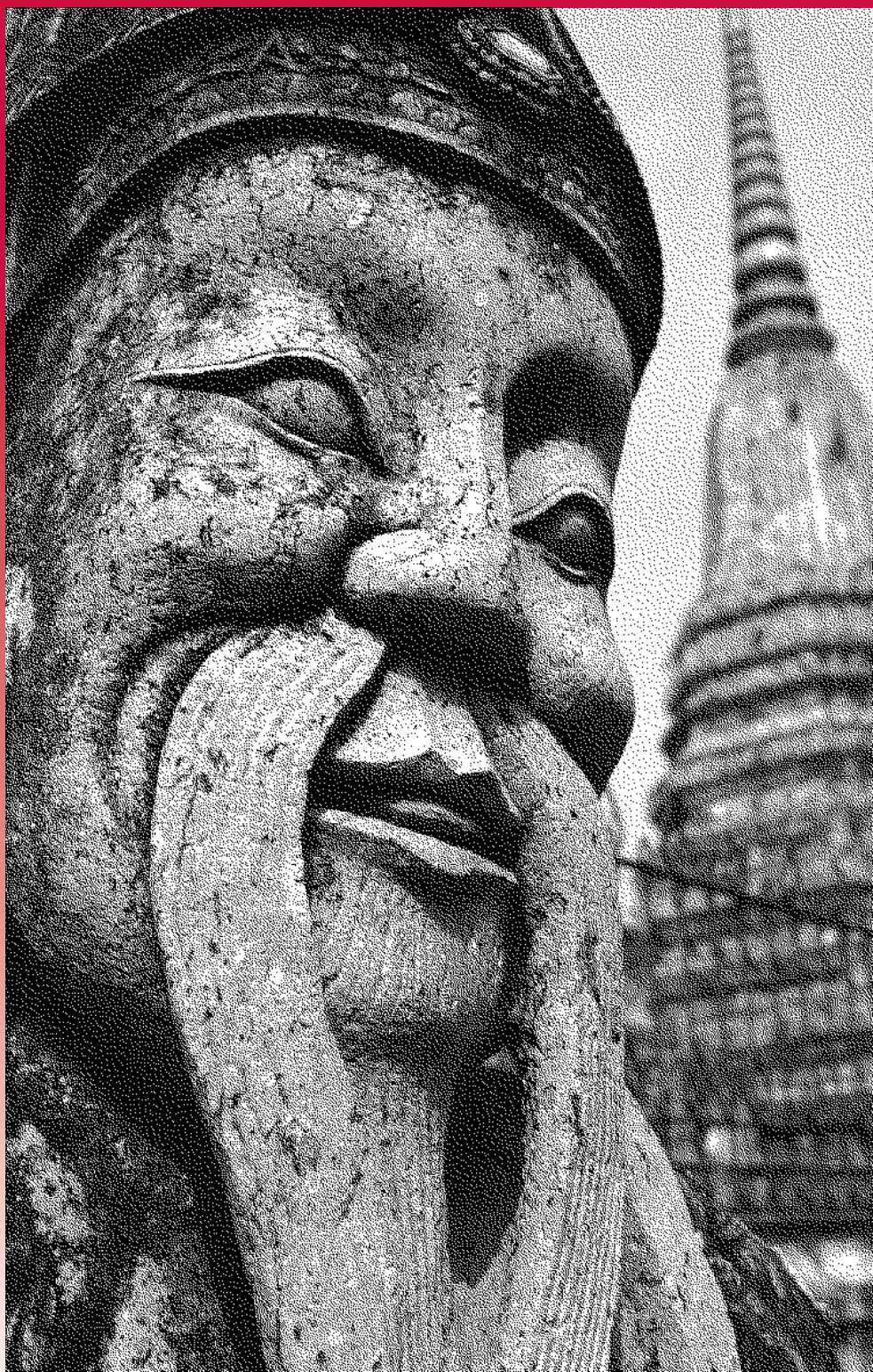


READING IS FUNDAMENTAL STORY SAMPLER

Discovering the Art of Ancient China

FOR CHILDREN
IN GRADES 2-5





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What Is a Story Sampler?

A Story Sampler makes books come alive for children. It is a book-based thematic approach to reading designed to engage children in the book experience. Each Story Sampler includes hands-on, cross-curricular activities for books that are linked by a common theme.

Why Use a Story Sampler?

Motivational activities are an important part of every Reading Is Fundamental program. And these motivational activities are an easy way to excite children's interest in reading and help them associate books and reading with positive experiences and that means fun! The ideas you will find in each Story Sampler show you how to build anticipation and excitement in your RIF programs.

Scores of studies show that students learn more and do better in school when their parents are involved in their education. Different types of hands-on activities enable all children to learn in different ways. Particular questions before, during and after read aloud activities can develop high order thinking skills.

Family members can encourage children to become life-long readers by reading aloud with them everyday. Reading aloud to children is one of the most effective ways

to support language and literacy development. Children who are read to from infancy associate reading with pleasant, warm feelings. When you invite children to participate in reading, ask open-ended questions that promote creative thinking and learning, and plan activities and experiences that allow children to expand their understanding of the story, you help them develop a love of reading.

What Are the Standard Elements of a Story Sampler?

Each section of the Story Sampler includes a featured book plus additional titles and resources.* The activities that accompany each section will help you develop a literacy-rich environment that contributes significantly to a child's enjoyment of reading. The standard elements in the Story Sampler include:

- Questions to ask
- Family involvement
- Things to do
- Community connections

**The ISBN listed indicates a specific edition of the book. However, other editions may also be available through the public library or other publishers.*

Who Should Use a Story Sampler and Where?

Some Story Samplers are age-specific, but most can be adapted to a broad range of ages. Teachers, families, and child-care providers can use them in classrooms, community centers, homes, and in Head Start sites. And most importantly, parents can extend the story beyond the classroom with home-based projects and field trips.

Story Samplers can forge relationships and shared experiences within the family and the community. Through the family, children can be introduced to many kinds of books. Books can explain and reinforce concepts; allow children to build positive self-images; stimulate discussions and thinking; increase children's understanding of various concepts; and expand their imagination.

The age range for a Story Sampler is indicated at the beginning of each set of activities.

When and How Should I Use a Story Sampler?

Story Samplers can be used within or as a supplement to a curriculum or an after-school program. They can be part of reading challenges, reading weeks, and family involvement events. Your imagination and the interests of the children who participate in the RIF program will help determine the best way to use the Story Sampler. Enjoy and have fun!

Tips for Reading Aloud

Before You Read a Story...

