

Chinese American Museum
Lantern Festival 2005
Lighting the Way



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
The Origins of Lantern Festival

Objective: Students will learn the stories about the origins of the Lantern Festival. They will also learn some of the values of the Lantern Festival.

Suggested Grade Levels: 1-3

Background: There are many different stories about the origins of the Lantern Festival. Below are some of the most popular. Use these stories to finish the exercises below.



A. The Story of Yuanxiao

Long ago, there was a palace maid named Yuanxiao. Yuanxiao was very homesick. She missed her family and wanted to see them, but she was not allowed to leave the palace. But Yuanxiao was very smart and came up with a plan to visit her family.

One day, Yuanxiao told the Emperor that the God of Fire came to see her and said that he was going to burn down the city. She said the only way to stop him was to make the city look like it was already on fire. The Emperor was very scared and did his best to make the city look like it was on fire. The Emperor had many bright lanterns hung in the streets, and lit many firecrackers.

That night, everyone in the Emperor's palace and the entire city was busy making and hanging lanterns. There were also firecrackers exploding everywhere. Because of all the noise and activity, no one noticed Yuanxiao sneak out of the palace. Her plan worked and she was able to visit her family for a happy family reunion.

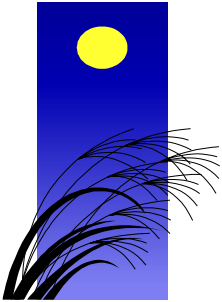


B. The Jade Emperor and his Goose

The Jade Emperor in Heaven had a favorite goose that was killed by people from a small town. The Jade Emperor was very angry at them for killing his goose. He was so angry that he was going to burn down the town they lived in.

A kind fairy heard about his plan. She wanted to help the people of the town. The kind fairy knew the day the Jade Emperor was going to light the town on fire. She told the town to light many lanterns that day. The people did as they were told. They made and lit many lanterns.

When the Jade Emperor looked down on the town from heaven, all of the bright lanterns made the town look like it was already on fire, so the Jade Emperor thought he did not need to light it on fire and left the town alone. The people were so happy that they saved themselves and the town!



C. Lanterns and the Full Moon

People thought they could see spirits flying in the light of the first full moon of the New Year. Many people wanted to see the spirits of their family and friends who had died. To help them see these spirits, they began using lanterns to light up the sky.

Exercises:

1. Circle the Lantern Festival value or tradition that was in the story.

Story A: The Story of Yuanxiao

- a. eating Tang Yuan b. family reunion c. full moon

Story B: The Jade Emperor and his Goose

- a. firecrackers b. lantern making c. honoring ancestors

Story C: Lanterns and the Full Moon

- a. full moon b. honoring Gods c. family unity

2. Which story did you like the most?

- A B C (circle one)

3. Write 2 reasons why you like the story you chose:
