

Cloze Passage Answer Key

Chinese New Year, also known as the Lunar New Year, is one of the most important and widely celebrated holidays in many parts of the world, especially in Asia. The holiday marks the start of the new year according to the lunar calendar, which is based on the cycles of the moon. While the date changes each year, Chinese New Year usually falls between January 21 and February 20. The celebration lasts for 15 days, ending with the Lantern Festival. It is a time full of joy, family reunions, exciting events, and meaningful traditions.

The history of Chinese New Year stretches back over 4,000 years. According to legend, there was once a fierce and terrifying monster named Nian that would come down from the mountains to **attack** villages at the end of every year. Nian was afraid of loud noises and the color red, so the villagers began using firecrackers and bright red **decorations** to scare him away. Today, these practices continue, but instead of warding off monsters, they are used to bring good luck and **happiness** for the new year.

People **celebrate** Chinese New Year in many countries across the globe, but it is most commonly observed in places with large Chinese communities, such as China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. In addition, people of Chinese descent in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom celebrate as well. In cities with large Chinese populations, such as San Francisco, New York, and London, you can find huge parades, street fairs, and beautiful firework displays during this time.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Chinese New Year is the Chinese zodiac, which assigns an animal to each year in a 12-year cycle. These animals include the Dragon, Snake, Tiger, Rabbit, and others. Each year, one of these animals is believed to influence the events of the year and the characteristics of babies born during that time. For example, people born in the Year of the Dragon, like the upcoming year 2024, are said to be confident, energetic, and lucky. This makes Chinese New Year even more **exciting**, as many people look forward to seeing how the year will unfold according to the zodiac sign.

Family plays a central role during Chinese New Year. It is a time when relatives, even those who live far away, come together to share special meals and enjoy each other's company. Preparing large family **feasts** is an important part of the holiday, with foods like dumplings, fish, and rice cakes taking center stage. Each dish has its own meaning and is believed to bring good fortune, health, or wealth in the coming year. For example, eating fish is thought to bring prosperity, while dumplings symbolize wealth.

Another exciting tradition is the giving of red envelopes, known as "hongbao," which are filled with money. These red envelopes are usually given to children or younger relatives as a wish for good luck and **happiness** in the new year. The red color is important because it symbolizes good fortune and wards off bad luck, much like the **decorations** and firecrackers used in ancient times to scare off Nian.

The festive mood of Chinese New Year can be felt everywhere, with **fireworks** lighting up the night sky and dragon or lion dances performed at parades. The dragon dance is particularly impressive, with teams of dancers controlling a long, colorful dragon puppet as they move through the streets. This dance is thought to bring **happiness** and success to businesses and families alike.

One of the most exciting days of the 15-day celebration is the Lantern Festival, which takes place on the final day of Chinese New Year. On this night, people light and release beautiful paper lanterns into the sky or float them on rivers. The lanterns are often decorated with wishes for the new year and are a stunning way to end the celebration.

So, whether you're watching a lion dance, enjoying a festive feast, or popping **fireworks**, Chinese New Year is a time to come together with loved ones, **celebrate** rich traditions, and look forward to the opportunities and adventures of the year ahead. Be sure to wear red, give a friendly "Gong Xi Fa Cai" (meaning "Wishing you great happiness and prosperity"), and enjoy the magic of this joyful holiday!