

Unit

1

Understanding Chinese culture

In this unit you will learn how to

- familiarise yourself with the traditions of the Spring Festival in China
- use present participles as adverbials
- introduce Chinese New Year's traditions to foreign friends
- become a confident English speaker



Around the topic

01

Your ideas

Work in groups or pairs and discuss the following questions.

1. Why is the Spring Festival so important for the Chinese people?
2. What do you usually do during the Spring Festival?
3. Are there any special celebration activities in your hometown during the Spring Festival?
4. In what ways do you think the Spring Festival has changed?

02

Vocabulary

There are some special things about the Spring Festival, which are difficult to translate into English. Here are some English words and expressions related to the Spring Festival. Try to guess their meanings.

lunar calendar	solar calendar
dumplings	firecrackers
fireworks	Spring Festival couplets
New Year's cake	New Year pictures
reunion dinners	lion dances
red envelopes	rice dumplings
The Lantern Festival	temple fairs

03

Listening and speaking

A. Listening

Li Ming and Susan are having a conversation. Listen to the recording and answer the following questions.

1. What are they talking about?
2. How did Li Ming spend his holiday?
3. What is Susan curious about?
4. What makes the Spring Festival different from other holidays?
5. What do Chinese people do on New Year's Eve?

B. Speaking

Do you agree with what Li Ming said about the Spring Festival? What is your opinion about it? Discuss this in groups.



A quiz

During the Spring Festival, some things are believed to bring good luck for the new year, while other things might bring bad luck. Read the items in the table below and decide whether they bring good luck or bad luck. When you finish, compare your answers in pairs.

	Good luck	Bad luck
1. Bathing in pomelo leaves on New Year's Eve		
2. Buying a pair of shoes		
3. Eating fish on New Year's Eve		
4. Eating sweets		
5. Getting a haircut in the first lunar month		
6. Having the house cleaned from top to bottom before the Spring Festival		
7. Opening windows or doors		
8. Sweeping the floor on the first day of the Spring Festival		
9. Talking about death		
10. Wearing clothes in black and white		

Reading A

01

Pre-reading tasks

A Chinese student is trying to introduce what he/she knows about the Spring Festival to his/her foreign friend. Work in pairs. One plays as a Chinese student and the other plays as a foreigner. Switch the roles in the next round.

When you read an article in detail, it often helps if you highlight or underline the important parts. This also helps you to review important points later.

02

Reading comprehension

The Spring Festival in China

The Spring Festival is the most important festival for the Chinese people. It is the time for all family members to get together, just like Christmas in the West. All people living away from home go back and it becomes the busiest time for transportation systems.



The Spring Festival falls on the first day of the first lunar month, often one month later than the Gregorian calendar. It originated in the Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 BC) from people's sacrifice to gods and ancestors at the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one.

Many customs accompany

the Spring Festival. Some are still followed today, but others have weakened.

On the 8th day of the 12th lunar month, many families make *laba* porridge, a kind of delicious porridge made with at least eight types of corn and fruit.

The 23rd day of the 12th lunar month is called Preliminary Eve. At this time, people offer sacrifice to the Kitchen God. Now however, most families make delicious food to enjoy themselves. After Preliminary Eve, people begin preparing for the coming New Year. This is called “Seeing the New Year in”.

Before the New Year comes, people clean the indoors and outdoors of their homes completely as well as their clothes, bedrooms and all their utensils.

Then people begin decorating their clean rooms featuring an atmosphere of rejoicing and festivity. All the doors will be pasted with Spring Festival couplets, highlighting Chinese calligraphy with black characters on red paper. The content varies from wishes for a bright future to good luck for the New Year. Also, pictures of door gods and Gods of Wealth will be posted on the front door to ward off evil spirits and welcome peace and abundance.

The Chinese character *fu* (meaning blessing or happiness) is a must. The character put on paper can be pasted normally or upside down, for in Chinese the reversed *fu* is similar to “*fu* comes”, both being pronounced as *fudaole*. What’s more, two big red lanterns can be raised on both sides of the front door. Chinese paper cuttings can be seen on windows and brightly coloured New Year pictures with auspicious meanings may be put on the wall.

People attach great importance to New Year’s Eve. At that time, all family members eat dinner together. The meal is more luxurious than usual. Dishes such as chicken, fish and bean curd cannot be excluded, for in Chinese, the pronunciation of the names, *ji*, *yu* and *doufu*, respectively mean auspicious, abundance and richness. After dinner, the whole family will sit together, chatting and watching TV. In recent years, the Spring Festival Gala broadcast on China Central Television Station (CCTV) is essential entertainment for the Chinese both at home and abroad. According to the custom, each family will stay up to see the New Year in.

After waking up on New Year’s Day, everybody dresses up. First they extend greetings to their parents. Then each child will get money as a New Year gift, contained in a red envelope. People in northern China will eat *jiaozi*, or dumplings, for breakfast, as they think the name *jiaozi* sounds like “bidding farewell to the old and ushering in the new”. Also, the shape of the dumpling is

like gold ingot from ancient China. So people eat them and wish for money and treasure. Southern Chinese eat *niangao* (New Year's cake made of glutinous rice flour) on this occasion, because *niangao* means “higher and higher, one year after another”.

Setting the fireworks is the most typical custom at Spring Festival. People think the exploding sound can help drive away evil spirits. However, in big cities such an activity is limited nowadays to certain areas and time as the government takes security, noise and pollution factors into consideration.

The lively atmosphere not only fills every household, but permeates the streets and lanes. A series of activities such as lion dances, dragon lantern dances, and temple fairs will be held for days.

The Lantern Festival on the 15th of the first lunar month marks the last day of the Spring Festival. On this day, decorative lanterns are hung out for people to appreciate. Guessing lantern riddles is an essential part of the festival. Besides entertainment and beautiful lanterns, another important part of the Lantern Festival is eating *yuanxiao*. *Yuanxiao* is round in shape and symbolises family togetherness.

New Words & Expressions

Reading A

New Words

abundance /ə'bʌndəns/	<i>n.</i>	充裕, 丰富
auspicious /ɔ:'spɪʃəs/	<i>adj.</i>	吉利的, 吉祥的
bid /bɪd/	<i>v.</i>	表示; 祝
festivity /fe'stɪvɪti/	<i>n.</i>	欢乐, 欢庆
glutinous /'glu:tɪnəs/	<i>adj.</i>	很黏的
gala /'gɑ:lə/	<i>n.</i>	庆典; 演出盛会
ingot /'ɪŋgət/	<i>n.</i>	(纯金属的) 锭
lantern /'læntən/	<i>n.</i>	灯笼
lunar /'lu:nə/	<i>adj.</i>	阴历的

paste /peɪst/	v.	粘贴
permeate /'pɜːmiənt/	v.	弥漫，遍布；充满
porridge /'pɔːrɪdʒ/	n.	粥
rejoicing /rɪ'dʒɔɪsɪŋ/	n.	欢庆，庆祝
reverse /rɪ'vɜːs/	v.	颠倒
riddle /'rɪdl/	n.	谜语
sacrifice /'sækrɪfaɪs/	n.	献祭；祭品
utensil /juː'tensəl/	n.	器皿，用具
Phrases & Expressions		
attach importance to		重视，认为……很重要
Gregorian calendar		格列高利历，公历，阳历
usher in		宣告，开创
ward off		抵挡；避开

A. Answer the following questions.

1. What is the origin of the Spring Festival in China?
2. What do people do on the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month?
3. Why is the character *fu* sometimes pasted upside down?
4. What is the meal on New Year's Eve like?
5. What do people do first upon waking up on New Year's Day?
6. Why must people in northern China eat dumplings on New Year's Day?
7. Why do people set off fireworks at the Spring Festival?
8. What is the tradition of the Lantern Festival?

B. What is the significance of the following things during the Spring Festival?

Spring Festival couplets: _____

Chinese paper cuttings: _____

pictures of door gods: _____

chicken: _____

fish: _____

bean curd: _____

niangao: _____

C. Discussion

There are different traditions during the Spring Festival in different parts of China. Where is your hometown? What special traditions do you have in your hometown besides the traditions mentioned in the text? Form groups of four and share your knowledge with your group members.

03

Vocabulary and structure

A. Work out the meanings of the underlined words with the help of the context.

1. Many customs accompany the Spring Festival.

2. Now however, most families make delicious food to enjoy themselves.

3. Also, pictures of door gods and Gods of Wealth will be posted on the front door to ward off evil spirits...

4. The Chinese character *fu* (meaning blessing or happiness) is a must.

5. The meal is more luxurious than usual.

6. According to the custom, each family will stay up to see the New Year in.

7. People think the exploding sound can help drive away evil spirits.

8. In recent years, the Spring Festival Gala broadcast on China Central Television Station (CCTV) is essential entertainment...

B. Fill in the blanks with the words below. Change the form where necessary.

sacrifice rejoice paste abundance
 auspicious bid usher permeate

1. The year of the dragon is considered _____ in China.
2. There was great _____ at the victory.
3. The discovery of oil _____ in an era of employment and prosperity.
4. Before the battle, the commanders ordered the _____ of two bullocks to the God of War.
5. Sunlight streamed into the church and through the stained glass windows, and a smell of grass and flowers _____ the air.
6. This is a chance to _____ farewell to their president and welcome the new man.
7. The country is very rich because it has a(n) _____ of natural resources.
8. You can make planes out of it, _____ it on walls and windows, and colour it or use it for bookmarks.

C. Complete each pair of the sentences with the correct form of the same verb, one as a present participle (-ing) and the other as a past participle (-ed). The first one has been done for you.

1. play
 I hurt my leg *playing* _____ football.
 Bridge is a card game _____ *played* _____ by four people.
2. make
 There is a label “_____ in Japan” on my camera.
 I have a job in a café _____ sandwiches.
3. write
 I’ve spent the whole morning _____ an essay.
 On the wall were some scratches _____ in big letters.
4. buy
 Goods _____ in the sales cannot be refunded.
 I’ve spent all my money _____ Christmas presents.

5. break

The police caught the burglar _____ into a house.

Careful! There's a lot of _____ glass on the floor.

04

Writing

Write down your experiences about the Spring Festival. The following questions may help you to come up with some ideas.

1. How does your family prepare for the Spring Festival?
2. What traditional activities does your family do to celebrate the Spring Festival?
3. What special activity do you like most when you are celebrating the Spring Festival?

Guidelines: Avoid strings of brief and simple sentences

A string of brief, simple sentences can be very boring. And such a passage may be hard to understand, as short sentences are unlikely to make the main ideas stand out. To avoid this problem, you can use coordinating and subordinating words to combine sentences to emphasise important ideas, and of course you can vary sentence length.

For example:

The house is old, bare and quiet. It is almost frightening. It has dim lights. The walls are green and shabby. The floor is gray. The furniture is black. All these produce a cold atmosphere. They remind the visitor of ghosts.

The passage can be revised as follows:

The house is old, bare, quiet and almost frightening. Its dim lights, green and shabby walls, gray floor, and black furniture produce a cold atmosphere that reminds the visitor of ghosts.

Language in use

01

Test your grammar

Look at the two sentences from the article we have just studied. Pay special attention to the highlighted parts. What grammatical phenomenon is it?

1. After dinner, the whole family will sit together, **chatting and watching TV**.
2. All the doors will be pasted with Spring Festival couplets, **highlighting Chinese calligraphy with black characters on red paper**.

02

Grammar development: Present participles used as adverbials

English has two types of participles: the present participle and the past participle. The present participle is formed by adding the suffix “-ing” to the base form of the verb.

A. Rewrite the following sentences using the present participle.

1. When the stranger saw the door open, he entered the house.

2. As Tom was athletic, he found the climb quite easy.

3. I ran for the bus, tripped and fell.

4. If we ask a question, we should get an answer.

5. Although he lived miles away, he attended the course.

Grammar tips

现在分词所表示的动作与谓语动词表示的动作同时发生时, 现在分词用一般式。
例如: Preparing a long speech for the president, the secretary worked late into the night.

现在分词所表示的动作先于谓语动词的动作时, 现在分词用完成式。例如:
Having finished his homework, the boy went out to play football.

B. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. Being Sunday, I shall have a quiet day at home.

2. Entering the house, the door closed with a bang.

3. Walking through the park, the flowers made a lovely sight.

4. Standing on the top of the church tower, the whole village could be seen.

5. Waiting for a bus, a brick fell on my head.

6. Having been away from his hometown for more than thirty years, no one recognised him.

7. Climbing to the top of the hill, there is a magnificent view to be seen.

C. Complete the following sentences with the proper form of the verbs in the brackets.

1. After _____ (think) everything over, she decided _____ (not leave) that day.
2. _____ (hear) the good news, they felt very excited.
3. _____ (have) a good rest, the tourists felt quite refreshed.
4. It _____ (be) Sunday, the Smiths went on a picnic.
5. _____ (enter) the room, the messenger collapsed, his face _____ (cover) with sweat.
6. _____ (promise) to give her an expensive gift for her birthday, I can't go back on my word.

03

Vocabulary building: Word pairs

In English there are many pairs of words joined by a conjunction, usually *and* but not always. The order of the words is fixed.

e.g. I still see Jane *now and again*.

She ran *up and down* the road.

Marry me or leave me. It's *all or nothing*.

The traffic was so bad on the way to the airport that it was *touch and go* whether we would catch the plane.

A. Match the pairs of words in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

A	B
() 1. wait and see	a. approximately
() 2. ins and outs	b. generally speaking
() 3. back to front	c. exact details
() 4. odds and ends	d. to put up with it
() 5. more or less	e. small things
() 6. grin and bear it	f. to be patient and find out later
() 7. by and large	g. the wrong way round
() 8. pros and cons	h. advantages and disadvantages

B. Complete the following sentences using the pairs of words in Exercise A.

- I've _____ finished reading the book.
- I didn't buy much at the shop. Just a few _____ for the kids.
- You've got your T-shirt on _____. The words should be at the front.
- It's difficult to explain the _____ of the rules of cricket. It's so complicated.
- "What have you bought me for Christmas?"
"You'll have to _____."
- "Oh, no! The Burtons are coming for supper! I hate their kids!"
"I'm sorry, but you'll just have to _____. It's only for an hour or so."

7. It was a very tempting job offer. I weighed up the _____, but I decided in the end that I wouldn't take it.
8. Britain has its faults, of course, but _____ it's a pleasant place to live in.

C. Match a word in Column A with a word in Column B and a word in Column C to form a set phrase. Look for synonyms and antonyms. There are more words in Column C than you need!

A	B	C	You may write your answers here! e.g. <i>now and then</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
now	and	from	
to	or	then	
safe	but	later	
sooner		surely	
slowly		order	
law		sound	

Reading B

01

Pre-reading tasks

- What is your favourite colour? Why do you like it?
- Do you know what the red colour stands for in Chinese culture? Why do Chinese people love red colour so much?

Why do Chinese people love the colour red?

Among a world of colours, red stands out the most. The colour red is fresh and pure, and in China we call it China Red. Chinese people are fascinated by the colour red not only because of its liveliness, but also because of its rich meaning in Chinese culture and history.

It is believed that no country in the world has ever adopted a colour in such a thorough way as in China, where red is a symbol that gives colour to the soul of the nation. In the past, red stood for dignity and mystery. Even now, we adore the colour. It can be said that China Red is an eternal theme for China, and an essential colour for the Chinese people. China Red has become a quite popular expression, attracting the world's attention.

Shooting red-coloured things in China is an easy task, as its powerful presence can be found everywhere. All traditional red things have played special roles in China: the walls of ancient palaces, the national flag, Chinese knots, lanterns, couplets, clothes, Chinese paper cuttings for window decorations, and even red *tanghulu* (sugar-coated haws on a stick). Red is the colour of the lucky, signifying reunion, health, happiness, harmony, peace and prosperity. Only real things and events can fully display and explain its beauty. Only in relation with people can colour be alive and meaningful.

The best way to feel China Red is to stay in China during the Spring Festival or attend a Chinese wedding. To celebrate the Spring Festival—the most important festival in China—people will set off red firecrackers, paste red couplets on door frames and Chinese red paper cuttings on windows, hang and light red lanterns at night, and give out red envelopes to kids.

In contrast to the use of white, especially with wedding dresses, popular in many Western countries, a Chinese wedding features the use of red, which is supposed to ensure a happy future for the couple. In a traditional Chinese wedding, you will find red everywhere. Red candles create a cosy and warm environment, and red Double Happiness characters are pasted on doors and walls. Red invitation

cards are sent and guests present red envelopes. The wedding bed is covered with red bed sheets and red quilts. The couple walks down a red carpet, strewn with red flowers. Even at modern weddings, where the bride wears a Western white wedding gown for the ceremony, it is customary for her to change into something red for the reception.

In China, red is more than just a colour. It carries the ancient history and culture of the Chinese nation. China Red is filled with mysterious charm beyond description and it is right here in China waiting for you to feel, to discover!

New Words & Expressions

Reading B

New Words

adopt /ə'dɒpt/

v.

采取, 采用

adore /ə'dɔː/

v.

敬慕, 爱慕

charm /tʃɑːm/

n.

魅力

dignity /'dɪɡnɪti/

n.

尊严, 高贵

display /dɪ'spleɪ/

v.

显示

eternal /ɪ'tɜːnəl/

adj.

永远的, 永恒的

fascinate /'fæsɪneɪt/

v.

迷住, 吸引

gown /gaʊn/

n.

女礼服

harmony /'hɑːməni/

n.

和谐, 协调

haw /hɔː/

n.

山楂

knot /nɒt/

n.

结

prosperity /prɒ'sperɪti/

n.

兴隆, 昌盛

reunion /ri:'juːnjən/

n.

团聚

shoot /ʃuːt/

v.

拍照

signify /'sɪgnɪfaɪ/

v.

表示, 意味着

Phrases & Expressions

give out

分发

set off

使爆炸

stand out

显眼, 突出

strewn with

充满

A. Answer the following questions.

1. Why is the colour red called China Red?
2. Why are Chinese people fascinated by the colour red?
3. What does red stand for in the past in China?
4. How is red used in the Spring Festival?
5. How is red used in the traditional Chinese weddings?
6. What colours does the bride wear at modern weddings in China?

B. Discussion

1. Do you agree with the author on his views about the red colour in the article? Why or why not?
2. How do Western people like the red colour? Different colours have different meanings in different cultures. What do you know about this? Share your knowledge with your group members.

03

Vocabulary and grammar

A. Match the words in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

A	B
() 1. harmony	a. comfortable and warm
() 2. thorough	b. to love deeply and respect highly
() 3. dignity	c. the pleasant effect made by different things that form an attractive whole
() 4. adore	d. quality that earns or deserves respect
() 5. eternal	e. including every possible detail
() 6. paste	f. to take photographs
() 7. cosy	g. having no end; lasting or existing for ever
() 8. shoot	h. to stick paper to a surface using paste

B. There is one inverted sentence in the text. Can you change it into the normal order?

Only in its relation with people can the colour be alive and meaningful.

Turn the following into INVERTED sentences.

1. The matter could be explained in no other way.
In _____
2. We had hardly started when it began to rain.
Hardly _____
3. I have seldom heard such beautiful singing.
Seldom _____
4. I shall never forget your kindness.
Never _____
5. We had no sooner left the house than it exploded.
No _____
6. He didn't realise that he had lost the key till he got home.
Not _____
7. They not only robbed you, but also they smashed everything.
Not _____

C. Translate the following sentences into English.

1. 他身材高大，因此在人群中很显眼。(stand out)
2. 学校应采用新的外语教学法。(adopt)
3. 人们相信，他是这个职位的合适人选。(it is believed that...)
4. 请举手表示同意。(signify)
5. 我发完这些表格就回来。(give out)

Project

Planning a Chinese New Year party

Step 1 Vocabulary

Think about what you would need to do in planning a Chinese New Year party. Make a list and check any new words in a dictionary.

Step 2 Talk to your neighbour

Suppose you are inviting a foreign friend to spend the Chinese New Year with your family. Talk to your partner about your plans. Brainstorm how to explain some

typical Chinese New Year's traditions to the foreigners.

Step 3 Role-play

Your foreign friend spends the New Year with your family. Practise with your partner conversations between you and the foreigner, taking turns to be the foreigner.

Step 4 Write a paragraph

Write a paragraph describing Chinese

New Year's traditions. Use some of the expressions you have learned.

Step 5 Show one another your writing

Read other students' writings. If you have anything you don't understand, ask the writer what it means. Which parts do you like best in other students' writings?

Culture tips

Things not to do on New Year's Day

Avoid housework on Chinese New Year's Day: this activity runs the risk of washing away or sweeping away good luck.

It is also considered unlucky to use anything sharp on New Year's Day—knives, scissors, even nail clippers. The action of the sharp blades risks cutting the threads of good fortune brought in at the New Year.

It is important not to use negative language—having an argument on New Year's Day is to be avoided at all costs.

Words related to sickness and death are to be avoided. This even extends to the use of words which sound like the words for death or sickness.

To avoid any association with death, any slaughtering of poultry or livestock is carried out on New Year's Eve. Finally, care must be taken not to stumble on or to break anything—this would be indicative of bad luck ahead.

Learning to learn

How to become a confident speaker

The following tips help you to become a more confident speaker. Do you agree with them? Discuss in groups.

It's important to build your confidence. If possible, use the simple sentence structure that you know is correct, so that you can concentrate on getting your message across.

Try not to translate into and from your own language. This takes too much time and will make you more hesitant.

If you forget a word, do what native English speakers do all the time, and say things that “fill” the conversation. This is better than remaining completely silent. Try using “um” or “er” if you forget the word.

Don't speak too fast! It's important to use a natural rhythm in speaking English. If you speak too fast, it will be difficult for people to understand you.

Try to relax when you speak, and you'll find that your mouth does most of the pronunciation work for you. When you speak English at a normal speed, you'll discover that many of the pronunciation rules, such as word linking, happen automatically.