



Unit **1**

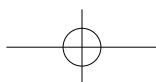
Understanding Chinese culture

In this unit you will learn

- ★ the origin and traditions of the Chinese New Year
- ★ how to use present participles as adverbials
- ★ how to introduce Chinese New Year traditions to foreign friends
- ★ how to become a confident English speaker



1



Around the topic

1 Your ideas

Work in groups or pairs and discuss the following questions:

1. Why is the Spring Festival so important for the Chinese people?
2. What do you usually do during the Spring Festival?
3. Are there any special celebration activities in your hometown during the Spring Festival?
4. In what ways do you think the Spring Festival has changed?



2 Vocabulary

There are some special things about the Spring Festival, which are difficult to translate into English. Here are some English words and expressions related to the Spring Festival. Try to guess their meanings.



lunar calendar

solar calendar

dumpling

firecracker

firework

Spring Couplets

New Year cake

New Year picture

reunion dinner

lion dance

red packet

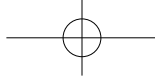
rice dumpling

New Year visit

New Year market

Lantern Festival





3 Listening and speaking

A. Listening

Li Ming and Susan are having a conversation. Listen to the recording and answer the following questions.

1. What are they talking about?
2. How did Li Ming spend his holiday?
3. What is Susan curious about?
4. What makes the Spring Festival different from other holidays?
5. What do Chinese people do on the Eve of the Spring Festival according to the recording?

B. Speaking

Do you agree with what Li Ming said about the Spring Festival? What is your opinion about it? Discuss this in groups.

4 A quiz

During the Spring Festival, some things are believed to bring good luck for the new year, while other things might bring bad luck. Read the items in the table below and decide whether they bring good luck or bad luck. When you finish, compare your answers in pairs.

| | Good luck | Bad luck |
|---|-----------|----------|
| 1. Bathing in pomelo leaves the night before the Spring Festival | | |
| 2. Buying a pair of shoes | | |
| 3. Buying books | | |
| 4. Eating fish on the Eve of the Spring Festival | | |
| 5. Eating sweets | | |
| 6. Getting a haircut in the first lunar month | | |
| 7. Having the house cleaned from top to bottom before the Spring Festival | | |
| 8. Opening windows and/or doors | | |
| 9. Sweeping the floor on the first day of the Spring Festival | | |
| 10. Keeping the lights on for the whole night | | |
| 11. Talking about death | | |
| 12. Visiting friends and relatives on the third day of the Chinese New Year | | |
| 13. Washing your hair | | |
| 14. Wearing clothes in black and white | | |

Reading

1 Pre-reading tasks

Before you read, discuss the following questions in groups:

1. Do you know why we call the Spring Festival “Nian”?
2. Do you know why we Chinese celebrate the New Year at a different time from the Western world?

2 Reading comprehension



The Chinese New Year

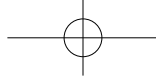
There are many tales associated with the Chinese New Year, or Spring Festival as it is often called. Legends about *Nian* are some of the most colourful!

Nian is a mythical monster which would terrorise humans around the time of the New Year. Indeed, *Nian* was so fierce and deadly that it threatened to destroy mankind. Worried about this, the Emperor summoned a wise man to solve the problem. Seeing with his own eyes the destruction that *Nian* brought, the wise man approached *Nian* with a challenge. “Why kill and destroy humans who are no match for your strength?” he asked. “Prove your real power by destroying the other monsters of the earth.”

Nian took up this challenge but one year later, having destroyed all the other monsters of the earth, *Nian* appeared again intent on terrorising mankind. However, it happened that on the day he returned some children were playing with firecrackers. *Nian* was

When you read an article in detail, it often helps if you highlight or underline the important parts. This also helps you to review important points later.





scared off by the loud noise, so from that time on, every New Year people set off firecrackers and other fireworks to scare away the last remaining monster on the earth—*Nian*.

