



MUSHROOM

E-MAGAZINE

Celebrating Students' Creativity & English Language Learning

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**THIS ISSUE'S TOPIC:
NEW YEAR**



Cover Design:
Lanyi-May, Grade 7, Suzhou

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Editor's Introduction

CELEBRATING NEW YEAR

By Dr Terrett

New Year is a time for reflection (反思) on the year that has passed and a time to look forward to the new year to come. In China we are lucky enough to enjoy two new years and two holidays (1st January New Year and Chinese New Year)

Spring Festival, the Chinese New Year, is often described (被描述) as a time when families get together to eat dumplings as part of a reunion dinner (团圆饭), watch the famous Gala Performance (联欢晚会) on TV and enjoy fireworks (烟花). This is often compared (被比较) to Christmas.

However, these descriptions (描述) of Spring Festival are limited (有限的/不够的) and not very interesting, so the challenge for the student writers for this issue (期) of Mushroom e-Magazine was to write coherent (连贯的) pieces that celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival in much more interesting ways and from different perspectives (). I hope you enjoy their efforts!

Note on 'fireworks' verbs:

More natural English verbs to use with 'fireworks' include:

watch fireworks (看烟花)

enjoy fireworks (欣赏烟花)

light fireworks (点烟花)

set off fireworks (放烟花)

see fireworks (看烟花)

We don't usually say "play with fireworks" in English because it means the fireworks are like toys, which is very dangerous (危险的).

About the Cover Illustration:

Lanyi-May's cover illustration (封面插图) shows Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, changes and time. He has two faces looking in opposite directions (相反的方向)—one toward the past, the other toward the future. This is why he is used to represent (代表) New Year, and why the first month is named after him (Janus → January).

The horse is wearing the traditional red and gold decorations (传统红金装饰) of Spring Festival and has a fiery mane (火焰般的鬃毛). This represents (代表) that this year is the Chinese year of the Fire Horse. If you search online, you will find that this has many different special meanings and interpretations (解释/象征意义).



NIAN BIOGRAPHY AND PICTURE

By Chali-Ray, Grade 5, from Suzhou

Nian is a Chinese mythical creature that attacks cities on Chinese new year and gets scared by the colour red (which is a bit nonsensical since he is red himself) and loud noises. The story goes something like this: nian lived on a mountain and on new year would come into the village and destroy stuff. But one day the villagers discovered he is scared of loud noises and the colour red. So when new year came, everyone set off fireworks and caps, and hung chunlian (春联) on their doors and nian got scared off. So every new year we must all "share our happiness" and make everything red.



Chinese New Year Celebration

~ By Archisa

In 2025, we celebrated joyfully Chinese New Year in Suzhou, China. My grandmother visited at our residence and experienced the traditional Chinese New Year first time. Mr. Zhang and Ms. Jiang, our family friends, invited us to their home for a family gathering (Nian Ye Fan). On that evening, we enjoyed ourselves a lot! We had a big dinner with more than 20 guests. There were some traditional Suzhou dishes, such as squirrel fish (Song Shu Gui Yu), crabs, lobsters, chicken soup. Those dishes were very delicious and mouthwatering. I took part in a Karaoke and saw how to play Ma Jiang. Then, we all set off firecrackers that jumped into the air and made colorful sparkling in the sky. After returning home, we watched the Spring festival gala on TV, ate many golden chocolates and wished for a very happy new year.



By Archisa, Grade 6, from Suzhou



The Siege of Nian



Suzhou has almost no local people, so when the Spring festival came, people fled to their hometown, leaving a few old people and young children behind. Then, when New Year's Eve came, a red, weird looking monster marched on the streets. It ripped people's houses, shouting: "Suzhou doesn't have an airport!" Now the people were mad. The fact that Suzhou doesn't have an airport makes every Suzhou citizen ashamed. The Suzhou citizens wanted revenge. They ran into their broken houses, and got everything they had to arm themselves. Most of them had knives and some leftover food. When they came back onto the streets, their soul filled with anger, they threw all the food and tried to slice Nian's body with the knives. Their attacks were almost no use, the knives couldn't cut Nian's body, and the food-throwing only made it mad. Nian chased the city people to a dead-end. The people were very worried; Nian came closer, some of the little kids even wet their pants. Suddenly, a beam of red light shined from the sky. Then, a man-looking figure slowly came from the sky, followed with sounds of firecrackers. When that figure finally came down, people noticed that this person is their mayor, Dr. Wizard. He yelled to his citizens: "Fellow citizens, there is nothing to fear about! All we have to do is blow that wicked monster up with some firecrackers." After he said that, people grabbed the firecrackers from Dr. Wizard hands and got some more from their homes. They all lit them together and threw them to the monster Nian, which is now very terrified. In a loud "Boom" noise, Nian exploded into crisps. The people of Suzhou cheered, lifting their Mayor up. Then, after the celebration, the citizens all agreed that they will let the government build an airport in Suzhou so that they wouldn't be ashamed anymore. After that, they all had a wonderful Chinese new Year - without Nian bothering them.

Name: Kitty

Spring Festival

(to speak the truth, starting from age 2. I spent like ^{only} about 3 spring festival in China)

I spent my last 2 spring festivals far away from China, on the two ends of the globe. And I'm going to spend it outside home this year, too, so I haven't seen the celebration on TV because for quite some time due to 5-8 hours of time difference (I was told that it was relatively boring compared to previous times, though.)



To celebrate the special occasion, my parents took me out to a Chinese restaurant on Spring Festival Eve. It sure is the best serving I'd had for days. The cold salad and King crab wasn't bad, but personally, my belly much prefer warm soup & dumpling. There was quite a few customers in the place who comes from where we lived. Even though we are all unfamiliar with one another, we still feel a feeling of Union and warmth as strangers in an foreign place.

I didn't get to set fireworks, though it isn't much of a pity, ~~in the~~ because I don't really enjoy it much in the first place. Every year, my cats cat sick because of fright fright and my dog barks alot, all due to the loud noise constant loud explosions. I feel bad about leaving my cats in the hospital while going off to travel and enjoy myself, and I'm certainly not crazy about spending thousands on the operations to cure them, not to mention the endless charges for medicine afterward.



At last, One of the best things about spring Festival is relieving the red packets. It is a rectangular red package, and comes in various sizes, usually a quarter of an A4 paper. I can only get 10 percent of what it contain, but it is more than enough. since I had quite a few relatives on my mother's side. I was worried that I won't get any because I was growing older, but my mother reassured me that she was receiving red packets after she graduated from college.

- China: ^{and pets!}
 - Gathering together on the sofa with family,
 - watching the Gala and staying up the night,
 - eating a fish-shaped rice cake.
- Italy & Switzerland ^{lunch}
 - Huddling together in an ice-made hut, around a warm fire and burning sausages and marsh-mallows
 - Supper: a hotpot in hotel. very good!
- Finland & Newzealand
 - Go to a Chinese restaurant to celebrate.
 - consume a huge bowl of borage, tried but failed to stay up for the Gala.



My Spring Festival Experience in Different places.

Nian Comes to TOWN!!!!

On the New Year's Eve, every one put up red paper and red lanterns.

Grandma and grandpa are making dumplings and telling story about Nian beast. I remembered the myth I had read on the book about Nian, it said that Nian is a evil beast that come and mess things up, it comes to every home on the New year's Eve, and the book also said it's scared of fireworks and red things.

We are eating hot dumplings, I heard heavy steps — that must be Nian! The sound came near and stopped. Grandma and grandpa looks calm. Grandma smile and go to open the door, I'm scared of what's behind the door, maybe a ten-meter long evil monsters with big fangs, I imagined.

Grandma open the door, and I see a little thing, with white fur and red wings looking at us. Grandma said, "You're here, little one," She turn to us and said, "Lets welcome Nian with dumplings and fireworks!", I look at Nian again, it's more like a puppy with wings, not a evil beast or monster. I realize the fire work and red papers is not for scared Nian off, they're used to welcome Nian.

We bring dumplings to Nian, Nian smells it, it carefully ate one, the jump around happily.

That night, we stayed up very late with Nian, it's not scary at all! This will be the best part of New Year's Eve!



By
Lemon

Grade 6,
from Suzhou

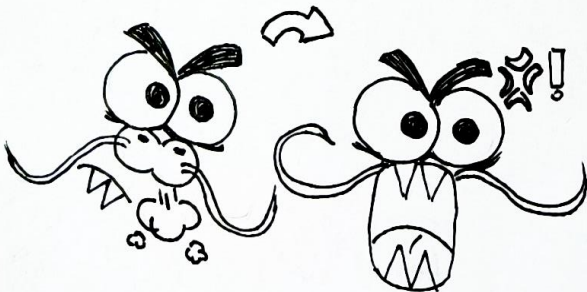


THE NIAN ARRIVES TO TOWN. - By VALERIE.

The clock of the town ticked seconds away from midnight. The urban city was too quiet, even the sound of a scurrying mouse could be heard in this night. No one played with fireworks. The streets were dark as ink, lights dimmed, then everything went pitch black. Last year, everyone stucked "Spring Couplets" on their house doors, but this year, the air was cold and the door was blank with no "Spring Couplets".

Suddenly, the second hand of the clock pointed to twelve o'clock. It was midnight. A roar exploded out of no where. Screams echoed in the town. People woke up and lights lit up. A huge red monster came dashing from the corner. It howled as it overturned the houses, sending them toppling with a loud "Crash". People scurried out of bed, some still wearing nightgowns and nightcaps as they held their children in one arm. "Nian is coming, Nian is back!" Someone cried. The monster appeared again, this time holding a child in its mouth. The child's mother screamed, tears trickling down her cheek. Other people clutched their children and ran as far as they could. Nian laughed coldly, but his loud laughter was covered with the sound of fireworks. A red line shooted high onto the air and bursted into red sparks. The creature stared blankly into the night, then roared a frightened roar, he turned, swinging his tail running away as quick as his legs could take him. People watched him go, and punched their fists in the air with happiness.

