

Celebrating the Lunar New Year with Ellie

Learning objective: To develop comprehension skills by identifying key cultural traditions and inferring the significance of symbolic customs during Chinese New Year.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below. Ensure you use evidence from the text to support your answers.

Ellie the elephant loves learning about global traditions. This year, she is fascinated by the Lunar New Year, a vibrant festival celebrated by millions worldwide. The date changes annually, following the cycles of the moon rather than the solar calendar. Families clean their homes thoroughly to 'sweep away' any misfortune from the past year, making room for incoming good luck. Ellie notes that red is the predominant colour, representing happiness and prosperity. Children often receive 'hongbao', which are decorative red envelopes containing money—perhaps a crisp £5 or £10 note—to bring them good fortune for the year ahead. The celebration culminates in the spectacular Lantern Festival, where the night sky glows with warm light. Each year is represented by one of twelve animals from the zodiac. Whether it is the Year of the Dragon or the Rabbit, the focus remains on unity, honouring ancestors, and sharing abundant feasts with loved ones. For Ellie, the most beautiful part of the festival is the sense of hope and the promise of a fresh, bright beginning for everyone.

Word bank: Lunar · zodiac · festivities · prosperity · tradition · symbolic · customs

1. According to the text, why do families clean their homes before the New Year starts? (2 marks)

2. What is the significance of the colour red during these celebrations? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the date of the Lunar New Year is not the same every year. (2 marks)

4. Why might a family choose to give red envelopes to children instead of other types of gifts? (3 marks)

5. Do you think the focus on 'fresh beginnings' is an important part of any festival? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene showing a lantern festival celebration, including at least three symbolic red decorations and one animal from the Chinese zodiac.



Extension challenge: Compare and contrast the Lunar New Year with another celebration you have studied. What might happen if a culture did not have any traditions to mark the passing of a year? Write a short paragraph justifying the importance of cultural heritage in modern society.