

CELEBRATIONS



Lunar New Year

Lunar New Year is celebrated in the springtime by many Asian cultures including Bhutan, Tibet, China, Korea, and Vietnam. It goes by different names in those countries and sometimes even lands on different days. In most cases, it falls on the second new moon after the winter solstice. If you celebrated the New Year on January 1, think of this as a second chance for a fresh start. The themes of the celebrations are renewal, luck, health, and family and for many of these countries, it is the biggest event of the entire year. Everything shuts down for a few days and people gather, have picnics, visit family and friends, cook, eat, and make lots and lots of offerings. Some countries have parades and fireworks.

At the Middle Way School we have been exploring ways to make this day feel very special for the children, something they look forward to all year (see photos from past years [here](#)).

So far, each year we have invited the monks from [the local Tibetan monastery](#) to come and do a small ceremony. The students always love to watch ceremonies and rituals and to participate in small ways, throwing things in the fire, making offerings of flowers. One year we had a lovely dancer come and lead the children in a dance of the spheres to represent the rotation of the earth. We cooked momos (dumplings) for the parents and enjoyed snacking together. We also instituted what we call a Prayer Parade, which we do whenever there is a big day to celebrate. The children came to school wearing red. They were equipped with lots of flower petals, [koshi bells](#), candles, and incense and walked around the entire perimeter of the school singing various songs.

We also hand out one crisp dollar to each child in a red envelope, usually with a [protection cord](#) (also called a blessing cord) sent to us by one of the lamas who love our school. The children are instructed not to spend the money but to collect it and keep it somewhere safe. The string can be tied on a wrist, around the neck, or attached to a backpack or placed into a sacred space. One year we invented a ceremony around a disco ball where each child encircled the ball and we wished each child a very happy and healthy new year.

In the weeks leading up to New Year, we introduce art projects and activities related to the themes of the new year. Some animal years lend themselves to different kinds of activities. For the dragon year (2019) we had so much fun making [dragon twirlers](#) and reading all the dragon books. For the rat year (2020) we watched [a video](#) by our friend Chase and read various books about mice then we premiered our [school play about the life of the Buddha](#). There seem to be fewer books about Oxen. We are now working on a new lunar new year song.

Here are some resources for your own Lunar New Year planning. We would love to expand this list with any creative thinking you have. Please contact noa@middlewayeducation.org with your ideas, lesson plans, history, and other resources we can include. Enjoy! And 新年快乐!

Guiding Questions

- Does everyone celebrate the same new year?
- What other calendars are there? *Hebrew, Gregorian, Lunar ...[so many!](#)*
- If you could decide when to start the year, when would it be and why?
- What year is it? Why is it 2022? (see humanities below)
- How do they celebrate Lunar New Year in other countries (Bhutan, Tibet, China, Korea)? (SEE BELOW)
- Which animal year were you born in? [chart](#)

PREPARATION

- In the days before new year, students can work together to give the classroom and grounds a really deep clean, especially the altars and sacred spaces.
- They should also clean their rooms at home.
- Teachers can help clean shared spaces, organize paperwork, clear out clutter.
- Artwork and old work can all be sent home.
- The night before everyone can bathe and give an extra scrub.

CELEBRATION IDEAS

- All children wear red to school
- Administrators prepare red envelopes for each child with one crisp dollar
- Invite special guests and families
- Do a prayer parade
- Make dumplings and/or stone soup
- Have a daytime fireside singalong
- Decorate the school with red lanterns that the children make
- Perform a school play ([here](#) is our draft script)

ACTIVITIES in the FIVE DOMAINS

Sciences

- Delve into moon studies (MWS has a series of activities around the moon which will be uploaded soon)
- Make it a math problem! 2022 is 4719 in Chinese years. How much of a difference is there? What year was someone born? 2022 minus their age.
- In-depth habitat study of the animal whose year is starting (dragons might be difficult!)

Humanities

- Explore one of the cultures that celebrates Lunar New Year. Invite guests, school families, lamas, and others to talk about how they celebrate.

