## Lesson Title: Celebrating the Chinese New Year

### Country: China  
**Class:** Geography; art  
**Grade level(s):** 2nd Grade

### Goals and Objectives

**The student will be able to:**
- Locate China on a map and on a globe.
- Learn respect and appreciation of another culture.
- Compare how the New Year is celebrated in United States and China.
- Name the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac.
- Create a paper wall chart featuring the animals of the Chinese Zodiac.
- Tell the story of the order of the animal years in the Chinese Zodiac.

### Time required/class periods needed: 5 30+ minute classes

### Primary source bibliography:

Maps, globes  

### Other resources used:

- The Story of the Chinese Zodiac retold by Monica Chang (in English and Chinese) (Yuan-Liou Publishing Co. Ltd)  
- Chinese New Year by David F. Marx  

### Required materials/supplies:

- Venn diagram, maps, globes, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, pictures of Zodiac animals, folk tale about zodiac animals, paper, printer
**Vocabulary:**

**China:** A large country located on the continent of Asia.

**Continent:** A large landmass.

**Chinese New Year:** A holiday whose date is determined by the Lunar calendar. It is usually celebrated between January 21st and February 20th.

**Chinese Zodiac:** A time-keeping system that runs on a 12-year cycle. Each year is “governed” by an animal and those born during a particular animal’s year, have the attributes of that animal. All animals in the zodiac have positive attributes and some animals get along better with other animals. This can be used in matchmaking! (see website: [http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/social_customs/zodiac/](http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/social_customs/zodiac/))

**Lunar Calendar:** A calendar based on the cycles of the moon.

**Solar Calendar:** Based on the cycles of the sun. The wester zodiac is composed of twelve signs (Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn) distributed across the 12 months of the year and divided into four basic elements; fire, earth, air, and water.

**Procedure:**

**Day 1:** Introduce China through maps, globes, reading selected materials (teacher’s choice) and watch a video from Discovery Education about China. ([http://school.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/china/](http://school.discoveryeducation.com/teachers/china/))

**Day 2:** Review China’s location on a map and globe. Discuss what New Year Celebrations look like in the United States. Discuss what happens during the Chinese New Year. Tell students that the Chinese Zodiac is also used in Japan, Korea and Mongolia. Complete Venn Diagrams together.

**Day 3:** Read folk tale about how the order of the animals of the zodiac was chosen either from the book or the retelling attached below. Show PowerPoint with authentic Chinese paper cuts depicting the 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac (saved on lesson plan website as Celebrating the Chinese New Year PowerPoint). Discuss how, according to legend, those born in a particular year of an animal are said to possess particular character traits associated with that animal. Print out coloring pages. Have students practice arranging animal in order. Color animal pictures.

**Day 4:** Assemble wall chart that shows the animals in their correct order and tells about their characteristics.

**Day 5:** Finish assembly of wall chart. Display wall chart in hallway.
Assessment/evaluation:
- Teacher observation
- Participation in class group discussions
- Completion of his/her section of the paper wall chart
- Completion of the Venn diagram
- Be able to name the 12 animals in the Chinese Zodiac
the West raced back on.

This is the story of how the years got named and why Cat and Rat hate each other. In this story, the animals' names are written in Chinese. Use the list on page 12 and 13 to figure out which animal is doing what when.

Long ago in Ancient China there was no way to mark the passage of time. So one day, the Tiān Zhū, the god of heaven, said, “We need a way to keep track of the years. Here’s my idea: Let’s hold a race. The first 12 animals to cross the river and cross the finish line will become the signs of the zodiac.”

The animals were all very excited about the race. All except 猫 and 牛, that is. They were worried. 猫 was worried about the river. “I don’t even like the water. What will I do?”
Find our alter Chapter 3.

What animal is YOUR Chinese zodiac sign?

And that is why there is no animal like mine.

"You brought me here, Vincent. You're no friend of my friends!"

"What?" shouted Vincent. "I'm an animal too!"

"Well, you're late. All the places have been taken."

"Yes, Vincent. I'm an animal too."

"If it's not too late, I'll take you to the middle of the street."

"I'm an animal too."

Suddenly, Vincent came running up the driveway. He reached for the front of the animal's back and climbed on. Then, Vincent leaped over the fence and ran away.

"Yes, Vincent. You're an excellent swimmers, so you did not need to jump into the water."

"Then, they were just a few yards from the shore."

"And I'll be in the first place, my dear."

"Sorry," said Vincent. "I'm an animal too."

"I'll be in the first place too."