

Station 1

Chinese New Year (Winter)

The Chinese New Year is the most festive and joyous of all the celebrations. The New Year begins on the 20th day of the first moon which may fall anywhere between January and March. It provides a break from the cold and monotony of winter. In the old days, preparation began weeks in advance, and festivities lasted a full month after New Year's Day from the new moon to the full moon. The families would plan and prepare large meals for the celebration. About ten days before the New Year, families and businesses begin sweeping away the old year by cleaning out their houses and shops. Artists paint new poems on red paper for people to place in their homes and shops. Large branches of plum blossoms are bought to decorate the homes much like Christmas trees in the West.

On New Year's Eve, family members gather together for a feast and to welcome in the new year. Firecrackers explode to frighten away evil spirits and to celebrate joy and happiness. New Year's Day is a time for remembering ancestors and for visiting close friends and relatives. The children wait in anticipation to see who will stop by and bring them red envelopes filled with good luck money. **Lion dances** are performed in the streets to bands of gong and drum players, accompanied by more explosions of firecrackers. Lion dances are processional-like dances in which a person parades underneath a hand-crafted lion or dragon head and other people often trail behind with its body made of colorful streamers. (See illustration on p. 20)

Chinese Cultural Activities

The Family in Traditional China. The family was the most important unit in traditional China. The family was organized along strict lines of authority, or hierarchy. This hierarchy was supposed to reflect the natural organization of government and society. The practice of ancestor worship made the family the focus of traditional religion. Rituals in the home honored the previous three generations of dead ancestors.

The family was also the base of political organization. In a system of mutual responsibility, each individual in a household was responsible for the actions of others in the family. Families within a community were responsible for one another. People described government leaders from the emperor down to local village officials as the father and mother of the people.

Sometimes the Chinese family was an extended family group. As many as 100 or more relatives lived together under the rule of the eldest male. The ideal was "five generations under one roof." However, only the rich ever achieved this ideal. Most Chinese households were usually limited to close relatives: parents, their unmarried children, their eldest son, and his wife and children.

The status of each person in the family depended upon his or her position by birth or marriage. The eldest generation had the greatest authority. Within each generation, sex and age determined authority. Most typically, the father was the center of authority in the Chinese family. His word was "law"; in theory he controlled all the family property. He arranged his children's and grandchildren's marriages, and he punished disrespectful children strictly.

The most important obligation of Chinese family life was filial piety, in which a son (or daughter) was expected to respect the father in

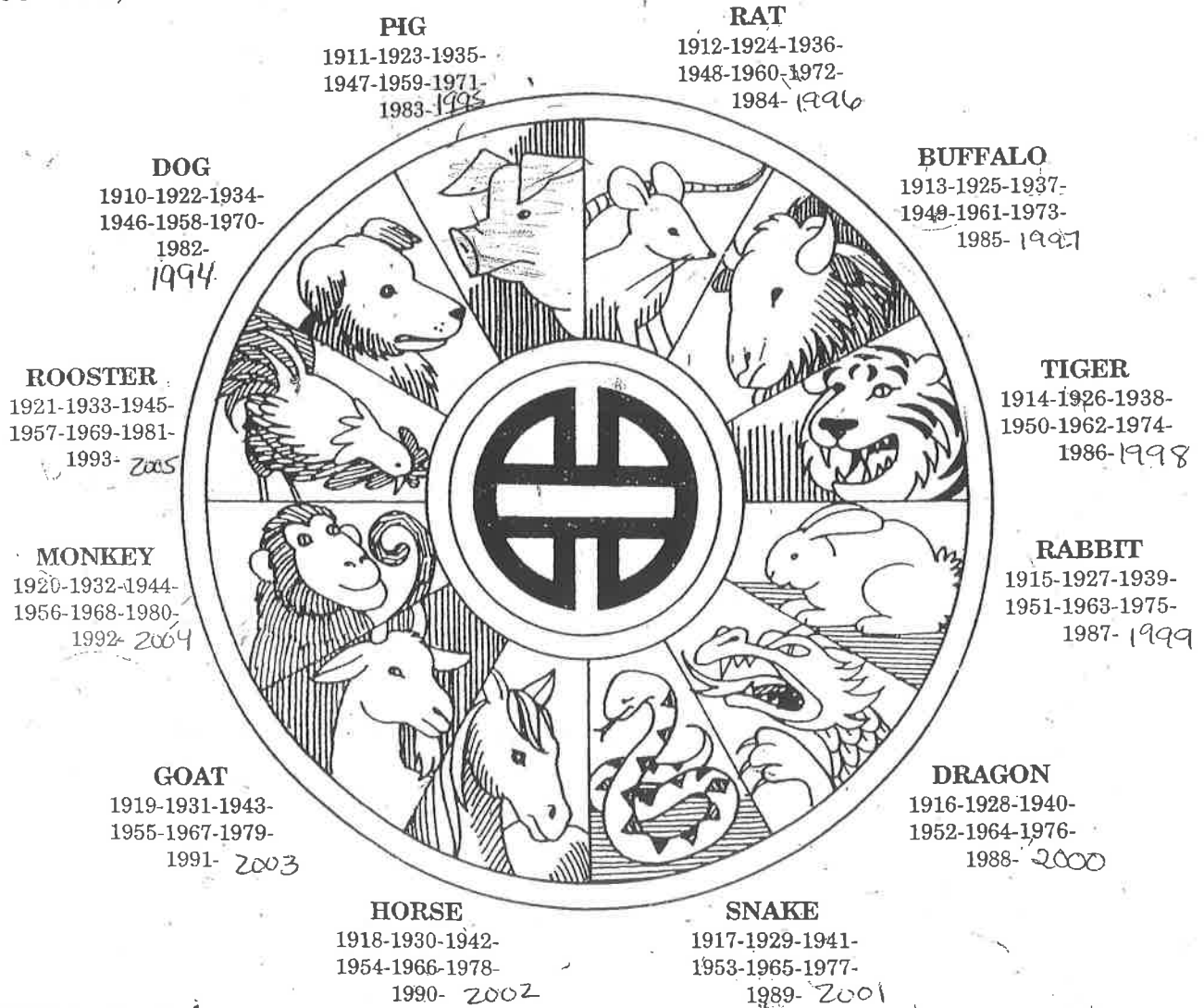
all things.
all things

Station 2

Station 3

The Chinese Zodiac

The Chinese have an astrological zodiac chart based on a cycle of 12 animals. Below is a diagram of the chart. Have the children locate their animal sign based on the year in which they were born. Then read the personality traits associated with that animal. Birth years provided below date from 1910, so children can look up the signs of their grandparents and parents as well as their own. Though the years labelled below end with 1993 at the sign of the Rooster, they continue in sequential order, clockwise around the chart (i.e., 1994—DOG, 1995—PIG, and so on).



MONKEY—You are very intelligent, clever, and well-liked by everyone. You will have success in any field you try.

ROOSTER—You are a hard worker and definite in your decisions. You are not afraid to speak your mind and are, therefore, sometimes boastful. You will make a good restaurant owner, publicist, or world traveler.

DOG—You are honest and faithful to those you love, but you tend to worry too much and find fault with others. You will make an excellent business person, teacher, or secret agent.

~~G~~—You are a good friend because you are sincere, tolerant, and honest, but by expecting the same from others, you may be terribly disappointed. You will thrive in the arts as an entertainer, or you may make a great lawyer.

RAT—You are imaginative, charming, and very generous to those you love, though you do have the tendency to be quick-tempered and overly critical. You will be happy as a writer, critic, or publicist.

BUFFALO—You are a born leader, and you inspire confidence in those around you. Be careful about being too demanding. You are also methodical and good with your hands. You will make a good surgeon, general, or hairdresser.

