A week of learning about the Chinese Lantern Festival

**Day 1:**  What is the Chinese Lantern Festival and where did it originate?

Have a conversation with younger children about what they think the word festival means? For older children, jump right in with when they think about a festival/celebration, what do they think of? Have them tell you things as a person, family and/or community that they celebrate ~ holidays (New Year, Christmas, Hanukkah, birthdays, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, etc) How do they go about celebrating these things? Make a list on chart paper. You will use this later on. Explain to the children that today we will learn about another celebration: The Chinese Lantern Festival. Ask if anyone has heard of it and what they know about it or has anyone been to the Chinese Lantern Festival?

**Share a quick background history:**

**Before sharing the history you may want to be ready to explain a few things:**

**\*\*\*** Difference between a lunar calendar and the solar calendar:

Lunar follows the moon patterns and it takes about 354 days to complete 12 lunar cycles, whereas the solar calendar lasts 365 days and is the amount of time it takes the Earth to travel around the sun. This is more consistent and is the one we use.

**\*\*\*** In ancient Chinese times, they believed, like many other places, that there was a god for everything.

The festival is celebrated every year, not on a certain day, but on the fifteenth day of the first month in the lunar calendar. During this time they pray for a good harvest, and gain favor from Tian, god of heaven.

The history of the lanterns dates back over 2,000 years ago in a time when Monks would light candles and put them up in their temples. The Emperor at the time, Ming, ordered everyone including the palaces to light lanterns on that particular evening. From there the tradition has grown into what it is today, a world wide event that is held in 40 countries up to over 500 cities that over 300 million people have visited around the world.

You can watch this video to share a little bit more about the lantern festival, the myth of how it got started and other aspects of the lantern festival. It is a 7 min video and the author shares how to pronounce some words in chinese. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfQAgA9VNog>

You can use the AEIOU method of recapping the video. With younger children, the teacher can scribe on the board, but with older students, they can get a sheet of paper and along the side, write AEIOU. Next to each letter share the following:

A - something that was awesome

E - something that made you excited

I - something you found interesting

O - something that made you go Ooooo

U - something you want to understand more about

\*Students can work in groups or individually. Have students share their ideas.

Reading Activities:

Younger students will enjoy a quick read of Lanterns and Firecrackers by Johnny Zucker. They can also listen to it <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NihYy9Tmdw> The author of the video shares how to pronounce different words from the book in chinese after reading the book. Children will enjoy learning new words in a different language.

Older students might enjoy The Red Lantern by Irma Grant, <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B077V8DG7M/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1>

(description and if need to purchase)

Activity:

Younger students: After reading the story, teacher can create a venn diagram to

compare the Chinese Lantern Festival with a celebration that all children have in

common ~ their birthdays. What are some similarities between the two and what

differences can the students find?

Older students: Have students work in pairs or small groups to create their own venn diagram and then share with the class.

Social Studies Activities:

Google slides to help: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ze6ky09nAVUlCeXH2UlupQ-GVAFF41sYqQP-_CjWIKg/edit?usp=sharing>

Younger students ~ get a globe or use the Google Slides above to show the students where we live: USA, specifically NC and then show them where China is. Talk about how they think the lanterns could arrive in NC.

Using a world map, <https://www.coloringpagebook.com/world-map-coloring-page/world-map-coloring-page/> , color in China and USA. Use the map to find the passage the lanterns take from Zigong to NC. Do they think it would take a short time or a long time to get to NC? (hint: it takes 40 days to travel on boats and trucks to get to Koka Booth)

Older students ~ Use a globe or a map in above Google Slides to display the world and find North America, USA, NC. Then show them where China is and then explain that in China they have provinces, similar to our states and then find the Sichuan Province and then Zigong.

Use the same map as above to locate and color: USA and China. If you would like to print the big world map on one side of the paper, then use the following 2 maps on the back to break it down further, like in Google Slides, use these 2 links below for the US Map and Chinese Province map.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state#/media/File:Map_of_USA_with_state_names_2.svg>

<https://www.maxpixel.net/China-World-China-Map-Map-Globe-Asia-Chinese-1356803>

**Day 2:** Why lanterns?

Start the day’s lesson with a little review of what we learned yesterday. Ask the students the following questions:

* When is the Chinese Lantern Festival held every year? fifteenth day of the first month in the lunar calendar
* What are they celebrating? To pray for a good harvest, and gain favor of Taiyi, god of heaven
* How do they celebrate? Making lanterns and having a celebration.