- Make sure everyone is comfortable
- Show the cover and read the title and author of the book
- Ask the children about the cover
- Suggest things the children can look or listen for during the story

During a Story...

- Change your voice to fit the mood or action
- Move your finger under the words as you read them
- Show the pictures and talk about the book as you read
- Add information or change words to help kids understand more words and explain the meaning of a new word
- Ask children to make predictions about the plot, the characters, and the setting
- Share your own thoughts about the story
- Follow the cues of the children

After You Read a Story...

- Ask questions about what happened in the story
- Encourage the group to relate the story to their own experiences
- Ask children how they might feel or act if they were one of the characters
- Encourage children to share their thoughts about the story and pictures
- Extend the story with an activity or another book

Discover the Art of Ancient China

A STORY SAMPLER FOR CHILDREN IN GRADES 2-5

▶ CHINA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Mei-Mei Loves the Morning

by **Margaret Holloway Tsubakiyama**,
Albert Whitman & Co, 1999
ISBN: 0807550396

▶ CHINESE INVENTIONS AND REMEDIES

The Emperor and the Kite

by **Jane Yolen**, Paper Start, 1998
ISBN: 0698116445

▶ THE POWER OF THE DRAGON

The Paper Dragon

by **Marguerite Davol**, Atheneum, 1997
ISBN: 0689319924

▶ ANCIENT CHINESE ART

Liang and the Magic Paintbrush

by **Demi**, Henry Holt, 1998
ISBN: 0805008012

▶ CHINESE FOLKLORE

The Greatest Treasure

by **Demi**, Scholastic Trade, 1998
ISBN: 0590313398

▶ CHINESE CUISINE

The Ugly Vegetables

by **Grace Lin**, Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999
ISBN: 0881063363

China: Yesterday and Today

Mei-Mei Loves the Morning

by Margaret Holloway Tsubakiyama

Albert Whitman & Co, 1999

ISBN: 0807550396

Mei-Mei and Grandpa ride along the busy streets of China on Grandpa's bicycle each morning. Playing games, practicing tai-chi, and drinking tea with friends are all part of a typical morning for Mei-Mei and her grandfather.



What To Do Before Reading the Story

- This book describes a typical morning in present-day China and may serve as a good place to begin a discussion about some aspects of Chinese culture, such as food, family, language, and ancient traditions.
- Read the title of the story to the children. Ask them what kind of name they think Mei-Mei is. Does it sound like an American name?
- Tell the children that Mei-Mei is a Chinese name and that this story takes place in China. Show the children where China is on a map. Explain how far it is from the United States, how long it takes to get there, and discuss its enormous size. Let the children know that in China people speak a language called Chinese that not only sounds different from English, but also has a different alphabet.
- Ask the children to predict why Mei-Mei loves the morning. What might be special about the morning? Ask the kids what their favorite time of day is and why.

What To Talk About During the Story

- Read slowly and let the children enjoy the illustrations; wait until the end of the story to point out the various activities that Mei-Mei and her grandfather do in the morning that may be different from a typical morning in America. If the children have questions as you read, keep a piece of paper handy to write down their thoughts so you can go back to them at the end of the story.

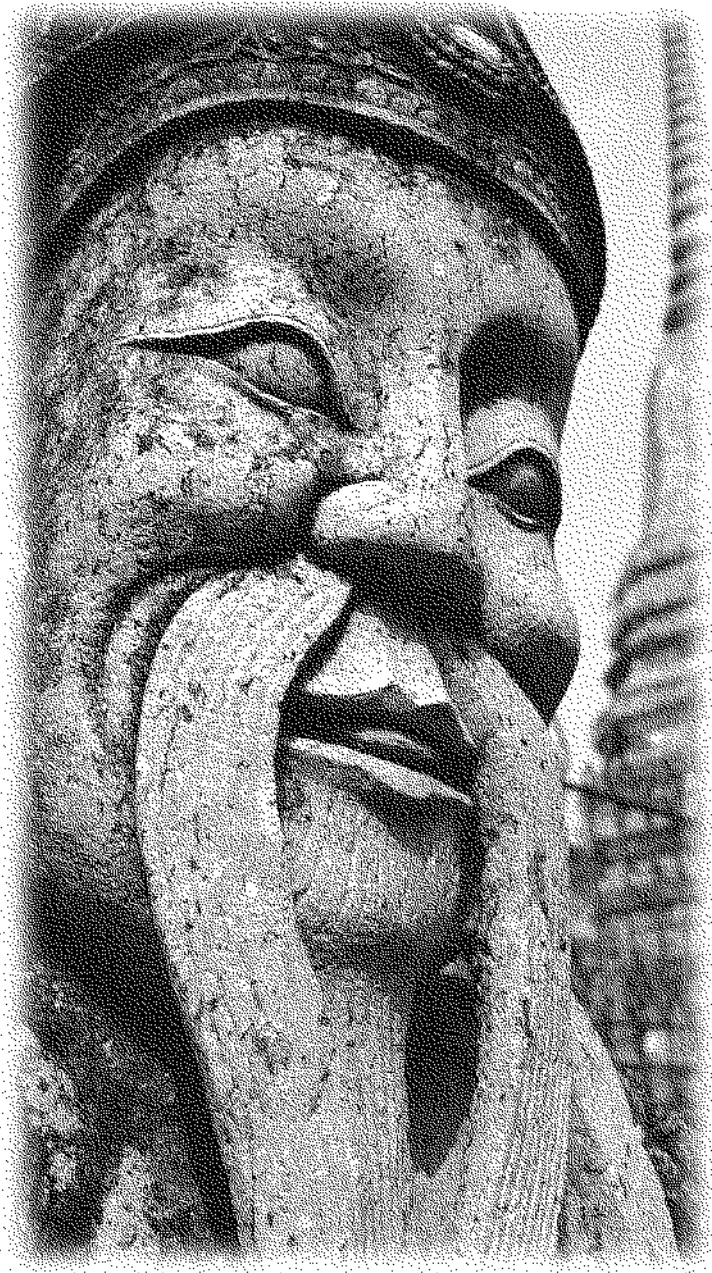
What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Mei-Mei and her grandfather begin the morning by eating rice and porridge with pickled vegetables. They also visit the park and do tai-chi with their friends. Talk about these and some of the other things Mei-Mei and her grandfather do in the morning that may be different from what most Americans do each morning.
- Discuss the fact that Mei-Mei's grandfather lives with Mei-Mei and her family. In China, the custom of several generations living together is quite common. China is a country of many ancient customs. Elders have always been respected and the younger generations learn many of the traditions from them. Ask the children what they like to do with their grandparents. Do they share morning activities together, or do they only see their grandparents on special occasions?

Reading Up on China

Select any of the nonfiction books (such as *Discovering China*, *Count Your Way through China*, or *China: A True Book*) from the Additional Titles list and learn more about China.

Read about its government, The Great Wall, and the famous pandas.



Confucius's Birthday

In America, we celebrate the birthdays of several national heroes such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. In China, the birthday of a famous teacher, Kung fu tzu (Grand Master Kung, which has been westernized to Confucius) is celebrated. Confucius was well known for his teachings that provided Chinese society with order – family, hierarchy, and seniority. He believed that each person had a place and a responsibility to perform within the society, that individuals were the masters of their own destinies, and that all people were to be respected.

Have the children think about the duties within their family, their school, and their community. Explain what the words “seniority” and “hierarchy” mean and discuss how they relate to the children’s lives. For example, fifth graders have seniority over first graders but they should still treat the first graders with respect and kindness.

Chinese-American

Over the last 100 years or so, many Chinese have emigrated to the United States. In some major cities such as San Francisco, New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C., Chinese immigrants have formed communities where they have opened stores and restaurants in sections of these cities that have come to be known in each place as “Chinatown.” Within these communities, as well as many other Chinese-American communities, ancient Chinese customs and holidays are still celebrated. The Chinese New Year is one with which many Americans are familiar and have embraced as a multicultural American event. Read *Sam and the Lucky Money* by Karen Chinn, *The Dancing Dragon* by Marcia K. Vaughan, or *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan’s Chinese New Year* by Kate Waters. These fictional stories describe elements of the Chinese New Year from the perspective of a child. Readers will learn about the holiday while enjoying a great book.

Family Involvement

- Read *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* by Bette Bao Lord. Learn about a little girl’s move from China to Brooklyn, New York in the late 1940s and how she develops a love for the great game of baseball. Snuggle up and read a chapter each night before bedtime.
- Listen to traditional Chinese music. Try a compact disc called *Chinese Music of the Han and the Uighurs*. (World Music Library. King Records KICC 5141.) This collection of folk songs played on traditional Chinese instruments will give everyone listening a chance to feel like they are in the land of the dragons. Listen closely and try to think of instruments that sound similar to what you hear.

Community Connection

- Study a current travel guide to China. Contact a local travel agency and invite a travel agent to speak about China; ask them to bring posters or brochures as well. Or try contacting the tourist bureau or check the Internet for more information about China.
- Talk to relatives or people in your community who have visited China. Find out what they say and what their impressions were of China. Brainstorm a bunch of questions to ask them about their trip. Or speak with someone who emigrated from China and ask what they think are the greatest differences between China and the U.S.
- If you live near a major city that has a Chinatown or a sizable Chinese community, find out if they have a Chinese New Year celebration in January and try to observe the festivities. Check out the local shops or restaurants and learn about China’s customs. How are they similar or different to the culture of your community? What do you find most interesting that is most different?

Additional Titles

Nonfiction:

Eyewitness: Ancient China by Arthur Cotterell, DK Publishing, 2000

ISBN: 0789458667

From the Eyewitness series, this magazine-style book is informative and fun to read. Color photographs of the highest quality show objects from all aspects of ancient Chinese culture with spot text to identify and clarify.

China (A True Book) by Ann Heinrichs, Children's Press, 1997

ISBN: 0516261657

One of several basic fact books on China. The print is large and easy to read with up to date information and colorful photographs.

The Children of China by Matti A. Pitkanen, Carolrhoda Books, 1990

ISBN: 087614394X

A good introduction to China through the daily experiences of various children. This book offers concise yet thorough information about China with its old and new traditions.



Ancient China (Nature Company Discoveries) by Judith Simpson, Time Life, 1996

ISBN: 0809492482

Double-page spreads offer an overview of Chinese lifestyle, religion, art, and history.

Ancient China (Journey into Civilization) by Robert Nicholson, Chelsea House Publishing, 1995

ISBN: 0791027260

Another great book that covers the tremendous history of ancient China.

Growing Up in Ancient China by Ken Teague, Troll, 1993

ISBN: 0816727163

A simple book that covers the key topics children might wonder about growing up in ancient China. From birthdays and school to transportation and festivals, this book grabs the reader with colorful illustrations and easy-to-read narrative.

D is for Doufu: An Alphabet Book of Chinese Culture by

Maywan Shen Krach, Shen's Books, 1997

ISBN: 1885008163

The title really says it all. This book covers Chinese culture using the Chinese alphabet and beautiful illustrations that kids will love.

Fiction:

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson by Bette Bao Lord, HarperTrophy, 1986

ISBN: 0064401758

A 10-year-old Chinese girl immigrates with her parents to the United States in the late 1940s. She develops a love for baseball, a sport that helps her assimilate. She also gets to meet her favorite player, Jackie Robinson.

Me and Mr. Mah by Andrea Spalding, Orca Book Publishers, 2001

ISBN: 1551431777

A nice story about a young American boy who befriends his new neighbor, a Chinese-American man named Mr. Wah.

Sam and the Lucky Money by Karen Chinn, Lee & Low Books, 1997

ISBN: 1880000539

Sam is off to Chinatown to celebrate the New Year and spend his lucky money. But everything costs too much. Sam's disappointment eventually gives way to compassion when he encounters a street person in need of socks and shoes. Now Sam has a new perspective on what it is to be lucky.

The Story About Ping by Marjorie Flack, Viking Press, 1977

ISBN: 0140502416

The classic tale of a little duck alone on the Yangtze river.

The Moon Lady by Amy Tan, Aladdin, 1995

ISBN: 0689806167

One rainy afternoon, a grandmother tells her three granddaughters of the Moon Lady she encountered when she was a very young girl.

Chinese Inventions and Remedies

The Emperor and the Kite

by Jane Yolen

Paper Start, 1998

ISBN: 0698116445

Once upon a time in ancient China, there lived an emperor who had four daughters and four sons. However, the smallest one, Djeow Seow, was often forgotten because of her tiny stature. She longed to be like her brothers and sisters and gain the attention of her father. When Djeow Seow's father, the Emperor, is captured and imprisoned, it is the little princess who comes to his rescue and becomes the largest heroine of all.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- Read the title of the book and show the children the cover. Explain that the story takes place in China. If you have not already done so, ask the children if they know where China is. On a map or globe, point out where China is in relation to the United States. Give the kids a sense of how far away China is and what continent it is on.
- Explain that China is a much older country than ours; its origins date back several thousand years. Many inventions, customs, and legends come from ancient China, some of which we use today in our own culture (such as fireworks, spaghetti, the wheelbarrow, and the compass). The Chinese also invented the kite.

