

CHINESE LANTERN



MAKE A CHINESE LANTERN FOR THE ASIAN NEW YEAR.

Materials:

- Clear contact paper
- Red tissue cut in tiny squares...about 1/2 inch
- Red crepe paper birthday streamer
- Permanent marker

Start with a small 6" square of clear contact paper. Use a permanent marker to draw a lantern shape on the contact paper. Remove the backing and place contact paper sticky side up on your work surface. Fill lantern outline with colored tissue squares. Cut a 6" length of red streamer in half so it is about 1" x 6". Cut fringe on the end and hang from the bottom of your lantern. Place your lantern in a sunny window and enjoy! *Gung Hay Fat Choy!*

For teachers and parents, background information about
The Asian or Lunar New Year is on page 2

THE LUNAR NEW YEAR

In China named *Nian*, in Vietnam named *Tet*, and in Korea named *Seol*, the Asian or Lunar New Year comes at the end of each cycle of twelve new moons, which means generally sometime between late January and Presidents Day. Each Lunar New Year bears the name of one of twelve animals. Legend has it that once when the Lord Buddha summoned all the animals, only twelve came, and so he named each year after one of them: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. People born in a given year are supposed to have some of the characteristics of that year's animal. The new year of 2003, by the way, number 4701 in the Asian calendar, is the year of the ram. You can be glad you will not be born in 2004, which is the year of the monkey.

Celebration of the Lunar New Year, which begins twenty-two days before New Year's Day and continues fifteen days afterwards, is very much centered on the family. In preparation, homes are scrubbed, children are freshly

clothed, and large quantities of flowers and tasty snacks appear everywhere. On New Year's Eve, families gather together for an elaborate feast which includes dried fruit, sweet and salty cakes, and sausages. Children are given red envelopes filled with *Lai-see* or "lucky money." Children also try to stay up as late as they can because they believe it will ensure long lives for their parents.



On the fifteenth day of the new year comes the Festival of Lanterns, which includes the long dancing dragons you see on television. According to one of many legends about the Festival, the heavenly Jade Emperor, angry at a town for killing his favorite goose, threatened to burn it to the ground. Warned in advance, the townsfolk displayed every lantern they could find, and the Jade Emperor, seeing all the light, believed the town had burned up on its own and took no action.

Throughout all these festivities, people greet each other with *Gung Hay Fat Choy!* "Best wishes and have a prosperous New Year!"

GUNG HAY FAT CHOY!