

Lesson Plan # 3

Chinese Winter Solstice Festival Lesson Plan

Objective: The students will learn about the Chinese Dongzhi or Winter Solstice Festival which is also known as the “Chinese Thanksgiving.” They will learn the origins and tradition of the festival. The students will study the foods and ceremonies of festival. The students will learn the importance of family in this celebration. The students will be exposed to meaning and the symbolism of the various aspects of the festival. The students will compare the Chinese festival with the American holiday of Thanksgiving.

Anticipatory Set: Ask students how their family celebrates Thanksgiving. They will review the foods and activities of their families’ Thanksgiving celebration. The students will focus on the importance of family and remembering things to be thankful for at Thanksgiving.

Materials: Fancy and simple images of the Yin/Yang, chart paper, markers

Input/Teaching:

- 1 The word Dōngzhi means the “Arrival of Winter” in Chinese. The Chinese have been celebrating this festival for 2500 years.
- 2 Ancient Chinese astronomers divided the whole year into 24 solar terms according to climate changes. There is one term every two weeks, and the Winter Solstice is the 22nd solar term. It falls between December 21 and 23 of our calendar. The teacher will compare the Chinese calendar to the 12 month calendar we use.
- 3 the celebration falls on the winter Solstice that is the shortest day in the year and the longest night of the year. After this day the days are longer each day until the summer solstice when the day is the longest and night is the shortest.
- 4 The symbolism of the festival is the Yin and Yang or complimentary opposites. In Chinese philosophy, Yin symbolizes the feminine qualities of the universe while Yang the masculine the universe. When something has reached one extreme, it will turn to the opposite. On the day of the Winter Solstice, the Yin is at its peak with the longest night. From then on, it will give way to the light and warmth of Yang. And the Chinese consider it a right time for optimism and joy.
- 5 The festival is also called the Chinese Thanksgiving. It is a time that families gather to celebrate all of the relatives who have passed whether they died young or old. They gather at their families ancestral temple to pray to the ancestors in the order of their age. They thank the ancestors for the end of a good harvest and pray to continue to have good fortune at next years harvest.
- 6 The Chinese believe that this celebration marks the time when everyone is “one year older.” They do this instead of waiting for the Chinese New Year. They believe that because they are one year older they should behave better

- than they did last year.
- 7 The Chinese have several different foods that they eat for this festival. One is from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220AD) called “quhan jiaoer tang” or “soup that expels the cold. A famous doctor saw children’s ears hurting from chill burns because of the cold. He ordered his apprentice to make wonton soup for the children. The Wonton were made in shape of an ear.

Independent Study: The students will be encouraged to write a brief essay on the why the Chinese call Dōngzi the Chinese Thanksgiving .

More Independent Practice: Students will use the art material to draw and decorate the picture of the Yin-Yang.