- Most children will probably know what a kite is; however, they may not know what an emperor is. Explain to the children that an emperor in ancient China was someone who ruled the country, like a king, a queen, or a president. Usually he was very wealthy, had a very large army, and his people believed he was close to god.

What To Talk About During the Story

- The book begins "Once in ancient China there lived..." Ask the children if they are familiar with the word "ancient." Explain that the word "ancient" means "old" or "from a long time ago" and that China is one of the oldest cultures in the world. Ancient China covers about 11,000 years of history, most of which we have learned about from stories, legends, and ruins, because there were no written records for much of the time period.
- Tell the children that this story, like many from ancient China, has been passed on for centuries and the author (Jane Yolen) decided to make the story into a book.
- During the story, a monk approaches a tiny princess and offers a prayer. Briefly explain that a monk is somewhat similar to a minister, a nun, or a rabbi, in that he is a person who has dedicated his life to a particular religion or set of beliefs. In ancient China, religious beliefs were divided into the "three ways" of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Buddhism came to China from India in the first century and remained its strongest and most popular belief until the communist takeover in 1912.
- The tiny princess heeds what the old monk says and figures out a clever way to save her father. Ask the children to try to make sense of the monk's words. What do they think he means by "My kite sails upward, mounting to the high heavens. My emperor goes on wings"? How would they try to save the emperor?



What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Ask the children if they think there is a moral to the story. (Is there any similarity to Aesop's fable *The Lion and the Mouse*? Little friends may prove to be great friends.)
- What did they learn about ancient China from the story they just read? This is a particularly good book with which to begin talking about ancient China. It is a simple story that happens to touch on several features of ancient China: kites, a famous invention of the Chinese; emperors, for thousands of years China was ruled by emperors whose dynasties spanned many years; and monks, individuals who dedicated their lives to the beliefs of Buddhism, one of the three religions that dominated imperial China.
- Once the children have had a chance to talk about the story, ask them if they have ever flown a kite. If so, what did it look like? Where did they fly it? Who did they go kite flying with? Explain that in China there is a kite festival held each year on the ninth day of the ninth moon (or month) of the Chinese calendar. There are several legends regarding the origin of the holiday which is also known as Double Nine Day or the Festival of High Places. Read the book *Kites* by Demi to learn more about one of these legends.

Look at me, up so high!

Make up a story about a kite from the perspective of the kite. Have the children think about what the kite might be thinking or seeing as it soars through the air. Share stories and let the kids illustrate their stories.

Made in China

Take a look at the book *Made in China: Ideas and Inventions from Ancient China* by Suzanne Williams or check out <http://www.crystalinks.com/chinainventions.html> on the Internet. Both resources offer plenty of fascinating information about the many inventions that came from ancient China. Children may be familiar with many of the inventions, however, some may require a bit of explanation. Talk about how and why some of these inventions came about and what future tools or machines may have been made as a result.

Lich'un

The Chinese festival known as Lich'un is linked to the agricultural cycle and the spring season. While every culture has relied on agriculture, the Chinese were the first to develop an irrigation system. Even though the Chinese invented tools and machines to help the farming process, they were still very spiritual people and believed the success of their crops also relied on powers beyond them. The main attraction of this festival is the parade of musicians and dancers led by a papier maché ox and ox driver. The colors (different colors represent various weather conditions) of the ox are determined only after careful examination of the official almanac. Learn about how we predict weather and how farmers today use weather instruments to determine what they plant.

Family Involvement

The Dragon Kite

Check out the Family.com site at <http://www.family.go.com/> and learn how to make a dragon kite with simple materials like plastic trash bags, markers, and clothes hangers. It's fun, easy, and a great way to spend a breezy day in the park.

Helping Hands

The little princess in the story *The Emperor and the Kite*, helps save her father, even though she is so small. Talk about ways that young children can help out around the home. Discuss possible tasks or activities that they can participate in and feel important!

Community Connection

- The springtime is often a time of cool breezes and sunny days, perfect for kite flying. Check your local community events to see if there is a kite festival held in your area. Kite making is often considered an art form. Find out if art museums in your area hold any kite-making workshops for children.
- Find out about the resources in your community. Is there a flight school or a course at the local college on aerodynamics? Invite a guest with a background in flight to talk about what they do and how birds, planes, and even kites soar in the air.

Additional Titles

Made in China: Ideas and Inventions from Ancient China by Suzanne Williams, Pacific View Press, 1997
ISBN: 1881896145

The ideas and inventions in this book are presented within the context of ancient Chinese history. Although the information may not be in depth, it is a great place to begin talking or learning about the various discoveries from China.

Kites by Demi, Random House, 2000
ISBN: 0375810080

In ancient China, kites were used to send messages and special wishes to the gods. The author, Demi, uses beautiful artwork to tell the story of a mother who wishes for her son to be wealthy, wise, and powerful.

Dragon Kite of the Autumn Moon by Valerie Reddix, Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1992
ISBN: 0688110304

A lovely story about a young boy, his grandfather, and the tradition of kite flying.

The Power of the Dragon

The Paper Dragon

by Marguerite Davol

Atheneum, 1997

ISBN: 0689319924

The great dragon in Mi Fei's village has stirred from its long slumber and the townspeople are fearing for their lives. To Mi Fei's shock and dismay; they call upon him to find a way to get the dragon back to sleep.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- In China the dragon is considered to be a divine mythical creature that brings with it ultimate abundance, prosperity, and good fortune. The dragon is the emblem of the emperor and the imperial command, and the people of China regard themselves as descendents of the dragon. In this story the dragon takes on evil characteristics associated with Western dragons. In the end, however, he becomes more in line with the beautiful, wise, and beloved dragons of the East.
- Ask the children what comes to mind when they think about dragons. Do they think dragons are mean or nice? Are they bright and colorful or harsh looking creatures? Ask the children what kinds of powers they think a dragon might have.

What To Talk About During the Story

- Not only is this story great for reading aloud, it is an especially fun book because the pages open out to reveal beautiful illustrations. Mi Fei is a Chinese scroll maker. He paints scenes of festivals and portraits of great heroes. Ask the children what he is doing when he paints these scenes. Is he recording history, telling a story, or perhaps he is even creating an early form of a book?
- Once the dragon wakes from his years of sleep and begins to destroy the town, why do the people insist on Mi Fei to face the fiery dragon? Why is Mi Fei considered a trusted and well-respected person in the village?
- Ask the children to predict how Mi Fei will accomplish each task the dragon orders him to do. Ask them how they might deal with the dragon.



What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Once Mi Fei succeeds with each task, what enables the dragon to finally return to his slumber?
- What characteristics does the dragon show at the end of the story?
- Mi Fei continues to paint and places a small dragon in one corner of each of his scrolls to remind everyone of the strongest thing in the world. The dragon's presence on many things such as Chinese artwork, shrines, and ceremonial robes is a tradition from ancient times which continues to this day.
- The dragon is considered by the Chinese to be the greatest divine force on Earth, the fundamental representation of Mother Nature. Altars, shrines, and temples have been built to honor these highly worshipped creatures. The dragon is also believed to have many powers, and be capable of living in the seas, flying up to the heavens, warding off evil spirits, and even protecting the safety of the people.

Dragon Tales

Read any of the stories from the Additional Titles list and learn more about the significance of the dragon within the Chinese culture.

Chase the Dragon's Tail

This time-honored Chinese game is played by at least 10 kids. One child is the head of the dragon and wears the mask. The other players line up behind him with their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. The head has one minute to tag the last kid in line without causing the line to break apart. If he succeeds, he wins; if not, he becomes the tail, and the child behind him wears the mask.

*This last project was used with permission from the Family Fun Magazine and can be found at the following Web site address: http://family2.go.com/features/family_1999_02/famf/famf29_chinesenewyear/famf29chinesenewyear5.html

**If you have access to the Internet, you can download wonderful projects, games, and parenting information from this great resource or subscribe to Family Fun Magazine by calling 1-800-289-4849.

Family Involvement

Paper Dragons

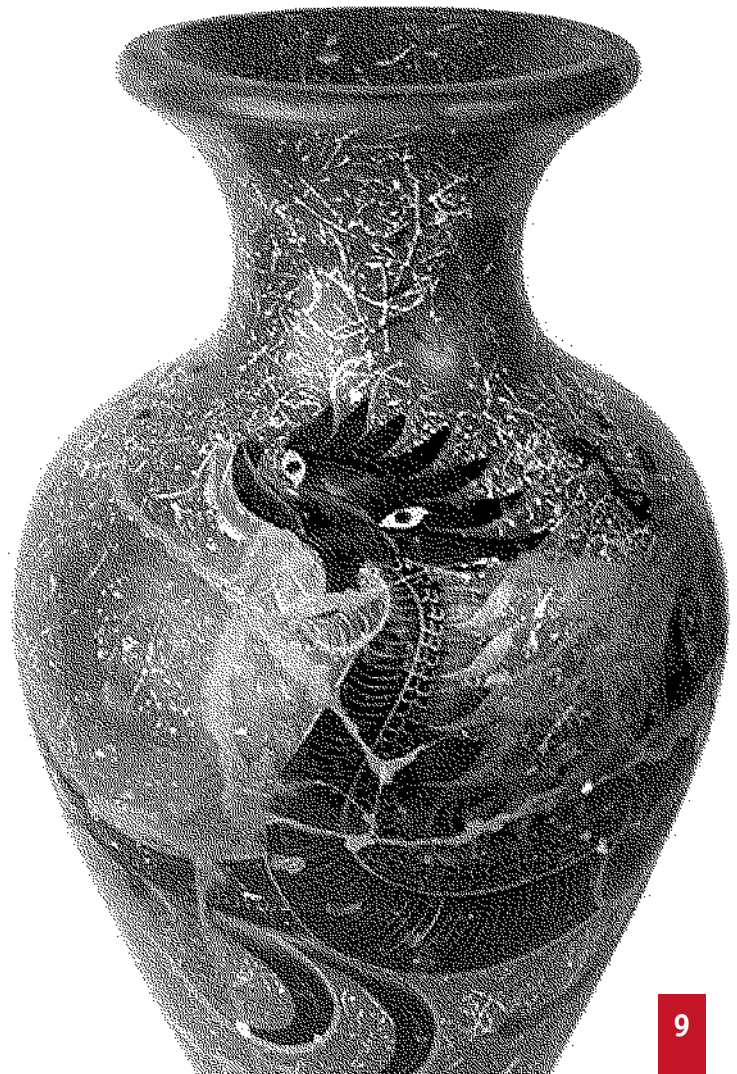
Check out a book on Origami and try to make paper dragons using the ancient Chinese art of Origami. *Easy Origami*, *Favorite Animals in Origami*, or *Mythological Creatures and the Chinese Zodiac in Origami* all by John Montroll may be helpful for the activity.

