



ACTIVITY 1

Happy New Year Dragon

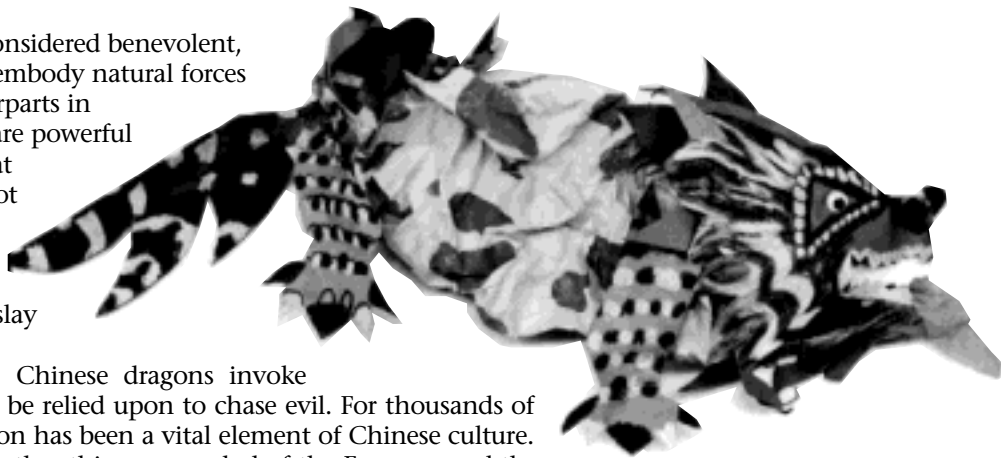
Three-Dimensional Paper Sculpture

Chinese dragons are considered benevolent, wise, and lucky. They embody natural forces and—like their counterparts in Western mythology—are powerful indeed! Please note that Chinese dragons are not loathsome nor are they vicious and destructive. No knights are needed to slay these creatures.

On the contrary, Chinese dragons invoke good fortune and may be relied upon to chase evil. For thousands of years, the Eastern dragon has been a vital element of Chinese culture. The dragon is, among other things, a symbol of the Emperor and the court. This is why you will find dragons all over imperial robes!

Dragons were believed to dwell in the heavens, mountains, and seas. They have not only influenced royal decisions—they are also thought to control weather and seasons! With such a long cultural history, it should be of little surprise to find that dragons often appear in Chinese art and offer a grand centerpiece of the Chinese New Year Parade!

The Chinese New Year is based on the lunar calendar, which means it can occur anywhere between mid-January and mid-February. It is a five-day celebration. On the third day, the mighty dragon will burst on the noisy scene, bringing good luck to all in its path!



▲ Figure 1-1. Gung Hay Fat Choy! New Year's greeting for prosperity and health.



◀ Figure 1-2. Dragon's head made of papier mâché; the body is a long train of cloth. Some men hold the head, while others—usually twelve—become “dragon legs”! Can you find another dragon in the firecracker smoke?



MATERIALS

- pencils
- 36" × 26" color Kraft roll paper
- 12" × 18" color construction paper
- 9" × 12" color construction paper (assorted for legs, tail, and details)
- red and orange tissue paper*
- scissors
- tempera paint
- oil pastels
- glue
- pipe cleaners
- plastic wiggle eyes (may substitute with paper circles)

* Red is considered particularly lucky for the Chinese New Year!

TEACHER PREPARATION

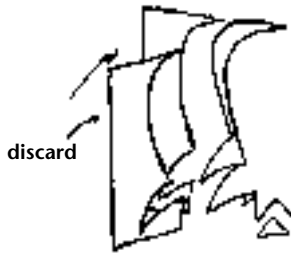
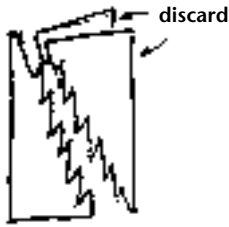
You might want to cut 36" × 26" color Kraft paper for students' selection. For classroom discussion, it's helpful to access sources of Chinese dragon images. **Stress that a Chinese dragon is the sum of many parts:** Its head is said to be shaped like a camel's; it has magic creature eyes, fins, horns, pointed beard, tusks; a snake's neck, fish scales, belly of a clam, eagles' claws, and the paws of a tiger! You will want to discuss the attributes of Chinese dragons with your students before they explore their own "bestly" interpretations!

DIRECTIONS

1. **Gung Hay Fat Choy!** How do we celebrate the New Year? The Chinese have the traditional Dragon (or "Lion Dancer") to bring in the year with gusto! Students' answers to these questions should give the teacher an opportunity to introduce the dragon in this particular context.
2. Students select color Kraft paper for the body of the dragon. Fold paper in half lengthwise. Fold in half again lengthwise to make crease and open this last fold only. Cut on a diagonal from the open bottom corner edge to top at mid-fold crease. *(See S.O.S., if needed.)
3. Select two to three colors of tempera paint which contrast with the paper body color. Open paper. Drip paint on one half of the paper and then refold and press to make symmetrical "blotto" design!
4. Fold 12" × 18" paper in half. Draw dragon head on fold. Cut out shape on fold. Cut out an open mouth shape with teeth. Color with oil pastels, making sure to add details, but no "eyeballs."
5. Draw half of the tail shape on folded 9" × 12" construction paper. Cut on fold and then decorate with textural design.



***S.O.S. (SAVE OUR SCHEDULE, i.e., "schedule saver" or shortcut) . . . "The Paper (Bag) Dragon"** may be created by decorating a paper lunch bag in lieu of steps 2 and 3.



6. Draw half of a leg shape on 4 pieces of 6" x 9" construction paper that has been folded in half. Cut on fold and open legs to decorate with textural designs using oil crayons.
7. Make body into tube by overlapping side edges of now-dry painted Kraft paper. The body will be wider at head and narrower at the tail end. Scrunch tube by carefully pushing open ends together.
8. Attach head, tail, and legs with glue or staples.
9. Use construction paper to add details such as horns and dimensional scales. Fire shooting from the dragon's mouth can be created by using tissue paper and pipe cleaners, etc.
10. To conclude the project, fill the empty eye shapes with eyeballs (cut paper or plastic wiggle eyes) to express the dragon's spirit. According to the Chinese dragon painter's tradition, when the dragon's eyes are put in, the dragon will fill with energy and fly away . . . *such is the magic of art!*



▲ Figure 1-4. Another alternative to the more ambitious version is the hand-held dragon, easily assembled as shown.

Figure 1-3. Souvenir hand puppets. (May be purchased in the "Chinatown" section of many cities.) Simple classroom version is the brown bag (or "colored" lunch bag) which enables articulated mouth. Add pom-poms. ▼



◀ Figure 1-5. You know you're in China when . . . you are standing at the Great Wall! China's world wonder is more than 1,500 miles long and is formed of endless sections, much like the art-room version detail shown here. Ours boasts the "Legend of Ch'en Jung the Dragon Painter," whose artistic powers enabled the painted dragon to break free! The student mural was made from a computer-based "blueprint."