

Lunar New Year: Traditions and Symbolism

Learning objective: To understand the significance, customs, and symbolic meanings behind the Lunar New Year (Spring Festival).

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of cultural traditions to provide detailed, thoughtful answers. Max the monkey has provided a few clues in the word bank to help you with your reasoning.

Lunar New Year is a significant festival celebrated by millions of people across the globe, particularly in East and Southeast Asian communities. Unlike the calendar used in the UK, this festival follows the lunar cycle. Each year is associated with one of twelve animals from the zodiac cycle. Traditions focus on honouring ancestors, family unity, and welcoming good fortune for the year ahead. Common customs include cleaning the home to sweep away bad luck, decorating with red items, and enjoying a feast with extended family. The festivities traditionally culminate with the vibrant Lantern Festival.

Word bank: Lunar calendar · Zodiac animals · Red envelopes · Prosperity · Symbolism · Lion dance · Reunion dinner · Lantern Festival

1. Explain why the date of the Lunar New Year changes each year in relation to the Gregorian calendar used in the UK. (2 marks)

2. Compare and contrast the traditions of the 'reunion dinner' with a standard family meal. Why is this specific dinner considered so important? (3 marks)

3. In many traditions, the colour red is used extensively during the festival. Justify why this colour is chosen based on the cultural meaning of luck and prosperity. (2 marks)

4. Max the monkey is curious about the 'Zodiac'. If you were born in a year represented by a specific animal, how might the cultural significance of that animal influence a person's identity within this festival? (3 marks)

5. What might happen if a family chose not to clean their home or clear out 'old' belongings before the New Year? Explain the cultural reasoning behind this. (2 marks)

6. Evaluate the importance of the Lantern Festival as a concluding event. What does it represent in the cycle of the New Year celebrations? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a traditional scene featuring a red lantern, a decorative knot, or a symbolic food item like a dumpling or citrus fruit. Add labels to your drawing to explain the symbolism behind the items you have chosen.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are an event planner tasked with organising a community Lunar New Year celebration. Write a proposal for three different activities you would include, ensuring each activity has a clear link to the themes of harmony, family, or good fortune. Justify why these activities would be meaningful for a diverse community.