Another legend about *Nian* concerns the red decorations that people put up on their windows and doors. The wise man advised “Red is the colour that *Nian* fears most!” Putting the red decorations outside their homes would protect people from the monster if it came back to trouble them again. This tradition has been kept from that day until now. Today, red decorations and firecrackers remain an essential part of the colour and fun of Chinese New Year.

Why do the Chinese celebrate New Year at a different time from people in the West? The traditional Chinese calendar, like many Asian calendars, follows the lunar cycle. So the New Year starts with the new moon on the first day of the new year and the celebrations end at the full moon fifteen days later. This day is called the Lantern Festival when traditionally people make paper lanterns and float them in the rivers or hang them from trees. A month is a “Moon” and the cycle lasts about twenty nine or thirty days. In order to catch up with the solar cycle, the Chinese insert an extra month every seven years. This month is called “run yue”. It is the same as adding an extra day in a leap year.

Although the celebrations for Chinese New Year start from the eve of the first day of the new year, the preparations begin a month earlier. People buy presents and new clothes, clean and decorate their homes and cook traditional food. Spring Cleaning has both a practical and symbolic value. Homes are cleaned from top to bottom. This is seen as a way to “sweep away” any ill fortune or unpleasantness from

the previous year and at the same time prepare the house for any good luck that the new year will bring! Doors and windows are repainted, usually in red to ward off evil spirits, and then decorated with Spring Couplets written in black ink on large vertical scrolls of red paper to bring happiness, wealth and longevity—and to warn off *Nian*!

Like many Chinese New Year traditions, the food prepared for the occasion is linked with ideas of good fortune for the coming year. Red meat would certainly not be on the menu because it is considered bad luck to eat it at this time. Fish, however, with its relationship to long life and plenty, is a traditional New Year favourite. Savoury dumplings called “Jiaozi”, eaten at the New Year’s Eve family gathering, are thought to encourage large and happy families. However, truly bad luck would be waiting on anyone who served them or ate them from cracked or chipped plates! Whatever lucky food is served at the party, there’s certain to be a lot of it. A table full of leftovers after everyone has eaten their fill is another sign of future prosperity!





A. Comprehension check

1. What did the monster do around the time of the Chinese New Year?
2. What was the wise man's solution to the problem of *Nian*?
3. Why do Chinese people set off firecrackers at the Chinese New Year?
4. Why do we Chinese insert an extra month every seven years out of a nineteen-year cycle?
5. Why do Chinese people do Spring Cleaning before the Chinese New Year?
6. What kind of food is associated with bad luck for the Chinese New Year?
7. Why do Chinese people have a lot of leftovers at the Chinese New Year party?

B. What is the significance of the following things during the Spring Festival?

- red decorations: _____
- fireworks: _____
- Spring Cleaning: _____
- repainting doors and windows: _____
- eating dumplings: _____
- eating fish: _____
- eating red meat: _____
- leftover: _____

C. Discussion

There are different traditions during the Spring Festival in different parts of China. Where is your hometown? What special traditions do you have in your hometown besides the traditions mentioned in the article? Form groups of four and share your knowledge with your group members.

3 Vocabulary and structure

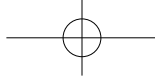
A. Work out the meanings of the underlined words with the help of the context. The first one has been done for you.

1. Indeed, *Nian* was so fierce and deadly that it threatened to destroy mankind. (Para. 2)

to be likely to harm or destroy something

2. "... humans who are no match for your strength?" (Para. 2)

3. ... other fireworks to scare away the last remaining monster on the earth—*Nian*. (Para. 3)



4. Legends about *Nian* are some of the most colourful! (Para. 1)

5. ... the red decorations that people put up on their windows and doors. (Para. 4)

6. ... remain an essential part of the colour and fun of Chinese New Year. (Para. 4)

7. A table full of leftovers after everyone has eaten their fill... (Para. 7)

8. ... is another sign of future prosperity! (Para. 7)

