

# Chinese New Year Comprehension Questions

1. What are the other names given to Chinese New Year?

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2. Why is Chinese New Year not on the same day each year?

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3. What types of celebrations might you expect to see in a western city like New York?

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4. Name three things that families do to prepare for the New Year.

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5. How do people celebrate New Year's Eve?

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6. What was the *Nian*?

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7. Why are firecrackers and the colour red used in New Year's celebrations?

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8. What is the purpose of the red envelopes on New Year's Day?

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9. What is the purpose of the Lion Dance?

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10. Where do the symbols for the Chinese Zodiac come from?

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# Chinese New Year Comprehension Answers

## 1. What are the other names given to Chinese New Year?

Lunar New Year and Spring Festival

## 2. Why is Chinese New Year not on the same day each year?

The dating is based on the lunar cycle and so the first day of the New Year can occur anytime between 21st January and 20th February.

## 3. What types of celebrations might you expect to see in a western city like New York?

Parades and lion dance displays – these are common in New York, San Francisco and Sydney.

## 4. Name three things that families do to prepare for the New Year.

They clean the house, pay off debts and make sure they have shown gratitude for kindnesses. They might also burn paper versions of the gods to send up to the Jade Emperor as messengers.

## 5. How do people celebrate New Year's Eve?

They have large family get togethers with a big meal. They might also cook dumplings for eating at midnight or make a new year's cake – these foods are associated with prosperity.

## 6. What was the *Nian*?

The legendary dragon that came to villages around the time of the New Year and destroyed homes and ate people. The villagers realised that he was scared of the colour red and loud noises.

## 7. Why are firecrackers and the colour red used in New Year's celebrations?

Because the evil dragon or spirit *Nian* was scared of loud noises and the colour red so these are used to chase away bad luck and evil spirits each year.

## 8. What is the purpose of the red envelopes on New Year's Day?

These are given to young adults and children to help bring wealth and prosperity in the New Year. The money helps alleviate the potential problems of the New Year.

## 9. What is the purpose of the Lion Dance?

The Lion Dance welcomes good luck and prosperity into homes and businesses. The dancing troupe will often be sponsored by a town or business to make an appearance. The symbolic eating of lettuce from poles held by business leaders is important to ensure prosperity to businesses.

## 10. Where do the symbols for the Chinese Zodiac come from?

A legend states that the twelve animals were the ones that chose to take part in a race across a river that the Jade Emperor arranged. The years are named in the order of the winners. The rat came first through cunning.