Next year, everyone promised to hang out "Spring Couplets", to light out fireworks, to wear red clothing, so Nian won't come again. THE END!



ONLINE DISCUSSION

By Grade 6-7 students, from Suzhou

Join the discussion at:

<https://mushroom-scholars.org/should-cities-enforce-rules-of-banning-fireworks/>

Should cities enforce rules of banning fireworks?

February 3, 2026 by [Weirdo](#)

My opinion: We should ban fireworks, first of all, fireworks are the main cause of noise pollution, hearing fireworks explode for long-term, it can cause permanent hearing damage. Second, use of fireworks causes a disruption to the nearby citizens, you don't want to get disrupted by fireworks when having a sweet dream, right? To stop this, we need to entirely banish the use of fireworks.

Bestfit: Restrict the use of fireworks in specific time.



[The Nerdy Gator Kid](#) says:

February 4, 2026 at 8:41 am

Well I think that small fireworks are ok to play, as long as they don't disturb others. I really enjoy them, though.



[wimpycat01](#) says:

February 3, 2026 at 8:52 pm

Maybe if your policy got approved the death rate wouldn't be as severe as increasing 2%.



[Bilbo Baggins of the Shire](#) says:

February 3, 2026 at 11:24 am

I personally think it would be okay to have fireworks in some cases, like community fireworks everyone can go to see and everyone knows about so it doesn't disturb them. But private fireworks should be used less, I think.

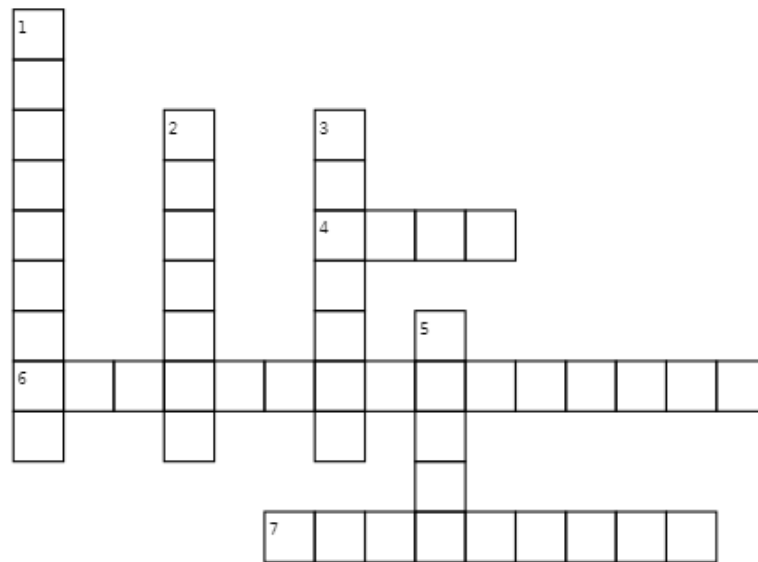


[Weirdo](#) says:

February 4, 2026 at 8:44 am

Private Fireworks should be banned, but public fireworks can be use on restricted time.

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

1. Food traditionally eaten at Spring Festival, especially in the north of China.
2. A time when we don't have to go to work or school.
3. The month named after the Roman god with two faces on his head - one looking forwards, the other looking back.
5. This year's animal of the Chinese zodiac.

Across:

4. A monster that is frightened away by the colour red and loud fire works.
6. The variety performance that millions of Chinese people watch on TV at Spring Festival.
7. Things we do not play with at Spring Festival.

Answers on the last page.

In the next issue...

THE NEXT ISSUE'S TOPIC IS...

Shakespeare

The next issue of this e-magazine will be published at the end of April, just after Shakespeare week. This is a good time to celebrate this important English poet (诗人) who is recognised (被认可) as the greatest playwright (剧作家) in the English language.

This issue will mostly be a celebration of Shakespeare, but let's also celebrate the spring.

Here is a quote about the spring from one of Shakespeare's poems 😊

*"From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything."*

(From Shakespeare's Sonnet 98)

USEFUL VOCABULARY

Here are some words that are useful for discussing Shakespeare:

Poet (诗人)
Poem (诗歌)
Play (戏剧)
Playwright (剧作家)
Tragedy (悲剧)
Comedy (喜剧)
History (历史)
Theatre (戏剧)
Stage (舞台)
Actors (演员)

Here are some words about the spring:

Blossom (开花)
Bloom (盛开)
Bud (花蕾)
Breeze (微风)
Birth (出生)
Rebirth (重生)
New growth (新生长)
Sunshine (阳光)
Meadow (草地)
April showers (四月小雨)



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WeChat connection coming soon...

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Crossword answers