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- Students can learn what BC and AD mean. *Anno Domini* is Latin for "in the year of the Lord," referring to the birth of Jesus Christ. Discussion of Jesus as a historical figure. Also explain that C.E., the abbreviation for "Common Era" is also used to mark time. B.C. means "before Christ" and B.C.E. is before the common era.
- Tibetan and Bhutanese Lunar New Year is called Losar
- [Learn to write/say Happy New Year in Chinese](#) and [here](#). Or other languages (Losar Tashi Delek in Tibetan and Bhutanese)

Movement/Embodiment

- Create a playlist of songs from each country
- Research and teach some dances from the different regions
- Creative movement inspired from the 12 different animals
- Make momos! Tibetan dumplings take a lot of fine motor skills

Contemplation/Dharma

- Make offerings of light, incense, flowers, music, money, life, food
- Life release (Tshertar): Set free some creatures free that are being used for bait or feed (be very careful to use only indigenous species)
- Making or reconfirming aspirations (resolutions)
- Visit a temple
- Contemplate impermanence and change (see [impermanence unit](#))

Arts

- [Lanterns](#), candle making or butter lamp making
- [Make prayer flags](#) or this [activity](#) from the Rubin Museum or hang pre-made ones
- Design your own money - what symbols would you use?
- [Make origami envelopes](#) out of red paper and gold paint or [this one](#)
- Compose a song that includes all 12 animals
- Learn to tie [auspicious knots](#)

BOOKS

There is a need for more books about lunar new year. These are what we could find:

[*Why Cats Chase Mice: A Story of the Twelve Zodiac Signs*](#) (Japanese Fairy Tale Series) by Mina Harada Eimon (Author). Heian Intl Pub Co (1993), Edition: First, 32 pages

[*Chelsea's Chinese New Year*](#). (Cloverleaf Books) by Lisa Bullard (Author), Katie Saunders (Illustrator)

[*Chinese New Year*](#) (Rookie Read-About Holidays) by David F. Marx (Author)

[*Chinese New Year Wishes: Chinese Spring and Lantern Festival Celebration*](#)...by Jillian Lin (Author), Shi Meng (Illustrator)

[*Harmony: A Treasury of Chinese Wisdom for Children and Parents*](#). by Sarah Conover (Adapter), Chen Hui (Adapter), Ji Ruoxiao (Illustrator)

[*Maisy's Chinese New Year*](#): A Maisy First Experiences Book Hardcover – Picture Book, December 8, 2020 by Lucy Cousins (Author, Illustrator)

[*Chinese New Year Wishes: Chinese Spring and Lantern Festival Celebration*](#) (Fun Festivals Book 2) by Jillian Lin, Shi Meng (Illustrator). This bilingual book for young readers tells the story of Hong and his family as they prepare for Chinese New Year. It also includes more facts in the back.

We will be uploading a booklist about the moon soon.

OTHER RESOURCES

- [Here](#) is a great link about Lunar New Year
- [This resource](#) put together by the History Channel on Chinese New Year features information on how the lunar new year is celebrated in some other Asian countries.
- [Photos](#) of past MWS celebrations
- [Here's](#) a video on how to make traditional Lunar New Year sweet rice cakes
- Two minute podcast full of moon facts. Episode 1/16/21 is very good but there are others. <https://www.wamc.org/show/strange-universe>
- [The Chinese Astrological Years](#)
- [Why the 12 animals](#) from the BBC
- [Oprah](#) on Lunar New Year
- Watch a [dragon parade](#) - how would students build their own dragon?
- [Twinkle](#) has a lot of resources like these gross motor movement cards, some of them you have to pay for.

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- In this lesson plan, students learn about the different animals of the Chinese Zodiac, how they were chosen, and what they symbolize. It also includes helpful links to more resources.
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/animals-chinese-zodiac>
- Learn how to make your own mini dancing lion or dragon toy with paper.
<https://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/chinesenewyear/lion/>
- Check out [this video](#) for five more fun arts and crafts you can do at home to make decorations for Chinese new year.
- [This fun video](#) from Ted Ed gives a short and entertaining animated introduction to the animals of the Chinese Zodiac.
- [This resource put](#) together by the History Channel on Chinese New Year which features information on how the lunar new year is celebrated in some other Asian countries.
- Learn how different cultures celebrate new year at this time:

[CHINA](#)

[BHUTAN](#)

[TIBET / HIMALAYAS](#)

[VIETNAM](#)