TIGER—You are sensitive, emotional, and capable of great love, but you tend to be stubborn about what you think is right. You will make an excellent boss, explorer, or race car driver.

RABBIT—You are affectionate, cooperative, and always pleasant, and people like to be around you. You can, however, get too sentimental and seem superficial. You will make a successful business person, lawyer, diplomat, or actor.

DRAGON—You are full of life and enthusiasm and a very popular individual with a reputation for being “funloving.” You will make a good artist, priest, or politician.

SNAKE—You are wise and charming. You are also romantic and a deep thinker, but you tend to procrastinate and be a bit stingy about money. You will make a good teacher, writer, or psychiatrist.

HORSE—You are an amazingly hard worker and very independent. Although you are intelligent and friendly, you can sometimes be a bit selfish. You will find success as an adventurer, scientist, or poet.

GOAT—You are charming, elegant, and artistic, and you like material comforts, but you also have a tendency to complain about things and worry a bit too much. You will make a good actor, gardener, or beachcomber.



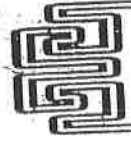
The Traditional Role of Women. Women were subordinate to men. According to tradition, they obeyed their fathers in youth, their husbands in middle age, and their sons in old age. Only sons could carry on the family name and offer sacrifices to their ancestors. Because of this, families prized baby girls less than male ones. In times of famine, girls were often killed at birth (infanticide) or raised and sold as servants.

Most marriages were arranged in traditional China. Marriage was more a union of families than of individuals. The family of the bride gave her a dowry of property and possessions that went with her to the household of her husband. Professional "matchmakers" brought suitable families together and helped work out the financial terms of the marriage. A family might also adopt a child bride and raise her within the family for future marriage for a son. Whatever her age, the bride went to live with the groom's family and was under the thumb of her mother-in-law.

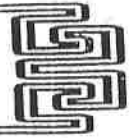
Wife of eldest male is responsible for the actions of her son's wives.

Station 4

Station 5



IDEOGRAPH CHARACTERS



sun

moon

vehicle

horse

man

heart

tree

eyes

fish

mouth

dog

hand

go

field

see

stream

return

father

make

walk

Pinyin

English Equivalent

r	as in right
s	as in sister
sh	as in shore
t	as in top
u	as in too
w	as in want
x	as in she
y	as in yet
z	as in zero
zh	as in jump

one	—	yi
two	—	er
three	—	san
four	—	si
five	—	wu
six	—	liu
seven	—	qi
eight	—	ba
nine	—	jiu
ten	—	sh'i



please	—	qing
thank-you	—	xiexie
hello	—	ni hao
China	—	zhongguo
right	—	you
left	—	zuo
tea	—	cha
rice	—	mi fan
friends	—	pengyou
United States	—	Meiguo
I don't understand	—	wo budong
yes	—	shi
no	—	bushi
good-bye	—	zai jian



Paint large posters suitable for a nursery using the Chinese numbers and simple objects to illustrate them. Decorate your classroom.

Illustrate some of the vocabulary words in poster form as well.

Have a brief conversation with a friend.

Family size. China's huge population is a major threat to modernization. In the years of Communist rule, the population has doubled. The government has taken strong measures to limit population growth. As part of its program, the government has encouraged young women and men to delay marriage until they reach their mid- or late twenties. It has also adopted a one-child-per-family policy. To enforce the policy, the government mixes penalties and rewards. Families that accept the one-child limit receive wage raises and other benefits, such as first chance at scarce apartments. Those who insist on having more than one child are fined or receive only limited food rations for the second child.

China's family planning program has had mixed success. In cities, where housing is scarce, many families follow the government's strict guidelines. In rural areas, however, peasant families still want large families. They can use the extra labor. Also, if the first child is a daughter, many parents will try again, hoping for a son.

"I've born nine children," admitted one peasant woman in 1987. "The first was a boy, but he died. Then I had seven girls. . . . Only the ninth time did heaven send another son." She paid increasingly large fines for each child.

Station 6