B. Fill in the blanks with the words below. Change the form where necessary.

approach

strength

vertical

ward off

be linked with

fortune

insert

summon

1. He comes to a point where he can no longer _____ up memories of faces, of places, even the time.
2. The young speak of _____, but the old speak of experience.
3. To validate your ticket, you have to _____ it into a machine on the platform.
4. The rocks rose almost _____ from the lake.
5. She was extremely _____ to escape without injury.
6. The president is under great pressure of producing a series of measures to _____ economic and political chaos.
7. In a world now where aid often _____ progress towards democracy, the government may eventually find this move an expensive one.
8. Few writers can even _____ Shakespeare in greatness.

C. Complete each pair of the sentences with the correct form of the same verb, one as a present participle (-ing) and the other as a past participle (-ed). The first one has been done for you.

1. play

I hurt my leg playing football.

Bridge is a card game played by four people.

2. make

There is a label “_____ in Korea” on my camera.

I have a job in a café _____ sandwiches.

3. write

I’ve spent the whole morning _____ an essay.

On the wall were some scratches _____ in big letters.

4. buy

Goods _____ in the sales cannot be refunded.

I’ve spent all my money _____ Christmas presents.

5. break

The police caught the burglar _____ into a house.

Careful! There’s a lot of _____ glass on the floor.



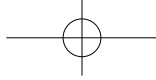
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Writing

Write down your experience about the Spring Festival. The following questions may help you to come up with some ideas.

1. How does your family prepare for the Spring Festival?
2. What traditional activities does your family do to celebrate the Spring Festival?
3. What special activity do you like most when you are celebrating the Spring Festival?





Language in use

1 Test your grammar

Look at the two sentences from the article we have just studied. Pay special attention to the highlighted parts. What grammatical phenomenon is it?

1. **Seeing with his own eyes the destruction that *Nian* brought**, the wise man approached *Nian* with a challenge.
2. *Nian* took up this challenge but one year later, **having destroyed all the other monsters of the earth**, *Nian* appeared again intent on terrorising mankind.

2 Grammar development: Present participles used as adverbials

English has two types of participles: the present participle and the past participle. The present participle is formed by adding the suffix “-ing” to the base form of the verb.

A. Rewrite the following sentences using the present participle.

1. When he saw the door open, the stranger entered the house.

2. As he was athletic, Tom found the climb quite easy.

3. I ran for the bus, tripped and fell.

4. If we ask a question, we should get an answer.

5. Although he lived miles away, he attended the course.

Grammar tips

现在分词所表示的动作与谓语动词表示的动作同时发生时，现在分词用一般式。例如：
Preparing a long speech for the president, the secretary worked late into the night.

现在分词所表示的动作先于谓语动词的动作时，现在分词用完成式。例如：*Having finished his homework, the boy went out to play football.*



B. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. Being Sunday, I shall have a quiet day at home.

2. Entering the house, the door closed with a bang.

3. Walking through the park, the flowers made a lovely sight.

4. Standing on the top of the church tower, the whole village could be seen.

5. Waiting for a bus, a brick fell on my head.

6. Having been away from his hometown for more than thirty years, no one recognised him.

7. Climbing to the top of the hill, there is a magnificent view to be seen.

C. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the brackets.

1. After _____ (think) everything over, she decided _____ (not leave) that day.

2. _____ (hear) the good news, they felt very excited.

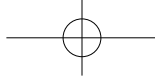
3. _____ (have) a good rest, the tourists felt quite refreshed.

4. It _____ (be) Sunday, the Smiths went on a picnic.

5. _____ (enter) the room, the messenger collapsed, his face _____ (cover) with sweat.

6. _____ (promise) to give her an expensive gift for her birthday, I can't go back on my word.





3 Vocabulary building: Word pairs

In English there are many pairs of words joined by a conjunction, usually *and* but not always. The order of the words is fixed. e.g.

I still see Jane now and again.

She ran up and down the road.

Marry me or leave me. It's all or nothing.

The traffic was so bad on the way to the airport that it was touch and go whether we would catch the plane.

A. Match the pairs of words in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

A

- () 1. wait and see
- () 2. ins and outs
- () 3. back to front
- () 4. odds and ends
- () 5. give and take
- () 6. grin and bear it
- () 7. by and large
- () 8. pros and cons

B

- a. be flexible
- b. generally speaking
- c. exact details
- d. put up with it
- e. small things
- f. be patient and find out later
- g. the wrong way round
- h. advantages and disadvantages

B. Complete the sentences using the pairs of words in Exercise A.

1. In any relationship you have to be prepared to _____. You can't have your own way all the time.
2. I didn't buy much at the shop. Just a few _____ for the kids.
3. You've got your T-shirt on _____. The words should be at the front.
4. It's difficult to explain the _____ of the rules of cricket. It's so complicated.
5. "What have you bought me for Christmas?"
"You'll have to _____."
6. "Oh, no! The Burtons are coming for supper! I hate their kids!"
"I'm sorry, but you'll just have to _____. It's only for an hour or so."
7. It was a very tempting job offer. I weighed up the _____, but I decided in the end that I wouldn't take it.
8. Britain has its faults, of course, but _____ it's a pleasant place to live.

C. Match a word in Column A with a word in Column B and a word in Column C to form a set phrase. Look for synonyms and antonyms. There are more words in Column C than you need!

A

now
more
safe
peace
sooner
slowly
sick
law

B

and
or
but

C

tired bigger
quiet less
later before
surely then
order
quickly
sound
healthy

You may write your answers here! e.g.
now and then

Project

Planning a Chinese New Year party

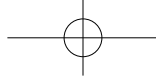
Step 1 Vocabulary.....

Think about what you would need to do in planning a Chinese New Year party. Make a list and check any new words in a dictionary.

Step 2 Talk to your neighbour.....

Suppose you are inviting a foreign friend to spend the Chinese New Year with your family. Talk to your partner about your plans. Brainstorm how to explain some typical Chinese New Year traditions to the foreigner.





Step 3 Role-play

Your foreign friend spends the New Year with your family. Practise with your partner conversations between you and the foreigner, taking turns to be the foreigner.

Step 4 Write a paragraph

Write a paragraph describing Chinese New Year traditions. Use some of the expressions you have learned.

Step 5 Show each other your writing

Put your texts on the wall and walk around the class to read other students' writings. If you have anything you don't understand, ask the writer what it means. Which parts do you like best in other students' writings?



Extension



Why do Chinese people love red colour?

From among a world of colours, red stands out the most. The colour red is fresh and pure, and in China we call it China Red. Chinese people are fascinated by the colour red not only because of its intoxicating liveliness, but also because of its rich meaning in Chinese culture and history.



It is believed that no country in the world has ever adopted a colour in such a thoroughgoing way as China, where red is a symbol that gives colour to the soul of the nation. In the past, red stood for dignity and mystery. Even now, we adore the colour much more than we love it. It can be said that China Red is an eternal theme for China, and an essential colour for the Chinese people. China Red has become a quite popular word, attracting the world's attention.

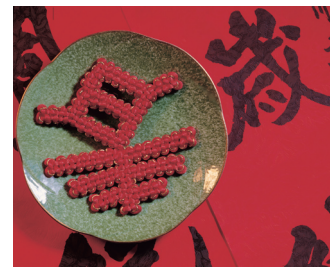


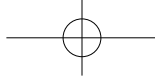
Shooting red-coloured things in China is an easy task, as its powerful presence can be found everywhere. All traditional red things have been playing special roles in China: the walls of ancient palaces, the national flag, Chinese knot, lantern, couplet, clothes, traditional paper-cuts for window decorations, and even red *tanghulu* (sugar-coated haws on a stick). Red is the colour of the lucky, signifying reunion, health, happiness, harmony, peace and prosperity. Only real things and events can fully display and explain its beauty. Only in its relation with people can the colour be alive and meaningful.