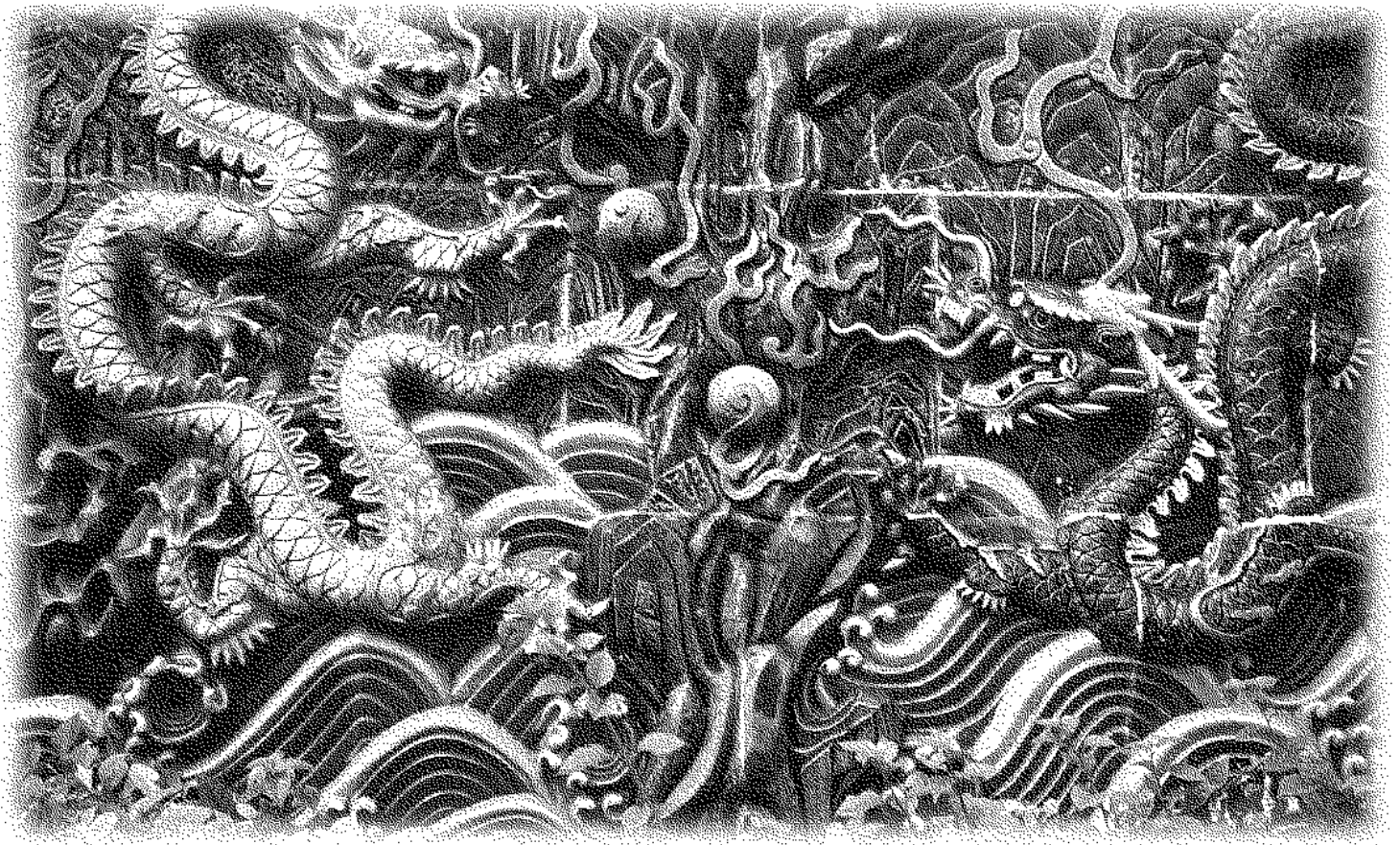
Dance of the Backyard Dragon

Organize a dragon dance right in your neighborhood! Gather a bunch of children, have them line up holding the waist of the child in front of them and turn on some music. If you are able to make some masks ahead of time, have the first child wear one of the masks and drape a long piece of brightly colored fabric or a sheet over the other children to form the body.

Community Connection

- For many centuries China used a lunar calendar and the Chinese New Year Festival was celebrated on the first day of the new lunar month. Although the Gregorian calendar was adopted by the Chinese in the beginning of the 20th century, the tradition of the festival is still celebrated in late January and usually lasts for about a month. The greatly revered dragon plays an important role in the festivities. If you live close to one of the many Chinatowns in the United States, try attending the colorful and elaborate celebration to see the fabulous dragons that dance through the streets.
- Check out the Web site <http://www.kiddyhouse.com>. They have a section on China for K – 12 students that offers an abundance of information, including The Art of Traditional Chinese Painting and Calligraphy as well as the important position dragons held in Chinese mythology.





Additional Titles

The Last Dragon by Susan Miho Nunes, Houghton Mifflin, 1997
ISBN: 0395845173

When Peter Chang's parents inform him that he will be spending the summer with Great Aunt in Chinatown, he is not exactly thrilled by the news. However, once he sees the sad dragon in the store window, his summer takes a turn for the better!

The Dragon's Tale: And Other Animal Fables of the Chinese Zodiac by Demi, Henry Holt, 1996
ISBN: 0805034463

A story for somewhat older readers, but for reading aloud to younger readers. The playful illustrations will appeal to the younger reader.

Dragon Poems by John Foster, Oxford University Press Childrens Books, 1997
ISBN: 0192761080

A book of 23 poems all dedicated to the subject of the dragon.

The Dancing Dragon by Marcia Vaughan, Mondo Publishing, 1996
ISBN: 1572551348

Chinese New Year is about to begin and everyone has plenty to do!

Behold... the Dragons by Gail Gibbons, Morrow Junior, 1999
ISBN: 068815526X

Once again, Gail Gibbons offers children terrific, simple explanations of a topic of great interest. Gibbons tells of all different types of dragons: serpent dragons, sky dragons, and classical dragons.

Dragonsong: A Fable for the New Millenium by Russell Young, Shen's Books, 2000
ISBN: 1885008120

Once every thousand years the four Imperial dragons choose one dragon to be Keeper of the Mountain. Now, little Chiang-An, being the youngest dragon, must find a gift that will last a thousand years to win the honor of the title.

The Dragon Lover and Other Chinese Proverbs by Yong-sheng Xuan, Shen's Books, 1999
ISBN: 1885008112

A creatively designed picture book that tells five proverbial stories. Each is written in English and Chinese and incorporates Chinese-style paper-cuts that children will find fascinating and fun to read.

The Dragon's Pearl by Julie Lawson, Unknown, 1993
ISBN: 039563623X

An old folktale about a boy who finds a magic pearl that brings good luck and celebrates the benevolent Chinese dragon.

Liang and the Magic Paintbrush

by Demi

Henry Holt, 1998

ISBN: 0805008012

Liang, a young boy in China long ago, desperately wants to paint, yet he lacks the resources. When a paintbrush suddenly appears one morning, Liang is overjoyed; however, his new tool comes with magical powers which Liang must use wisely.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- Read the title of the book and ask the children what they would do if they had a magic paintbrush. What would their magic paintbrush be capable of and how would they use it in their everyday life?
- Ask the children if they like to draw, paint, or color?
- Introduce the story by telling the children that Liang is a little boy who likes to paint. Then begin reading.

What To Talk About During the Story

- As the story begins, Liang is passing an art school and asks the teacher if he may paint with the class. The teacher refuses to allow Liang to join because he says he is a beggar. Ask the children why the teacher will not allow Liang to participate. Talk about the fact that ancient China was divided between the very wealthy and the very poor. Beggars or peasants were not allowed anywhere near the emperor or other noblemen.
- When Liang finds out that his paintbrush is truly magical, he decides to spread kindness with it instead of abusing its powers. He learns to use it wisely. Ask the children how he is able to control what the paintbrush brings to life. How does the greedy emperor find out about Liang's paintbrush? What does he want Liang to create with the brush? Why does the paintbrush lose its power in the emperor's hand?

What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- Tell the children the story is an old Chinese folktale that has been passed on for many years. Discuss why certain tales are passed on through generations and how many of them have morals or lessons.
- This is also a terrific story to begin talking about the art of ancient China and the various art forms such as calligraphy, brush painting, scroll painting, kite making, and fan making.





Magic Strokes

Give the children magical paintbrushes! Put out a bunch of paper and water colors and let the children pretend they are Liang. Ask them to think about what they would paint if it could come to life. Let their imaginations wander and have them tell you about their painting when they are finished.

