

Lunar New Year: Year of the Ox

Lanterns Light the Way



Lanterns have been used as part of Lunar New Year celebrations for thousands of years. Traditionally, lanterns were made from paper, silk, or animal hide wrapped around a wood or bamboo base. They were illuminated by candles or sometimes by the light of fireflies! Now lanterns can be lit with electric or battery-operated lights. During Lunar New Year celebrations in China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia, lanterns of red and gold line the streets as seen in the picture above. Some lanterns are decorated with special **hanzi** or chinese characters, and most are red to symbolize good fortune. The Chinese **Lantern Festival** takes place on the 15th day of the Lunar New Year, marking the final day of celebrations. There is usually a big parade where **Kongming** (sky lanterns, which are like tiny hot air balloons) are released into the sky to symbolize letting go of your past self and ushering in your new self for the new year! Hooray for new beginnings!

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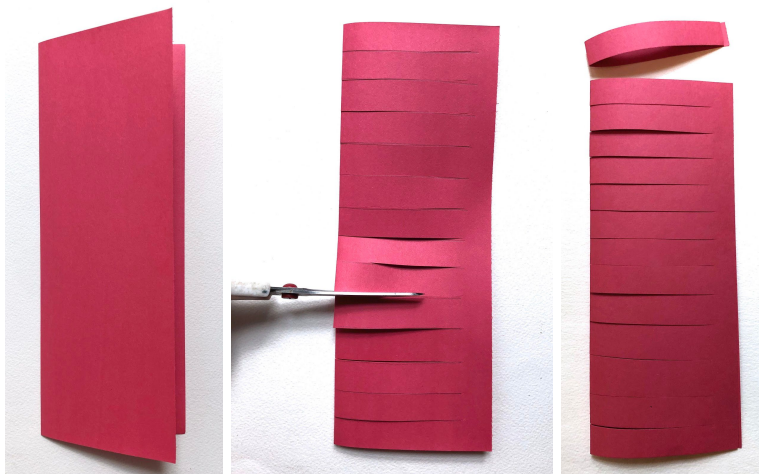
Art Activity: Paper Lantern

Materials:

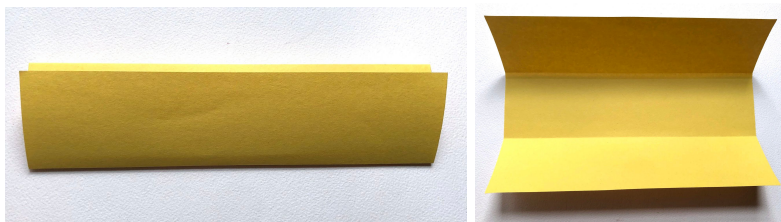
- Two (2) sheets of construction paper (traditional colors are yellow and red)
- Tape or glue
- Scissors
- Markers
- Stapler (optional)
- Ruler (optional)

Steps:

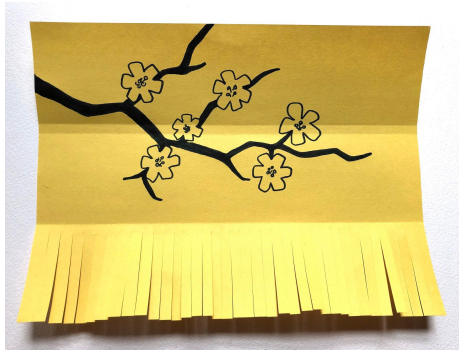
1. Start by collecting your materials. If you don't have something on the list, use your creativity to find a substitute.
2. Fold the sheet of red construction paper in half lengthwise.
3. Cut slits every half inch along the fold. Stop cutting about half an inch from the open edge of the paper (see images below).
4. Cut the last strip of paper off completely. This will become your lantern handle.



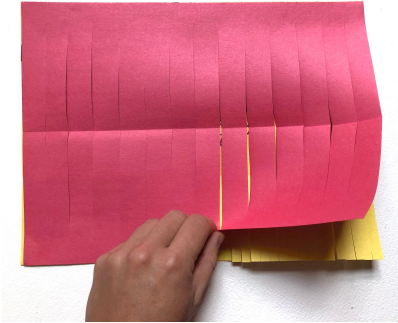
5. Fold your yellow paper lengthwise into three sections.



6. Use markers to decorate the top two sections of your yellow paper. These designs will show inside the lantern.
7. Use the scissors to cut slits along the bottom section of the yellow paper to create fringe.



8. Glue the top edge of the red paper to the top of the yellow paper so that the slits are vertically aligned.



9. Glue the bottom edge of the red paper to the yellow paper, just above the start of the fringe.



10. Round your paper into a cylinder, keeping the red part on top and sliding the edge of the exposed yellow paper under. Staple, tape, or glue the edges together.



11. Take the strip of red construction paper you cut in step 4 and staple, tape, or glue it to the top of your lantern to create a handle.



12. Hang your lantern in a special place. Make more lanterns to string around your home to celebrate the new year!

Collection Connection

Octagonal Lantern



Octagonal Lantern, China, 1662–1722.

This Chinese ceramic was made to look like a traditional paper lantern. It is hollow inside, the walls are thin, and it is open at the top and bottom so that it could actually function as a lantern. It is decorated with pictures of the eight **Daoist** Immortals, or *xian*, crossing the ocean. **Daoism** is a Chinese philosophy based on the writings of the ancient philosopher Laozi. A central tenet of **Daoism** is the belief that adhering to certain practices, as the eight Immortals did, can lead to a long life or even immortality. The Immortals symbolize the ability to **transcend**, or go beyond, the limitations of ordinary human life. They are considered to be signs of prosperity and longevity—good omens for a brand new year! What good events do you hope for in the new year?