

GET READY

# Chinese Language Day

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**Chinese Language Day (联合国中文日)** falls on the 20th of April every year to celebrate **cultural diversity** and **multilingualism**. So you can share this amazing language with your students, we've pulled together some **fun facts and activities** to be done at home or in the classroom.

## Did you know...

Chinese is one of the **most commonly spoken languages** in the world – with more than

**1.1 billion**

speakers across the globe including

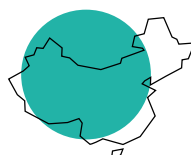
**800 million**

**in China alone.**

The **earliest Chinese characters**, dating back to

**1250 BC**

were discovered **engraved on animal bones.**



It is the

**world's only**

**pictographic language**, using pictures or symbols to represent **words, ideas, or concepts.**



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## Language

Chinese is a language with lots of variations, the most widely spoken of which is Mandarin, the official language of China. However, other forms such as Wu, Xiang, Cantonese, Min and more are spoken across the country and around the world.

Spoken Chinese uses four different tones to give different meanings to words that would otherwise be identical to the ear.

- First tone: higher pitch
- Second tone: starts with lower pitch raising to higher pitch
- Third tone: starts with a neutral tone, dips to a lower pitch and ends with a higher pitch
- Fourth tone: starts with a slightly higher pitch and go strongly downward

Founded in ancient times, traditional characters are still used in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The majority, including mainland China, use the more modern, simplified version.

## Did you know?

There are approximately

**50,000 characters**

in the Chinese language.

To read a newspaper you need to know approximately

**2,500 and 20,000 for regular use.**

In addition to the Chinese language having characters, there is a system to transcribe Mandarin Chinese sounds into a Latin alphabet too! Pinyin was invented in the 1950s and is used today to help read Chinese characters, transcribe names and places and be used as a method for typing Chinese characters.



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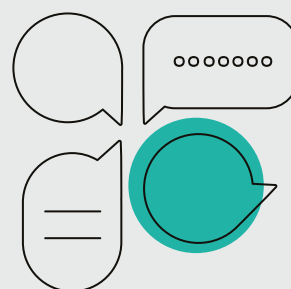
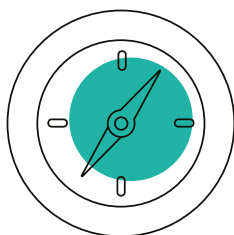
## Culture

China has one of the world's oldest and most complex cultures, with traditions that often vary by city and even town.

During the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), language played a central role in dramatic works, often addressing social issues. Chinese literature is renowned for its exploration of poetry, astrology, astronomy, and constellations, which continue to be key to Chinese culture today.

### Did you know...

China invented **papermaking, printing, gunpowder and the compass!**



### Famous people who are fluent in/speak some Chinese include:

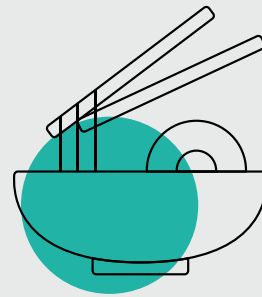
- Jackie Chan
- Rihanna
- Mark Zuckerberg
- Bruno Mars
- Vanessa Branch
- Tom Hiddleston
- Sandra Bullock



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## Food

Chinese food is well recognised across the world but within China, food is embedded into their culture with different dishes reflecting the country's geography, history, and social values.



## Good fortunes

兔

rabbit

龙

dragon

蛇

snake

虎

tiger

牛

ox

鼠

rat

猪

pig

狗

dog

鸡

rooster

猴

monkey

羊

goat

马

horse

Animals play an important part in Chinese culture. The lion dance is said to bring luck and good fortune, while the Chinese Zodiac assigns animals to a 12-year cycle that is said to influence a person's traits and fortunes. The dragon, a powerful symbol in legends, festivals, astrology, art, and idioms, is also central to the renowned Dragon Boat Festival, which honours the late poet Qu Yuan.

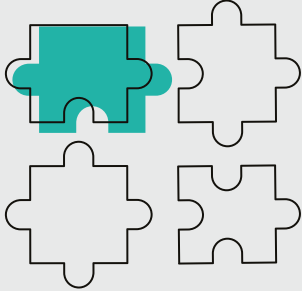


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# Activities

## What do the characters mean?

Can you match these **common characters** to their **pīnyīn** and **English translations**?



### Activity 1

Character	Pīnyīn	English
人		
一		
了		
不		
大		
以		
之		
上		
中		
我		
来		

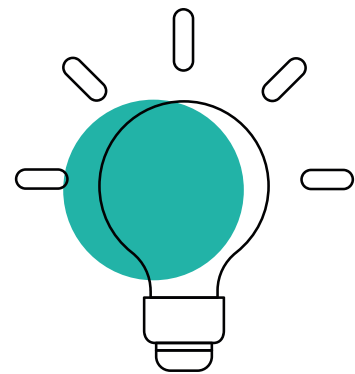


# Activities

## Activity 2

### Did you know?

We've shared just some amazing facts about the Chinese language and culture. Find five more and present your learnings in a colourful poster for all your class to see.



## Activity 3

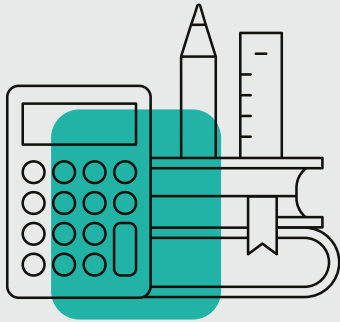
### Around the globe

Chinese is spoken widely around the world. Choose a continent and explore which countries and/or communities within the continent speak a form of Chinese. Are there any similarities or differences in the way they use the language? Any cultural differences with food, the way of everyday life or with celebrations? Create an interactive presentation that brings the Chinese language to life.



# Activities

## Activity 4



### Create your own character

All Chinese characters are made of brush strokes that aim to depict each item. Choose an item that means a lot to you and create your own Chinese character.

## Activity 5

### What zodiac sign are you?

The **Chinese calendar** follows a **12-year cycle**, with each year represented by a **different animal**. If the Rooster was the animal for 1981, can you find the next 11 animals in the cycle? Write down **the years they are linked to** over the next four years and some of the **characteristics of each animal**. What is **your Chinese Zodiac** sign?

Animal	Years	Characteristics
Rooster	1981, 1993, 2005, 2017	Observant, hardworking, courageous

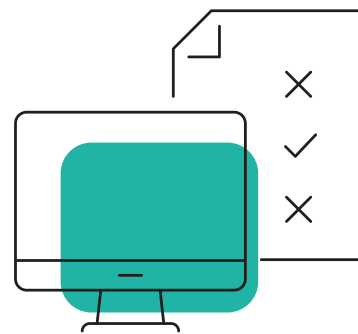


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# Answers

## Activity 1: What do the characters mean?

Character	Pīnyīn	English
人	rén	Man, person, people
一	yī / yì	one / single
了	liǎo	To know, to understand
不	bù	No, not
大	dà	Big, huge, large, major
以	yǐ	To use, take
之	zhī	Him, her, it
上	shàng	Above, on, over, top
中	zhōng	Within, among, in, middle, centre
我	wǒ	I, me, myself
来	lái	To come



## Activity 5: What zodiac sign are you?

Animal	Years	Characteristics
Rooster	1981, 1993, 2005, 2017	Observant, hardworking, courageous
Dog	1982, 1994, 2006, 2018	Lovely, honest, prudent
Pig	1983, 1995, 2007, 2019	Compassionate, generous, diligent
Rat	1984, 1996, 2008, 2020	Quick-witted, resourceful, versatile, kind
Ox	1985, 1997, 2009, 2021	Diligent, dependable, strong, determined.
Tiger	1986, 1998, 2010, 2022	Brave, confident, competitive, unpredictable
Rabbit	1987, 1999, 2011, 2023	Quiet, elegant, kind, responsible
Dragon	1988, 2000, 2012, 2024	Confident, intelligent, enthusiastic
Snake	1989, 2001, 2013, 2025	Enigmatic, intelligent, wise
Horse	1990, 2002, 2014, 2026	Animated, active, energetic
Goat	1991, 2003, 2015, 2027	Calm, gentle, sympathetic
Monkey	1992, 2004, 2016, 2028	Sharp, smart, curious