

CHINESE NEW YEAR **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

OVERVIEW

Gung Hay Fat Choy! This is a greeting for the Chinese New Year, the oldest and most important festival in China. It is a 15-day celebration during which people gather with family and friends and give thanks. Like all Chinese festivals, the date of the new year is determined by a calendar based on the movement of the sun and the moon. The date of the holiday varies each year from late January to mid-February.

This Chinese New Year welcomes in the Year of the Rooster. The rooster is one of 12 animals the Chinese use to designate the year. The other animals include the rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, dog, and boar.

Use this discussion guide and related videos in your classroom to help students learn about the history of China and become more familiar with Chinese culture.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Show the segment “The Great Wall of China” from the *Landmarks of Civilization* video. Have students research the Great Wall of China and then write a one-page essay about it. Their essays should address the following questions:
 - Why did the various Chinese emperors build the Wall? What were they trying to accomplish? Were they successful?
 - When was the Great Wall of China built? What is it and what is unique about it?
 - How is the Great Wall used today?

2. Show the segment “Story of the Silk Road” from the *Destiny Determined: Power and Ritual in Asia* video. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.) Hold a class discussion about the role of the Great Wall in the expansion of China during the Han Dynasty. Consider the following questions:
 - What was the Silk Road?
 - How did the construction of the Great Wall during the Han Dynasty affect China’s economy?
 - What was the role of the horse in expanding the Chinese empire?
 - What effect did the Great Wall have on religion in China?

3. Show the segment “Write Chinese” from *Stories from China: Land and People* video. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

Discuss the ancient Chinese art form known as calligraphy.

- How is writing in Chinese different from writing in English?
- How many characters are there in the Chinese language?
- What tools are used in calligraphy?
- What did the Chinese write on before they invented paper?

Ask students to list three things that they learned about Chinese writing.

4. Show the segment “Histories and Traditions: A Diverse Population with Similar Rituals and Games” from the *Hidden Peoples of China* video. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

Discuss with students the fact that even though China is one country, its people come from many different ethnic groups. Despite their differences, China’s diverse population shares a love of games based on ancient traditions. Ask students to share their thoughts about how sports can bring people together.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

National Council for Social Studies

The National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This discussion guide addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environments
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption