

Chinese New Year

Celebrate Chinese New Year with us!

This teacher's supplement is to be used with Project Pullout #31, which is found in issue 84 of DMAG. Students will learn about Chinese New Year celebrations, about other cultures and how immigration has influenced the Australian identity.

This supplement encourages students to:

- Understand how shared customs, practices, symbols and traditions in communities contribute to Australian and community identities
- Learn about different people, their beliefs and the ways in which they celebrate
- Realise the importance of past and present people, days and events in their life and in family and community life.

Celebrations: 15 Minutes of Fame

Chinese New Year isn't just about 15 days of partying. Traditionally, certain days within the 15 day event should be spent doing certain things like visiting relatives and paying respects to gods and ancestors. As a class, find out how each of the fifteen days is meant to be spent/celebrated and write these in a timetable on the board. Make sure you include the following:



Courtesy City of Sydney

- Lantern festival
- The birthday of all dogs
- The birthday of man
- Day to honour the Jade Emperor
- Day to welcome the god of wealth

Art and Drama Chinese Opera

Read pages 44-45 of the Project Pullout and look at the images. Chinese opera is known for its bright costumes and bright masks. As a class, research what different colours on these masks mean and write the answers on the board. (E.g. Yellow symbolises fierceness and ambition).

The most renowned form of Chinese opera is the Beijing opera. In the Beijing opera, there are four types of characters: Sheng, Dan, Jing and Chou. Split the class up into groups of four and ask each member to research the role of one of the four characters. Then, ask each to make a mask out of cardboard for their researched

character – giving special attention to the mask's expression and colours.

In the same groups of four, ask each group to write and then perform a short, two-minute play involving their four characters. This play can be about anything they choose, but must use all four characters.

Maths: Calendars

Read pages 46-47 of the Project Pullout and then explain to the class that although we are familiar with the Gregorian calendar, other countries around the world use different calendars. Split the class into four and ask each group to research the following calendars.

- Islamic / Hijiri calendar
- Julian calendar
- Chinese lunar calendar
- Mayan calendar

In their research they must look at the following: what does the calendar

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base its dates on (the moon, the sun etc.) when was the calendar created, the number of months in the calendar's year, the number of days in the year, whether or not the calendar includes leap years and any significant dates within the calendar.

Extension: Leap Year

Ask the class what they think is the relevance of leap years. Get them to do some further research into the Julian calendar to help them answer this. What complications would we have today if the Julian calendar had not been amended to cater for that added quarter of a day per year?

Class Excursion: Chinese Culture

If you can, take a class trip to a Chinese temple or garden near your school. Whilst there, ask each student to draw or write a description of what they see. Ask them to take special note of any traditional symbols, dress or rituals that are taking place.

If you managed to visit a Chinese temple hopefully you will have seen some religious rituals being performed. As a class, discuss some of the things you noticed at the temple or garden. What type of temple/garden was it? How old was it? Were there any predominant colours? Were there any statues of gods in it? If so, how many? How were visitors paying homage to them? Did they have to do anything special e.g. taking off their shoes or prostrating to the ground?



Religion

The three main belief systems in China are Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism (or Daoism). Divide the class into three groups and get each to research the various belief systems. Their research should include the following:

- Is the belief system native to China, or was it introduced through another country?
- What are the system's main beliefs? How do its followers practice these beliefs in their everyday lives?
- Does the belief system have a god, multiple gods or no god at all? What beliefs surround this/these gods?
- What percentage of China believes in that belief system?
- Many Chinese pay respects to and worship their ancestors, what does this involve?

Extension

There are five major belief systems in the world. One is Buddhism, but what are the other four? Ask students to find out the answer and then do some research on each. What are their

major similarities and differences? What other religions can they think of? If they want, get them to share some information about their own religion and what rituals and beliefs they have.

HSIE: The Gold Rush

Read page 50 of the Project Pullout and discuss as a class what the significance of Chinese immigration during the gold rush was to forming our Australian identity. What remnants of their time here have been left behind?

Immigration

Chinese immigrants have played many roles in Australia's history. Ask each student to choose a significant event in Australia's history in which the Chinese have played a role. They are then to write a one-page essay about it and how it has contributed to Australia's history.

Alternatively, students may choose to interview a person who is an Australia immigrant about their journey and experiences. This is then to be written up as a one-page recount.

English: Primary Accounts

Read aloud the story on pages 48-49 entitled *My Chinese New Year*. As a class, discuss celebrations and/or festivals that the class has. Ask if anyone has any unusual dates that are especially significant. Ask each student to write a first-hand account of this celebration.