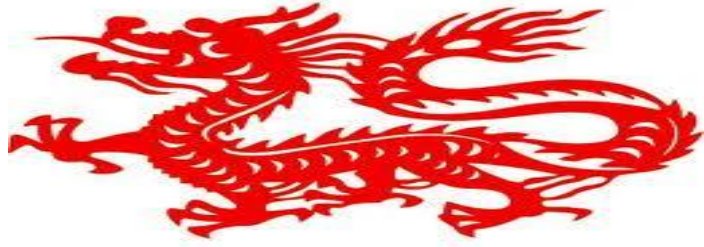


Chinese Dragon



The people of China have a long held belief that they are descendants of the dragon, a tradition that is firmly embedded in their culture and one that is encountered across all aspects of Chinese society and in the minds of its people. In China the dragon is held in high esteem for its dignity and power for good. The Dragon is also a symbol of strength and good luck.

As tribes fought for domination and came to be united under a common banner the dragon was adopted as a national icon. Such was the mysterious creature's power it was regarded as the god of rain, thunder, the rainbow, and the stars.

The image of the dragon has undergone a series of changes over the centuries becoming more and more mighty and beautiful. The original illustration on primitive bronze ware portrays it as ferocious and mysterious; in the Han Dynasty (206BC - 220), it became magnificent and unrestrained; while during the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), it was personalized as gentle, tamed and graceful. From the Song Dynasty onwards (960 - 1279), the design became delicate and lowery.

Although there are differences in appearance, the basics are similar. This is because it is a combination of the features of animals with which people were familiar. A dragon has a protruding forehead indicating wisdom and antlers signifying longevity. Its ox's ears denote success in the imperial examination; it has tiger's eyes as a sign of power; eagle's claws showing bravery; while a fish's tail implies flexibility and the horse's teeth are a mark of diligence.

The most vibrant and spectacular way of expressing fondness for the dragon is the dragon dance. This has evolved from what was a ritual rain dance into a popular entertainment performed during the period from the Spring Festival until the Lantern Festival.

The Year of the Dragon is lucky (takes place every 12 years). Children that are born during the Dragon Years enjoy health, wealth and long life. The Dragon person is self-confident and impulsive and consequently does not always listen to the advice of others. He is also a perfectionist and he sets high standards for himself. Although strong and decisive the Dragon is not manipulative or sly. He refuses to deceive or compromise and fails to spot subversive intent. He enjoys being in command and like an emperor holding court he eliminates obstacles until success is his.

TASK:

Read the information on page and answer the following questions. Students are to re-write the question into their books and write their answers in full sentences. Do not write in the booklet.

Questions

1. The Chinese believed they were descendants of the dragon. In your own words, explain how this could be possible.
2. What does the dragon symbolise and what was it regarded as?
3. What did the tribes fight for and what was the dragon adapted as?
4. Discuss the changes the dragon has undergone. Include key dates and key features.
5. In a table, list the 7 animal features and what they represent. Example:

| Animal Features | Represents |
|---------------------|------------|
| Protruding forehead | Wisdom |

6. What is performed during the Spring and Lantern Festival?
7. If you were born into the Year of the Dragon, what type of person would you be?
8. List any other key information about the Dragon.