

Exploring Chinese New Year with Nova and Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the traditions, symbolism, and significance of Chinese New Year within the context of global religious and cultural celebrations.

Read each flashcard carefully to learn about the customs of Chinese New Year. Use the information to test your knowledge or quiz a partner.

What is the alternative name for Chinese New Year, reflecting the season it welcomes?

The Spring Festival.

How does the Chinese calendar differ from the Gregorian calendar used in the UK?

It is a lunar calendar based on the cycles of the moon rather than the solar year.

What are 'Hongbao' or red envelopes used for during the celebrations?

They are gifts of money given to children and elders to bring good luck and ward off evil spirits.

According to legend, what is the 'Nian'?

A mythical creature that would emerge at the end of the year, which is why people use loud noises and the colour red to scare it away.

Why is the 'Reunion Dinner' considered the most important meal of the year?

It is a time for family members to travel home to be together, strengthening family bonds and honouring ancestors.

What is the significance of the 12 animals in the Chinese Zodiac?

Each year is represented by one of twelve animals, and it is believed the animal representing your birth year influences your personality traits.

What specific colour is prominent during Chinese New Year and why?

Red, because it symbolises good fortune, joy, and prosperity.

How does the Lantern Festival conclude the celebration?

It marks the final day of the festivities with parades, riddles, and the lighting of paper lanterns.

Explain why cleaning the house before New Year's Day is a vital tradition.

It is believed to 'sweep away' the bad luck of the past year to make room for incoming good fortune.

Nova asks: Compare the concept of 'luck' in Chinese New Year to other traditions you know. How are they similar?

Answers will vary, but should focus on themes of hope, new beginnings, and shared community values.

Ellie asks: Why might a family choose to keep certain traditions alive for hundreds of years?

To maintain a connection to their heritage, ancestors, and shared identity.

What might happen to the spirit of the celebration if the focus shifted entirely to the money inside red envelopes?

The celebration might lose its emphasis on family unity, gratitude, and symbolic meaning.