Using the Google Slide presentation,<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Cmxc6E7ubmWj8W_9DONoLzUGtuKIHr-UyEf_MadnBB4/edit?usp=sharing>, go as far in depth as you want with the history of the lantern festival as you review or watch the 7 minute video in the slide presentation.

Explain to the children that while the celebration started 2000 years ago, it was not always the same as we see today.

\*lanterns were much simpler in ancient times

\*only emperors and people who had a lot money (nobleman) had very fancy,

ornate lanterns.

\*While there have been many rulers, emperors, throughout China’s history, they

have all had a part in keeping the tradition of the Chinese lanterns alive and

turning it into what it is today. From Emperor Yang inviting others countries to come and visit to the different emperors extending the festival to 5 days. As these ideas came about, they began to spread to the bigger cities in China. As time went on, it became more and more popular throughout China. During hard times in China, they still found a way to continue with the Festivals. (the video goes through a couple of the emperors)

\*In 1964, Zigong, a city in China’s Sichuan Province, hosted the first modern

lantern festival and is considered as the starting place of the modern day

lantern festival.

\*Show video of the Zigong Festival as it is in China in Google Slide

Why Lanterns and not something else… Do they remember the myth about the Jade Emperor and the Fairy Crane?

**CHINESE MYTH ABOUT LANTERNS**

The Jade Emperor and the Fairy crane

"The stories say that a long time ago, a fairy crane got lost on Earth and was killed by a hunter who was ignorant of the bird’s origin. In the agrarian age, it was normal for villagers to kill wild beasts to protect humans and their property. However, the Jade Emperor, the ruler of heaven and the owner of the crane, became angry and decided to punish the man’s world by setting it on fire, but the emperor’s daughter felt sympathetic and informed the villagers of the looming disaster.

The villagers lit lanterns and set off fireworks and firecrackers from the 14th to the 16th of the first lunar month. Looking from afar, the Jade Emperor thought the village was already burning and the village was spared.

The tradition has lived on ever since."

Show the following Google Slides to present what lanterns are and the different types of lanterns that can be created. There are some riddles for the students to solve, as riddles are popular to solve during this time.

Read: Mooncakes by Loretta Setto

<https://www.amazon.com/Mooncakes-Loretta-Seto/dp/1459814312/ref=pd_bkstr_rtpb_4?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=1459814312&pd_rd_r=21e23da9-813b-4ce4-8a11-0f23fe60fb5d&pd_rd_w=9wB5h&pd_rd_wg=ZjkIf&pf_rd_p=ce89d005-1905-48bc-a826-f3b57926b608&pf_rd_r=7WPS6R3Q12VFV6HQFVSA&psc=1&refRID=7PQ8E5SDEET23J4RSKMQ>

Or watch/ listen to the story: This story is animated and very engaging for children of all ages.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJLV3lPVXhs>

Some ideas to talk about after reading the story:

* How do you and your family celebrate your holidays? Compare and contrast how families share in celebrating different holiday traditions. This is a great way to show how each family is unique in their celebrations and being respectful of others traditions and celebrations.
* What are some foods that are typical of different holidays?

Activities for students to do:

Younger and older students will enjoy figuring out riddles.

\*At this website: <http://www.misspandachinese.com/chinese-lantern-festival-riddles/> you will find a riddle game that Miss Panda has created for you, and all you need to do is download.

Older students may enjoy creating their own riddles to hang on the end of their lanterns. Can they guess each other’s riddles? Students love to make jokes and figure out riddles.

**Day 3:** How are lanterns made?

Take a few minutes today to review what we have learned so far about the Chinese Lantern Festival.

Read: Lin Yi’s Lantern by by Brenda Williams and Benjamin Lacom

This book is a great book for all ages. There is a repetitive part of the story that younger children will enjoy participating in the telling of the story. At the end of the book, it shares how to create a lantern.

<https://www.amazon.com/Lin-Yis-Lantern-Brenda-Williams/dp/1846867932>

Can be watched/ listened to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64ULAnMa0bM>

Use GOOGLE SLIDES to help talk about the steps of how the lanterns are made:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Mku6AURpw8KYGkzYchZOObD1Ay7gJSRPstfvPhe23Oo/edit?usp=sharing> In the Google Slides, you will find the steps and some very fun videos that go to Zigong to show how the lanterns are made.

