Everytime you play, sing or read with children they are learning about language.

By sharing this book and play experiences with children they will have the opportunity to:
• Share their beliefs and respect the beliefs of others.
• Explore some customs associated with Chinese New Year.
• Learn that books can help them discover new and important things.

We hope these activities will provide you with a starting point for fun and purposeful play with children.

Engaging With Language and Literacy

• Spend some time looking at and discussing the cover before reading the story. Ask the children what they think the story might be about. This will give you a good idea about children's prior knowledge and experiences and how you can best extend the story with them.
• After reading the story discuss with the children Fang's feelings. Some questions you could ask are:
  • Why was she feeling that way?
  • Have you ever felt that way?
  • Did she need to feel like that?
  • How did her feelings change?
• Make a list with the children of what they can remember from the story about Chinese New Year.
• Talk about the traditions associated with Chinese New Year (refer to background notes).
  Ask the children to think about the future and think of a wish for themselves, then one for their family and then a wish for the world.
  The children's wishes could be displayed around the room on star shapes.
• Tell the children the story ‘How the Years Got Their Names’ (see background notes).
  After telling the story ask children to draw their favourite part of the story. Use their illustrations to make your own book of ‘How the Years Got Their Names’.
Exploring Our World

Reading helps children make discoveries about their world.

- Look for China on a map of the world or a globe. Make a list of the things that the children know about China. Share some non-fiction books about China with the children. After reading, encourage the children to add more information to the list.

- Find out about the cultural background of the children. Send home a questionnaire for parents asking what countries their families come from, what languages are spoken at home and what special events are celebrated.

- Celebrate the children's similarities and differences by displaying the information around a map of the world.

- Talk about how people in Australia celebrate the New Year. What things are the same and what are different to how the Chinese celebrate their New Year?
- Read stories about festivals and celebrations. Provide reference books about festivals for the children.
- Children can create their own Chinese New Year’s feast by drawing the food from the story on top of paper plates. These can then be used in the Chinese Restaurant (see next page).
- Make your own lucky money envelopes. The following website has illustrations of Chinese money that you can print and then cut out for your money envelopes. www.chinatoday.com/fin/mon
- Visit the following website: www.enchantedlearning.com/asia/china/
  Here you will find many interesting activities for the children, including;
  - Information about Chinese animals.
  - How to count to 10 in Chinese.
  - How to make a Chinese flag.

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce and your local council may also be a valuable resource.

Enjoying Musical and Dramatic Play

- Make your own drums from an empty plastic container. Paint them red and decorate them with gold decorations or gold pen.
- Make dragon masks with the children. Decorate them with bright paint and colourful collage materials. Let the children have a dragon parade.
- Role-play the story of ‘How the Years Got Their Names’ (see background notes). Make animal puppets or masks for the children to use while acting out the story.
Chinese Restaurant

- Transform the home corner into a restaurant that is celebrating Chinese New Year. Look carefully at the pictures in the book with the children to help you decide what you will need in the restaurant. You may want to include:
  - Menus from local Chinese restaurants
  - Tablecloths and serviettes
  - A Chinese tea set and chopsticks
  - A pretend aquarium filled with fish and eels
  - Costumes for waiting staff
  - Paper and pencils to write down orders with.

If you can, visit your local Chinese supermarket or Chinatown. They sell a wider range of Chinese artefacts at reasonable prices.

Other books to try:

- Clancy and the Courageous Cow by Lachie Hume
- Whoever You Are by Mem Fox and Leslie Stawb
- We Live in China: Kids Around the World by Pilon & Thomas
- Usborne Children's Picture Atlas by Ruth Brocklehurst

Rhymes and songs:

**Red Dragonflies**

Chinese rhyme

(English version)

Red Dragonflies, Red Dragonflies, They gently stop. On the rocks, gently they stop; On the water, gently they stop; In the breeze, gently they stop.

(French version)


(English version)

Are you sleeping, Are you sleeping? Brother John? Brother John? Morning bells are ringing, Morning bells are ringing, Ding ding dong, Ding ding dong.

For more book suggestions, tip sheets, nursery rhymes, songs and fun things to make and do please visit: thelittlebigbookclub.com.au
Chinese New Year

Background Notes

Chinese New Year has been celebrated for over 3,000 years. It is linked to the lunar calendar and the first day of the New Year always has a new moon. It occurs at a different time each year.

The Chinese believe the animal ruling the year in which a person is born has a profound influence on their personality. They say ‘This is the animal that hides in your heart.’

Use the table below to find which year is named after each animal.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Years</th>
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‘Kung hay fat Choi’ means ‘Wishing you to prosper’ and is the traditional New Year greeting.
Chinese people prepare for the New Year in many ways. They clean and decorate their homes and buy new clothes. You can decorate your rooms by putting up red and gold decorations (red and gold are thought to be lucky colours), writing happy wishes on red paper and using blossom or living plants to symbolise new growth.

It’s a time when Chinese people visit their temples and remember members of their family who have died. They are thankful for the last year, and look forward to what may happen in the coming year.

If you were a Chinese child, you would be given a special little red envelope with ‘lucky money’ inside.

The festival can last up to 15 days. The dragon is an important part of the celebration and is paraded through the streets. People gather in family groups to exchange gifts and enjoy the feasting, dragon dances and fireworks.

The Story of How the Years Got Their Names

Once upon a time a monkey, a dog and a dragon were arguing about who the New Year should be named after.

The dragon thought it should be named after him, as he was the fiercest. The monkey thought it should be named after him as he had the best ideas. The dog thought it should be named after him, as he was the hardest worker.

As they argued, other animals came along and listened. Soon there were twelve animals joining in the argument. They all wanted the New Year to be named after themselves. They were making such a noise roaring, barking, growling, chattering, neighing, bellowing, squeaking, thumping, hissing, bleating, crowing and grunting that they disturbed the gods in heaven.

The gods wondered what was the matter. They appeared in the sky so they could see what was making all the noise. The animals were surprised to see the gods that they quickly stopped arguing. The gods asked the animals why they were fighting. All the animals started to answer at once. The noise was deafening. The gods ordered them to stop and explain to them one at a time. The animals were ashamed of their bad manners so they took it in turns to explain the problem.
The gods thought about it for a while. Soon they came up with a good idea. They suggested that the animals should have a race across a river and the New Year would be named after the winner.

The animals liked the idea as they all thought that they would be the winner. They lined up along the bank of the river and waited for the race to begin. Ready, set, go! Soon ox was in the lead as he was the strongest animal. However, he had not noticed rat who was swimming behind him. Rat was not a good swimmer but he was very clever. He swam as fast as he could and just managed to grab onto ox's tail. He pulled himself up and tiptoed along ox's back. Just as ox was about to reach the other side of the river, rat jumped off his back and was the first to reach the other side.

The gods agreed that rat was the winner and so the New Year would be named after him. They decided the following year would be named after the ox. In fact the gods were so pleased with all the animals for finishing the race that they decided to name a year for each animal.

Reference