

Chinese American Museum
Lantern Festival 2005
Lighting the Way



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
The Origins of Lantern Festival

Objective: The purpose of this exercise is to teach and engage students with the stories of the origins of the Lantern Festival, which also teaching them about the Festival and its values.

Suggested Grade Levels: 4-6

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



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 could not leave the palace because she was the Emperor's maid. 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 visited her and said that he was going to burn down the entire city, and that the only way to stop him was to make it look like the city was already on fire. The Emperor took this warning very seriously. To make the city look like it was on fire, he ordered that bright lanterns be hung all over the city streets, and tons of firecrackers be lit.

That evening, the Emperor's palace and the entire city was filled with activity. Everyone was busy making and hanging lanterns, and firecrackers were exploding all around. Because everyone was distracted by their work and the noise of the firecrackers, Yuanxiao was able to sneak out of the palace and visit her family for a joyous family reunion.

B. The Jade Emperor and his Goose

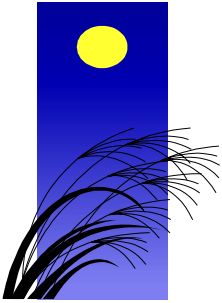
The Jade Emperor in Heaven had a favorite goose that was killed by some townspeople in China. He was so angry with them that he decided he would burn down the entire town they lived in.

A kind-hearted fairy heard about his plan and wanted to help the people of the town. She knew the day the Jade Emperor



was going to set the town on fire so she warned the townspeople of his plan. The fairy told the town to light as many lanterns as they could on that day. The townspeople did as they were told.

When the Jade Emperor was about to set fire to the town, he looked below on it from Heaven. All the lighted lanterns made the town look like it was already burning, so the Jade Emperor decided he did not need to light it on fire and left the town alone. The people were able to save 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 members and friends who had died. To help them in their search, they began using lanterns to light up the sky.

Exercises:

1. Name one Lantern Festival value or tradition in each of the stories. Choose a different one for each story.

A. The Story of Yuanxiao	B. The Jade Emperor and his Goose	C. Lanterns and the Full Moon

2. Which story do you think matches the values and traditions of the Lantern Festival the most?

A B C (circle one)

Give 3 reasons why you chose this story?