Activities for students to do today: Lantern making!

Younger students: Teachers may want to have a print out of a lantern pattern. Allow children to color or even paint different flowers or designs on their lanterns. If using paint, allow a day to dry before cutting and putting it all together. Other items you can use to decorate your lanterns ~ stickers, markers, streamers, foam pieces, ribbon, etc.

Simple paper lantern:

<https://printables4kids.com/chinese-new-year-printables/chinese-new-year-lantern-craft/>

Simple paper lantern with dragon or cherry blossom or plain ~ free if you subscribe:

<https://www.kitchentableclassroom.com/how-to-make-a-chinese-lantern-a-chinese-new-year-craft/>

This has simple, no pattern paper lanterns, paper mache and covering a jar to make a lantern. : <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Chinese-Lantern>

Older students: If they could design their own lantern, what would it be? How would they go about creating this? Using popsicle sticks, piper cleaner and tissue paper, can they create their own lantern? They will enjoy using some of the same materials as the younger students. You can also have the students go through some of the same process the artisans in Zigong go through: drawing out their design, planning materials they need to create their design, and then start creating their design.

Writing activity:

Pretend you are a lantern. Tell a story from your point of view. Here are some ideas of what you can tell us:

* Tell me how you were created.
* Tell me what kind of lantern and why you chose that lantern.
* How do you feel as millions of people come and look at you and make comments?
* Tell me about your journey from Zigong to being set up at the Chinese Lantern Festival.

Fun Fact:

Did you know the largest STANDING lantern according to the Guiness Book of World Record is 66 ft tall?

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-decorative-lantern>

\*Have children measure out 66 ft.

\*How many children “standing” on top of each other would it take to make 66 feet?

**Day 4:** Different types of lanterns and how did they get to Koka Booth?

Today you can use Google Slides: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1X60sprsC0zfADRXpGkgSysXFSINwJBhOdb6qqvUope4/edit?usp=sharing> to discuss what makes a lantern and the different types of lanterns children may see at the Chinese Lantern Festival.

Make sure to tell students that the lanterns change every year.

Lanterns are made in Zigong, but then have to be transported to wherever they are going to set up. This requires them to put the lanterns together when they get to their destination. There are artisans from the Tianyu Arts & Culture, Inc., who set up each lantern. They are in Cary for several weeks.

This video is specific to the Chinese Lantern Festival at Koka Booth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEHHYKpmy5w> by Offbeat Discoveries:

Watch from beginning until time: 1:34. This is a great visual history of bringing the lanterns over and showing the students where they come from and the history of the Chinese Lantern Festival arriving in Cary and staying.

From 1:34 to the end it is a viewing of all the lanterns and the hosts talking about their thoughts. A good view of 2019-2020 Chinese Lantern Festival

Another great video is from UNC TV (2017) that talks about Koka Booth and again reiterating that there are 24 artisans that come from China and stay in the US for weeks to help put the lanterns all together and set it up for what visitors will see at the lantern festival.<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7qrgg1l7VQ>

\*\*This video is from 2017, so dates are not correct. The correct dates for this year’s Chinese Lantern Festival are: Nov. 19, 2021 - Jan. 9th 2020

Today would be a great day to have your own Chinese Lantern Festival. Decorate the classroom or house with all the lanterns that have been created. If you are a classroom teacher and have students that celebrate Chinese New Year, do they want to share games they typically play during this time? Is there a particular food they are willing to bring in? Getting donations sent in from parents for mooncakes would be a fun way to wrap up the week.

If you want to be more inclusive: Today would be a great day to celebrate everyone’s unique heritages. Have children send in small bites (at least one per person in class) of various foods from their traditional celebrations with a write up of what they are and ingredients. This will help some children try new foods and learn more about different cultures.

**Day 5:**  Today you will be attending the Chinese Moon Festival during the day.

What are you hoping to see?

When you have returned from seeing the lanterns, what are some thoughts and feelings the students have about seeing the lanterns? Have students journal about their favorite lantern or lantern group and explain why they felt that way.

The class can take a survey and turn the survey results into a graph to organize the data and then ask math questions about the graph.

\*\*All information used on Google Slides and lesson plans came directly from the Tianyu Arts and Culture, Inc. Group\*\*\*