

Chinese New Year's Dragon

An exciting and colorful festival, the Chinese New Year is usually celebrated in February according to the Chinese calendar. Giant dragon floats are paraded through the streets to bring good luck in the new year. The dragon is a symbol of health and prosperity. In this project, children make their own New Year's dragons. Use them to hold your own parade around the classroom!

Materials

For each student:

- ⊙ dragon head pattern (page 75)
- ⊙ two 4- by 18-inch strips of brightly colored construction paper (for dragon's body)
- ⊙ one 4 1/2-inch square of construction paper (for dragon's head)
- ⊙ one 4- by 9-inch strip of construction paper (a different color for the tail)
- ⊙ scraps of colored paper
- ⊙ one 12-inch red pipe cleaner (for dragon's tongue, or use a strip of red paper)
- ⊙ 2 chopsticks or rulers (optional)

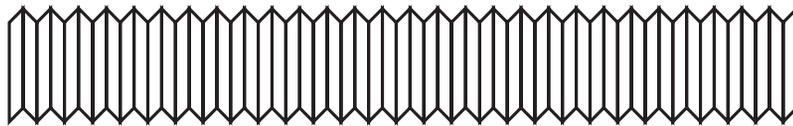
Other materials:

- ⊙ tape
- ⊙ scissors
- ⊙ glue stick
- ⊙ hole punch
- ⊙ colored or white hole reinforcements for eyes and nostrils
- ⊙ markers and crayons

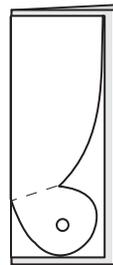
Pass out the materials. Have children cut out the dragon head pattern box and then set it aside. Show children how to do the following.

1 Starting at the end of one of the long strips of paper, make a fold about one inch deep. Now fold the paper back another inch in the opposite direction. Keep folding back and forth until you have folded the entire piece of paper. This is called an accordion pleat. Now do the same thing with the other long strip of paper.

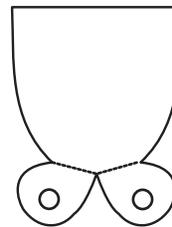
2 Glue together the two body pieces so that they form one continuous back-and-forth pleat. Set the body aside.



3 Fold the square of paper for the head in half. Line up the pattern box along the folded side of the paper as shown, and tape it down in a few places.



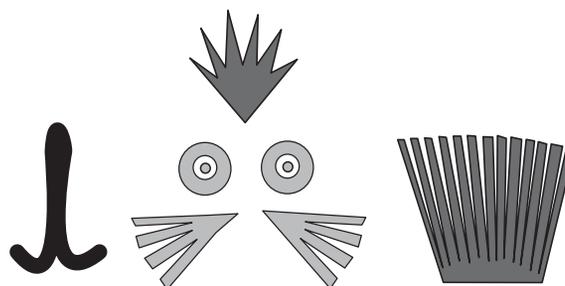
4 Cut out the head shape along the outer edges, cutting through all layers of paper. Use the hole punch to make nostrils and fold up on the dotted line.



5 Remove the pattern and spread open the dragon's head. Add hole reinforcements to the nostrils if desired.

6 Cut out two large circles for the eyes. (Stack two pieces of paper and cut out two at a time for symmetrical eyes.) Draw eyes on the circles or use hole reinforcements. Glue these to the head so that they stick out over the top of the head. Bend up in the same direction as the nostrils.

7 Cut out fringe for whiskers and glue these underneath the dragon's head. Cut out a shape for a top comb and glue it to the head between the eyes. Let it stick up over the top of the head like hair.



Tip

To make the dragons even more colorful, paint the papers ahead of time. See page 8 for more.

Book Break

Share *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year* by Kate Waters (Scholastic, 1990), the true story of a Chinese boy looking forward to his first performance in a Chinese New Year parade on the streets of New York City. After sharing this story, let your students use their paper dragons in their own Chinese New Year parade.

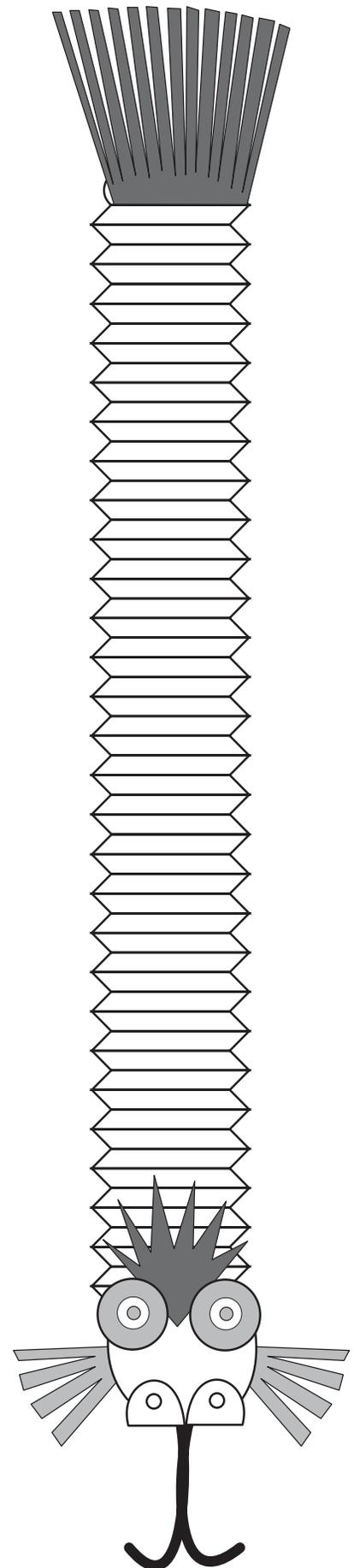
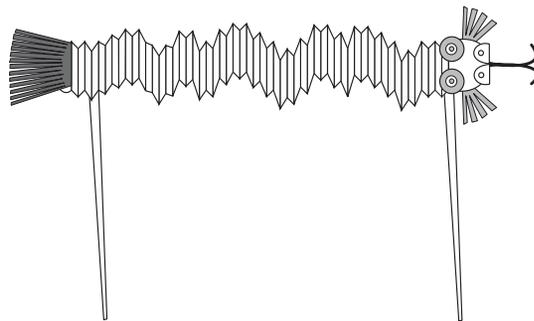
Then invite your class to find about the Chinese New Year and its many customs. According to Chinese tradition, each year in a 12-year cycle is named after an animal—rat, buffalo, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. Help children to find out what animal sign they were born under.

8 Fold the pipe cleaner in half and curl the ends outward to make the dragon's tongue. Tape it under the head. Or, instead, use a long, thin strip of red paper for the tongue and write a lucky fortune on it. Glue the end under the dragon's head. Then roll it up and friends can unroll the tongue to see what the dragon is saying.

9 Glue the head to the body.

10 Fringe the piece of paper for the tail and glue it to the end of the body. Now the dragon is ready to roar!

Optional: Attach chopsticks or rulers to the dragon's head and tail with tape. These can serve as handles for holding the dragon up high in a parade.



Chinese New Year's Dragon • Head