Bring the Scene to Life

If you have time, create a play based on their drawings where the children become the characters from their artwork and come to life.

Calligraphy

Calligraphy is the art of writing with a brush and ink. Each combination of brush strokes stands for an object or an idea. Many of the Chinese characters are like pictures. Traditionally, calligraphy has been closely related to painting, using the same brush for both art forms. Read any of the three books by Huy Voun Lee: *At the Beach*, *In the Snow* or *In the Park* or try *Long is a Dragon: Chinese Writing for Children* by Peggy Goldstein and practice writing the Chinese characters.

Family Involvement

- Ask your local newspaper if they have any extra end-roll paper (long rolls of paper that many newspapers give away for free or for a few dollars.) Tape it to a wall or a fence and let the children paint to their hearts content.
- Decorate the neighborhood with chalk! Designate a slab of the sidewalk for each child to write on and let them use their imaginations. Stick with the theme of the story and ask the children to pretend to be Liang and draw what they think would be helpful to their neighbors.

Community Connection

- Invite a local artist to talk about his/her artwork. Have the children find out what inspires the artist and what kind of materials he/she prefers to use to create their work.
- If you live near an art museum, find out what is currently on exhibition and what is part of the permanent collection. Take a tour and see if you can find any ancient artifacts or Chinese artwork.

Additional Titles

Kites by Demi, Random House, 2000

ISBN: 0375810080

In ancient China, when kites were invented, they were used to send messages and special wishes to the gods. This author/illustrator uses beautiful artwork to tell the story of a mother who wishes for her son to be wealthy, wise, and powerful.

Eyes of the Dragon by Margaret Leaf, Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1987

Out of Print

Many years ago, there stood a small village in China next to a tall mountain on which wild beasts were believed to live. To protect themselves, the people built a wall around their village. When it was complete, they asked a special artist to decorate the wall with a large dragon. Not heeding the warning of the artist, the eyes of the dragon were added, thus rendering the original purpose of the wall useless.

At the Beach, In the Snow or **In the Park** by Huy Voun Lee, Henry Holt, 1998 & 2000

ISBN: 0805058222; 0805065792; 0805041281

Xiao Ming and his mother find the beach, the park, and even the snow to be terrific places to learn about different Chinese characters.

The Greatest Treasure

by Demi

Scholastic Trade, 1998

ISBN: 0590313398

Long ago in China there lived a rich man named Pang and a poor man named Li. They lived their lives quite differently until one day when Pang, in an effort to quiet Li's happy life, offers him a pile of gold. Although Li is initially excited by his new fortune, he is soon reminded of the greatest treasure of all.

What To Do Before Reading the Story

- Introduce the story by reading the title. Ask the children to predict what they think is the greatest treasure. Ask them what they would do if they were suddenly given lots of money.
- Briefly discuss the concept of money with the children. What do people need money for? How do they use it as a part of their everyday life?

What To Talk About During the Story

- At the beginning of the story, Pang is busy counting his money and has no time to play with his sons. He reminds them of a famous proverb, "With money you are a dragon, without it you are a worm." Ask the children what Pang means by reciting this to his sons. Why is a dragon used in the proverb?
- Ask the children why Pang gives Li many of his gold coins. What happens when Pang gives Li the coins?
- What does Li's wife mean when she says "He who has heaven in his heart is never poor"?
- How does Li resolve his troubles? And what does he in turn share with Pang?

What You Can Do When You Finish Reading the Story

- When Pang despairs towards the end of the story, Li reminds him of another great proverb, "Gold and silver have their price, but peace and happiness are priceless." Ask the children what this final proverb means and how Li and Pang become friends in the end.
- Ask the children to imagine what would happen if the story continued. What would happen in the next chapter of the book? Would Li and Pang go into business together? Would their children become friends?

Confucius Says

Confucius was and still is considered a great philosopher of ancient China. He was well known for his beliefs as well as the statements he made on government, life, and law. Check out the Web site <http://www.crystalinks.com/confucius.html> and read some of the famous sayings of Confucius. Look in your local library or bookstore for books on Chinese proverbs. Read some with the children in your group and see what they think. You might even want to try making up a few on your own!





Famous Folktales

Take a look at any of the books from the Additional Titles list and read and discuss some of these folktales or fairy tales from ancient China. Find out whether any of the stories you read are similar to folktales from other cultures.

Family Involvement

■ In the story *The Greatest Treasure*, Li shows Pang there are more important things in life than counting your money. He shows him how to enjoy himself and his family with activities that cost nothing, like singing, dancing, and playing the flute. Look around your home or your community and make a list with your children of the things you can do together that cost nothing. Here are a few ideas to get you started: going to the local playground, going for a walk and playing a game of *I Spy*, listening to or dancing to music, attending a local parade, etc.

Community Connection

Moon Festival

One of China's biggest festivals, the Moon Festival, is held in September and is considered the mid-autumn harvest celebration, somewhat like the American holiday of Thanksgiving. In ancient times, offerings were made to the sun in the spring and the moon in the fall. Because the Chinese have always been a farming culture, many of their beliefs are based on forces of nature, like the moon, that affect the weather or the harvesting conditions. The Moon Festival was originally based on the strong relationship between the moon and water, a belief from ancient Asian mythology. The moon was said to control reservoirs and supplies of water, thus in turn producing fertility and freshness in the soil which would result in more prosperity.

In addition to families getting together and the streets being hung with decorative lanterns, moon cakes (a favorite food filled with lotus, sesame seeds, and dried fruits) are made as a tribute to the moon. Try making moon cakes. There are many recipes for this traditional Chinese pastry on the Internet or in Asian cookbooks.

Additional Titles

Ling Cho and His Three Friends by V.J. Pacilio, Farrar Stauss & Giroux, 2000
ISBN: 0374345457

Ling Cho wants to share his wealth with his friends; however, a test of their honesty reveals who his true friends really are and what they will do with their opportunity.

The Five Chinese Brothers by Claire Huchet Bishop, Paper Star, 1996
ISBN: 0698113578

A classic retelling of the story about five brothers and their amazing abilities continues to be a hit with young children.

Why Rat Comes First by Clara Yen, Childrens Book Press, 1991
ISBN: 0892390727

A great pourquoi story told by a Chinese-American author whose father passed on stories about the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac, this one being her favorite.

The Emperor's New Clothes by Demi, Margaret McElderry, 2000
ISBN: 0689830688

Demi, the author and illustrator, sets this well-known fairy tale in a province of China. As with many of Demi's books, the illustrations are filled with extreme detail and color and are based on historical knowledge of the culture and beliefs of ancient China.