The best way to feel China Red is to stay in China during the Spring Festival or attend a Chinese wedding. To celebrate the Spring Festival—the most important festival in China—people will set off red firecrackers, paste red couplets on doorframes and red paper-cuts on windows, hang and light red lanterns at night, and give out red envelopes to kids.

In contrast to the use of white, especially with wedding dresses, popular in many Western countries, a Chinese wedding features the use of red, which is supposed to ensure a happy future for the couple. In a traditional Chinese wedding, you will find red everywhere. Red candles create a cozy and warm environment, and red Double Happiness characters are pasted on doors and walls. Red invitation cards are sent and guests present red envelopes. The wedding bed is covered with red bed sheets and red quilts. The couple walks down a red carpet, strewn with red flowers. Even at modern weddings, where the bride wears the Western white wedding gown for the ceremony, it is customary for her to change into something red for the reception.

In China, red is more than just a colour. It carries the ancient history and culture of the Chinese nation. China Red is filled with mysterious charm beyond description and it is right here in China waiting for you to feel, to discover!





Understanding
Chinese culture



Notes:

stand out: to have an easily seen shape, colour, etc.; be very noticeable 显著, 显眼

intoxicating: *adj.* making you feel happy, excited, and unable to think clearly 令人激动的, 令人陶醉的

shoot: *v.* to take photographs or make a film 拍摄, 拍照

1 Vocabulary check

Match the words in column A with their meanings in Column B.

A

- () 1. intoxicating
- () 2. thoroughgoing
- () 3. dignity
- () 4. adore
- () 5. eternal
- () 6. paste
- () 7. cozy
- () 8. strew

B

- a. comfortable and warm
- b. to love deeply and respect highly
- c. to spread here and there
- d. quality that earns or deserves respect
- e. very thorough; complete
- f. making you feel happy, excited, and unable to think clearly
- g. having no end; lasting or existing for ever
- h. to stick something to something else using glue

2 Discussion

Discuss the following questions in groups.

1. Why do Chinese people love the red colour?
2. What does the red colour stand for in Chinese culture?
3. What is the best way to feel China Red?
4. What colour is popular for the wedding dresses in Western countries?
5. How do Western people like the red colour?





Culture tips

Things NOT to do at the New Year

Avoid housework on the Chinese New Year's day: this activity runs the risk of washing or sweeping away good luck. For the same reason, avoid washing your hair on the first and last day of the New Year.

It is also considered unlucky to use anything sharp on New Year's day—knives, scissors, even nail clippers. The action of the sharp blades risks cutting the threads of good fortune brought in at New Year.

It is important not to use language which is negative—having an argument on New Year's

day is to be avoided at all costs.

Words related to sickness and death are to be avoided. This even extends to the use of words which sound like the words for death or sickness.

To avoid any association with death, any slaughtering of poultry or livestock is carried out on New Year's Eve. Finally, care must be taken not to stumble or to break anything—this would be indicative of bad luck ahead.



Learning to learn

How to become a confident speaker

The following are tips to help you to become a more confident speaker. Do you agree with them? Discuss in groups.

It's important to build your confidence. If possible, use the simple sentence structure that you know is correct, so that you can concentrate on getting your message across.

Try not to translate into and from your own language. This takes too much time and will make you more hesitant.

If you forget a word, do what native English speakers do all the time, and say things that “fill” the conversation. This is better than remaining completely silent. Try using “um”, or “er”, if you forget the word.

Don't speak too fast! It's important to use a natural rhythm in speaking English, but if you speak too fast it will be difficult for people to understand you.

Try to relax when you speak, and you'll find that your mouth does most of the pronunciation work for you. When you speak English at normal speed, you'll discover that many of the pronunciation rules, such as word linking, happen automatically.