion Dance Song

(tune: *Mary Had a Little Lamb*)

See the lion dance and prance  
dance and prance, dance and prance  
See the lion dance and prance  
On Chinese New Year's Day



Hear the firecrackers pop  
pop pop pop, pop pop pop  
Hear the firecrackers pop  
On Chinese New Year's Day

See the children laugh and clap  
Laugh and clap, laugh and clap  
See the children laugh and clap  
On Chinese New Year's Day

### Happy New Year: (original source unknown)

(tune: London Bridge)

Gong hei fat choy we will say  
We will say, we will say  
That's the Chinese New Year's way  
Gong hei fat choy!

Gong hei fat choy we will say  
We will say, we will say  
On this Chinese New Year's Day  
Gong hei fat choy!



**Literacy: RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

**Snuggle up in a big comfy chair and read together**

*Lunar New Year* by Hannah Eliot

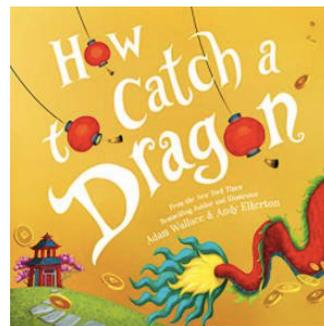
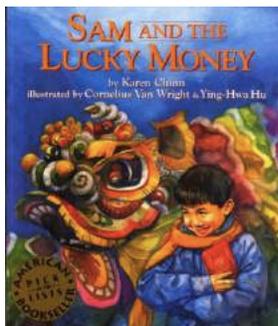
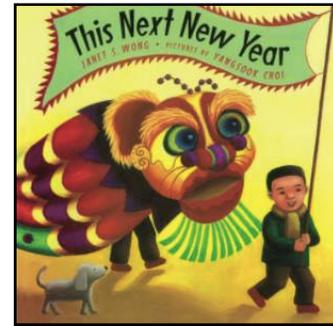
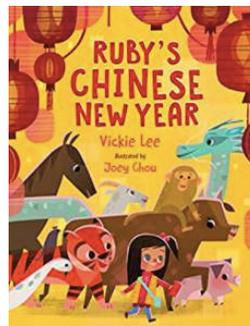
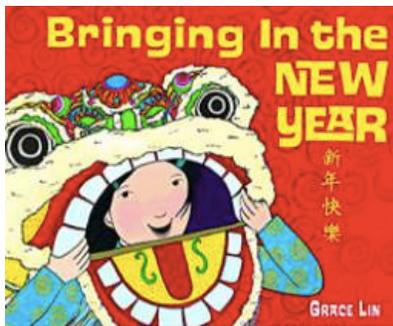
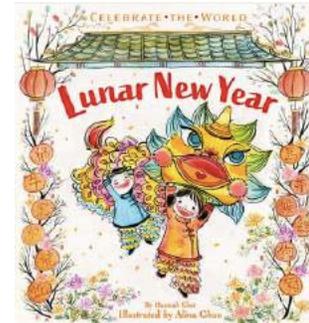
*Bringing in the New Year* by Grace Lin

*Ruby's Chinese New Year* by Vickie Lee

*This Next New Year* by Janet S. Wong

*Sam and the Lucky Money* by Karen Chinn

*How to Catch a Dragon* by Adam Wallace



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See you next week with issue 21 of **Minis at Home!**

Share your work on <https://www.instagram.com/minimastersaam/>

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