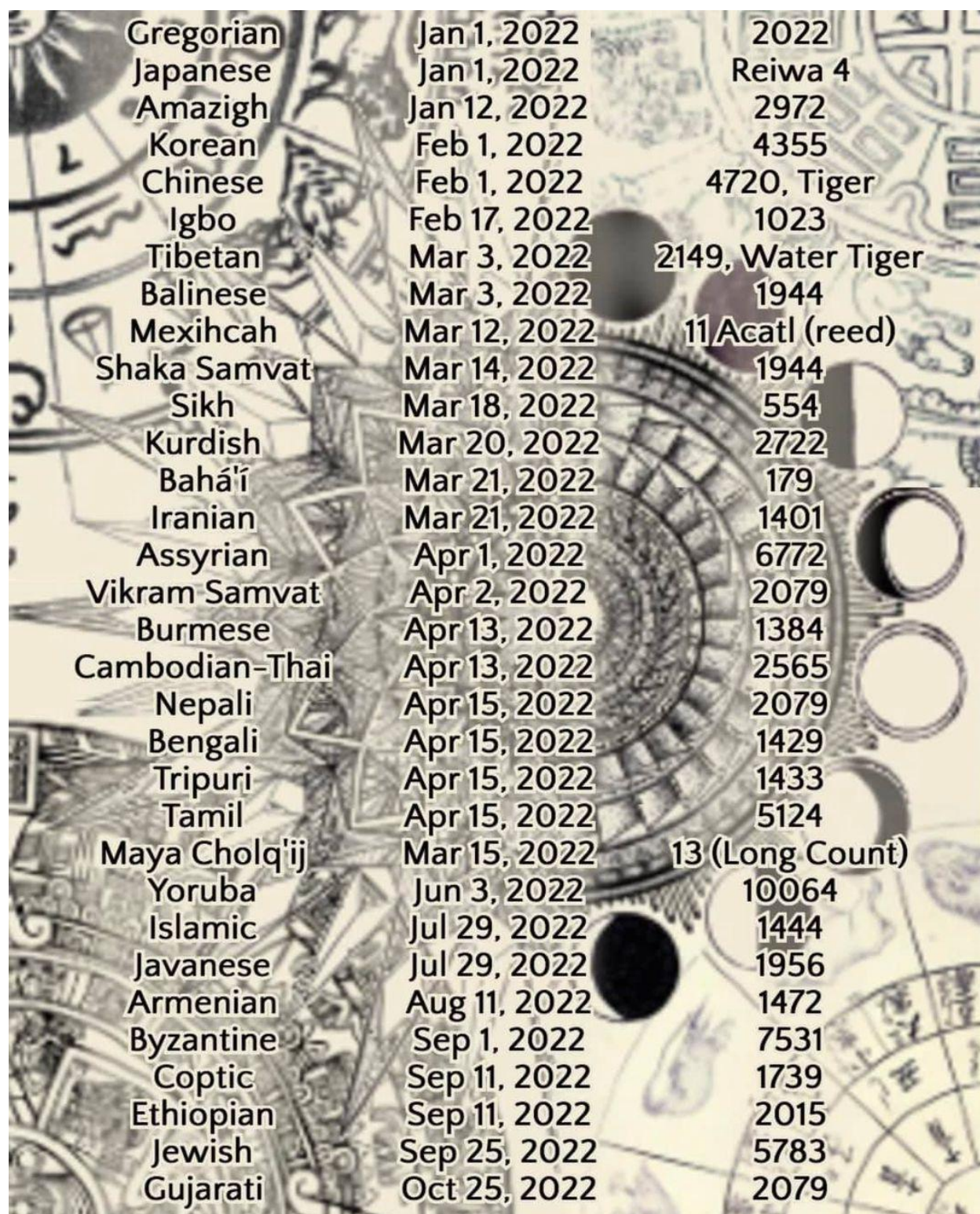
Or at slightly different times

[LAOS](#) (summertime)

[CAMBODIA](#)

[JAPAN](#)





Gregorian	Jan 1, 2022	2022
Japanese	Jan 1, 2022	Reiwa 4
Amazigh	Jan 12, 2022	2972
Korean	Feb 1, 2022	4355
Chinese	Feb 1, 2022	4720, Tiger
Igbo	Feb 17, 2022	1023
Tibetan	Mar 3, 2022	2149, Water Tiger
Balinese	Mar 3, 2022	1944
Mexihcah	Mar 12, 2022	11 Acatl (reed)
Shaka Samvat	Mar 14, 2022	1944
Sikh	Mar 18, 2022	554
Kurdish	Mar 20, 2022	2722
Bahá'í	Mar 21, 2022	179
Iranian	Mar 21, 2022	1401
Assyrian	Apr 1, 2022	6772
Vikram Samvat	Apr 2, 2022	2079
Burmese	Apr 13, 2022	1384
Cambodian-Thai	Apr 13, 2022	2565
Nepali	Apr 15, 2022	2079
Bengali	Apr 15, 2022	1429
Tripuri	Apr 15, 2022	1433
Tamil	Apr 15, 2022	5124
Maya Cholq'ij	Mar 15, 2022	13 (Long Count)
Yoruba	Jun 3, 2022	10064
Islamic	Jul 29, 2022	1444
Javanese	Jul 29, 2022	1956
Armenian	Aug 11, 2022	1472
Byzantine	Sep 1, 2022	7531
Coptic	Sep 11, 2022	1739
Ethiopian	Sep 11, 2022	2015
Jewish	Sep 25, 2022	5783
Gujarati	Oct 25, 2022	2079