

Chang-O and the Moon

Long ago, the earth had, not just one, but 10 suns. Each of these suns would take turns shining on the earth. Then one day, the 10 suns refused to take turns; instead, they decided to shine all together. With all 10 suns shining at once, the people became much too hot, the rivers started to dry up, the plants withered, and the land became parched and cracked.



The emperor called his finest archer, a man named Hou Yi, and asked him to shoot down the troublesome suns. Hou Yi took careful aim, and one by one he shot down nine of the suns. Just one sun was left in the sky to shine on the earth.

To thank him, the emperor gave Hou Yi a powerful potion that had been made from special herbs by a magical rabbit called the Jade Hare. The potion would make Hou Yi immortal so that he would live forever.

Now, Hou Yi had a beautiful wife, named Chang-O, whom he loved dearly. Hou Yi did not want to leave Chang-O and be immortal without her, so Hou Yi and Chang-O hid the magic potion in a secret place where they thought no one could find it.

However, the jealous Feng Meng knew about the potion, and when Hou Yi was away, he tried to force Chang-O to give the potion to him. Rather than let the evil Feng Meng have the magic potion, Chang-O snatched it away and quickly drank it down.

Chang-O immediately started floating up into the sky and finally landed on the moon. There she built herself a beautiful crystal palace. But without her husband, Chang-o was terribly lonely, so the emperor asked the Jade Hare to go live with her on the moon and keep her company.

In China, people call Chang-O the Moon Goddess, and every year, in the autumn, they celebrate a Moon Festival in her honor.

Name: _____

THE CHINESE MOON FESTIVAL

This year the Moon Festival begins on 21 September and lasts for 2 days. During the Moon Festival, the Chinese people carry paper lanterns and go out to look at the full moon. They also eat little round cakes shaped like the moon (called *moon cakes*).

It's said that on the night of the Moon Festival, if you look very closely, you can see Chang-O and the Jade Hare dancing together across the full moon.

YOUR TURN:

The story of Chang-O is a myth. Myths are stories about gods, goddesses or other heavenly creatures. A myth often tells how something came to be or explains why things are the way they are. Quite often a myth will try to explain how a particular custom or tradition got started or why a certain holiday is celebrated.

1. What makes the story of Chang-O a myth?
2. What does the story try to explain?
3. With all 10 suns shining at once the land became *parched*. What does parched mean?
4. Drinking the magic potion made Chang-O *immortal*. What does *immortal* mean?
5. Instead of Chang-O or the Jade Hare, some people think they see the face of a man when they look at the moon. What do you see when you look at the moon?