

Name: _____

Chinese New Year 2022

The traditions of Chinese New Year date back more than three thousand years. (2020 is the 4,717th year in the Chinese Lunar Calendar.) Here is the story behind these ancient New Year traditions:



The Legend of Nian

In the distant past, the people of China lived in fear of a terrible monster. Nian, as the monster was called, spent most of the year sleeping at the bottom of the sea. Once a year, though, on the eve of the New Year, the monster would come on shore to hunt for food. He would go from one village to the next, killing and eating all the animals and people he could find.

The terrified people would flee their homes and head for the mountains to wait for the monster to pass on. When the monster had left, the people would come back down to their villages, clean up the mess, and try get on with life.

One New Year's Eve, a beggar came to one of the villages. A kind old woman gave him some food and urged him to flee with her to the mountains. But the beggar insisted that he was not afraid of the monster and told the woman that he would rid the village of the monster if she would allow him to stay in her home for the night.

The woman tried her best to convince the beggar that it was not safe to stay. But when she realized that convincing him was hopeless, she left him in her home and fled to the mountains without him.

Once all the villagers were gone, the beggar got to work. He put bright red banners on the doors of all the homes and placed firecrackers throughout the village. Then he waited patiently for Nian to appear.

When the monster arrived, the beggar set-off the firecrackers. The noise from the exploding firecrackers was extremely loud, and the bright red banners made it look as if the town were on fire. Loud noise and fire were the only two things of which Nian was afraid. The beggar had known this, of course, and so he was able to drive away the monster with nothing but a few firecrackers and the color red.

When the villagers returned, they were amazed to find the beggar unharmed and their village intact. The beggar had gotten rid of the monster, just as he said he would. From that time on the villagers prepared for New Year's Eve by placing red banners over their doors and lighting firecrackers.

Today, people all over China hang red banners by their doors and light fireworks on New Year's Eve. And every New Year's Day, they congratulate each other for having survived another year without being eaten by the monster Nian—whose name means "year" in Mandarin Chinese.

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1. Which Chinese New Year traditions does this legend try to explain?
2. Why would villagers hide in the mountains on New Year's Eve?
3. What did the beggar say he could do?
4. How the beggar prepare for the monster?
5. What are the two things were the monster is afraid of?
6. How did the beggar get rid of the monster?
7. What was the monster's name?

What does the name mean?