The Making of Monkey King retold by Robert Kraus and Debby Chen, China Books & Periodicals, 2000
ISBN: 1572270454

One of many stories about Monkey King, a famous hero from ancient China.

The Chi-lin Purse: A Collection of Ancient Chinese Stories retold by Linda Fang, Farrar Straus, 1997
ISBN: 0374411891

Nine lively stories, all from ancient China, based on a variety of sources.

Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China retold by Ai-Ling Louie, Paper Star, 1996
ISBN: 0698113888

This is the oldest known version of Cinderella!

The Weaving of a Dream: A Chinese Folktale by Marilee Heyer, Viking Press, 1989
ISBN: 0140505288

A famous Chinese folktale of an old woman who weaves ornate brocades.

The Ugly Vegetables

by **Grace Lin**

Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999

ISBN: 0881063363

When a little girl and her mother plant their garden, it doesn't look like others in the neighborhood. The little girl doesn't understand why their garden is not filled with pretty flowers and buzzing bumblebees. Her mother reassures her that what is in their garden is better than the neighbor's plants. Eventually the sweet smell of the Ugly Vegetable Soup fills the air, and the little girl is delighted with what has come from her mother's garden.

What To Do Before Reading The Story

- The title of the story is a fun place to start. Bring in a few vegetables such as a cucumber, a pepper, a turnip, or perhaps a head of lettuce from your garden or the local grocery store. Ask the children what they think of the vegetables that you are showing them. Do they like the colors? Are they nice to look at or are they shaped strangely?
- Read the title of the story to the children after you have looked at and discussed the vegetables you have brought in to show them. Ask the kids if they can think of any vegetables that they think are pretty or that make them want to eat them when they look at them. Ask the children what they think makes a garden seem attractive? Is it the colors or the smell? What can make a garden look ugly?

Things To talk About During The Story

- The illustrations are wonderful in this story. Point out details as you read, especially the differences that the little girl keeps pointing out to her mother.
- Ask the children why the little girl in the story thinks her mother's garden is filled with ugly vegetables. Why does this make her sad?
- During the story, the mother starts cooking and the little girl says everyone is trying to eat the smell; what does that mean? Ask the children if they ever smelled something so delicious they became hungry just from the smell. Try to bring in something with a strong, tempting scent like popcorn or cinnamon bread to use as an example.
 - Toward the end of the story, everyone in the neighborhood wants to try some of the yummy smelling soup, so they bring flowers and things from their garden to trade for a taste. Ask the children if they ever wanted something from one of their friends at lunch and offered to trade for it.



What You Can Do When You Finish Reading The Story

- Discuss how the “ugly vegetable” garden was different from everyone else’s in the neighborhood. Flowers can be pretty, but vegetables can be good to eat! What kinds of vegetables do they like to eat?
- Ask the children why they think people choose to grow different things in their gardens. Why did most of the people grow flowers? Why did the little girl’s mother grow Chinese vegetables? Talk about farmers. How do they choose what to plant in their fields or gardens?
- Make a list with the children of all the things you can plant and grow (flowers, vegetables, trees, grass, bushes, etc.).

Use All Five Senses!

Gardens are meant to be appealing to the eye, but they can also be pleasing to the other senses. Grab some mushrooms, carrots, peppers, or broccoli. Wash and slice them up into bite size pieces. Buy some of the vegetables cooked and have them ready for the children to try as well. Talk about some things the children might eat that have the vegetables in them such as pizza, salads, or soups. Give each child a small plate of vegetables to smell, taste, and touch. Let them explore, and find out if they like any of the ugly vegetables!

Family Involvement

- Make some Ugly Vegetable Soup! The author of the story provides the recipe for Ugly Vegetable Soup at the back of the book along with descriptions of the ugly vegetables, and the Chinese symbol for each.
- Have a traditional Chinese New Year feast! Follow recipes found on the Internet or in cookbooks and try making some of the foods like dim sum (sweet dumpling snacks), fortune cookies, or sweet almond tea.

Community Connection

- Explore your community. What kinds of cultures or nationalities exist where you live? Is there a Chinatown or Little Italy? Find out what kinds of fruits and vegetables are used by other cultures in their traditional recipes. Try a new recipe or trade with your neighbors like the characters in the story, *The Ugly Vegetables*!
- Visit a local Chinese restaurant or Chinatown and try some traditional Chinese foods such as lo mein, dumplings, or sticky rice.

Additional Titles

Yoko by Rosemary Wells, Hyperion Press, 1998
ISBN: 0786803959

A cute story about a little girl and the foods she brings to school that are a part of her culture.

The Children’s Kitchen Garden: A Book of Gardening, Cooking, and Learning by Georgeanne Brennan, Ten Speed Press, 1997
ISBN: 0898158737

This is a great resource to use with children that not only provides recipes but also information on composting and how flowers “drink”.

Almond Cookies & Dragon Well Tea by Cynthia Chin-Lee, Polychrome Publishing, 1993
ISBN: 1879965038

Two girls from different backgrounds spend time together and learn about each others’ cultures.

Char Siu Bao Boy by Sandra S. Yamate, Polychrome, 2000
ISBN: 1879965194

A new edition of a somewhat older book, this story tells of an Asian-American boy who is teased for bringing to school food he loves to eat for lunch.

The People of China and Their Food (Multicultural Cookbooks) by Burckhardt, Bridgestone Books, 1996
ISBN: 1560654333

Along with recipes for particular meals, this book talks about Chinese food customs and the preparation.



RIF'S MISSION

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF) develops and delivers children's and family literacy programs that help prepare young children for reading and motivate older children to read. Through a national network of teachers, parents, and community volunteers, RIF programs provide books and other essential literacy resources to children at no cost to them or their families. RIF's highest priority is the nation's neediest children, from infancy to age 11.

ABOUT RIF

Founded in 1966 in Washington, D.C., RIF is the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit children's literacy organization, with programs operating nationwide in 18,000 schools, child-care centers, libraries, hospitals, clinics, migrant worker camps, Head Start and Even Start programs, homeless shelters, and detention centers.

RIF serves more than 4.3 million children through a network of more than 310,000 volunteers. Two-thirds of the children served by RIF have economic or learning needs that put them at risk of failing to achieve basic educational goals.

Through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, RIF provides federal matching funds to thousands of school and community-based organizations that sponsor RIF programs. RIF also receives private support from hundreds of corporations and foundations, thousands of local organizations and businesses, and countless individuals.

RIF distributes about 14 million books a year. This year, RIF is celebrating its 35th anniversary and the milestone of placing more than 200 million books in the hands and homes of America's children.



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