



A long time ago in China there was a scary monster called Nian. He was big and ugly. He had sharp teeth and long claws. His mouth was enormous and he liked to eat people. At the end of every year he would come down from the mountains looking for some dinner. The villagers would lock their doors and hide in their houses because they were very frightened of Nian.

One year a wise old man came to the village. He thought that the villagers' panic and fear made Nian stronger. He told the villagers, 'You must not be frightened of the monster. You must not hide in your houses. We must work together to send the monster away.'

'But how?' asked the villagers.

'Nian does not like the colour red,' said the wise man, 'and Nian does not like loud noises.'

The villagers listened carefully to the old man's instructions.

'First you must decorate your windows and doors with red paper and lanterns. Then you must bring your drums and gongs and make loud music. Nian will be frightened and he will run away.'



The villagers agreed to work together. The night before New Year, the villagers did not hide in their houses and lock their doors. They made lanterns and decorated their houses with red paper. They collected all their musical instruments and firecrackers then they waited in the streets for Nian to come down from the mountain.

The hungry monster came down from the mountain, showing his big teeth and claws, but when he saw the red windows and doors, he was afraid. Then ...

'BANG!' went the drums.

'CRASH!' went the gongs.

'POP!' went the firecrackers.

Nian was so frightened that he ran away. The people chased him with their drums and gongs and red paper decorations. Nian escaped to his mountain and never went back to the village.

Today, all over the world people celebrate Chinese New Year with fireworks, drums and gongs and they decorate their houses with red – just in case!



Teaching notes

Preparation

Make some red crepe paper streamers and a lantern (using the instructions on p.4).

Cut the dialogue on pp.5-6 into strips. There are two main roles (Nian and the old man/woman) and between two and five villagers. You will need enough copies so that each child has a role, plus extra ones where several characters speak at the same time (i.e. 'villagers' and 'everybody').

You will also need some or all of the following:

- stiff red or gold paper for making more lanterns in class
- red crepe paper for making more streamers in class
- paper, paints and/or coloured pencils for drawing a monster
- boxes and bits of coloured paper or sweet wrappers for making a monster
- sheets of black paper, coloured chalks and hairspray
- some drums, if possible, or strong cardboard boxes to hit, if not
- some musical instruments, or pots and pans to hit
- clothes for dressing up as the characters in the story.

Comprehension activities

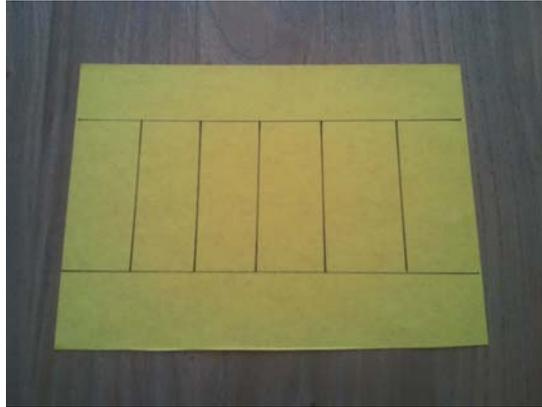
Whilst reading the story out loud you could:

- raise your hands, with your fingers bent like claws, to represent the monster
- show red paper streamers, lanterns, drums, musical instruments and firecrackers when these things are mentioned.

After reading the story out loud, you could use one or more of the following ideas:

- Reread the description of Nian. Children make a drawing, painting, collage or model of the monster.
- Children draw the scene of the villagers chasing off Nian, using coloured chalks on black paper. Spray the pictures with hairspray to set the chalk so it won't smudge. Invite the children to write a sentence about their picture and stick it underneath.
- Make some red streamers and lanterns. Demonstrate to children how to make the lanterns using the instructions on p.4. Read the story out loud again and get the children to join in, showing their monster claws, banging drums, playing musical instruments and waving lanterns and red paper streamers.
- The children can act the story of Nian using the dialogue on pp.5-6. Assign a different part to each child and hand out the strips of dialogue. Let them rehearse their lines by reading them out loud to a partner. Then have the group read their lines in turn. Now act out the story, with children still reading from their lines if they need to. Give them time to memorise their lines if they still need to. Make the play come alive by providing dressing-up clothes and instruments (or boxes, pots and pans) for the villagers to play.
- More advanced levels could write their own dialogues. If you have a large class, separate them into groups and invite each group to put on a little skit for the rest of the class.

How to make a lantern



Take a piece of paper, preferably red or gold. With a ruler, draw a line along the top, horizontally, and one along the bottom. Now take the ruler and draw vertical lines between the top and bottom lines.



Turn the paper over and fold it in half bottom to top horizontally, so that the vertical lines are exposed. Cut along these lines with scissors.



Fold the paper in half on the opposite side and stick the two edges together. Make a handle and decorate the room with these paper lanterns.

Acting out the story

NIAN:

My name is Nian. Look at my long claws and sharp teeth. I live in the mountains and I like to eat people! I'm hungry. I will go to the village to get my dinner!

VILLAGER:

Quick! Lock your doors. Lock your windows. Hide in your houses. Nian is coming!

Nian eats some villagers and goes back to the mountains.

VILLAGER:

He's gone. We can come out now. Oh it's terrible! What can we do to stop Nian?

WISE OLD MAN OR WOMAN:

Nian is only strong because you are frightened of him. You must not hide in your houses. You must not lock your doors and run away.

VILLAGER:

But how can we stop him?

WISE OLD MAN OR WOMAN:

Nian does not like the colour red. He does not like loud noises. I will tell you what to do.

VILLAGERS:

Tell us! Tell us! We are listening.

WISE OLD MAN OR WOMAN:

You must take all your drums and gongs and firecrackers. You must decorate your houses with lanterns and red paper.

The villagers collect their instruments and decorate their houses with red paper.

VILLAGER:

We are ready for Nian.

WISE OLD MAN OR WOMAN:

Good. When Nian comes, do not run away or hide in your houses. You must make a lot of noise.

NIAN:

I'm hungry again. I will go to the village for my dinner.

Nian comes to the village, but the villagers make a lot of noise.

NIAN:

Oh no! RED!!! I hate the colour red! I am so frightened! What's that noise? Aaarrgggghhh! Help me! Save me!

The villagers chase him up the mountain.

VILLAGER:

Hooray! Nian has gone. We must do this every year in case he comes back.

WISE OLD MAN OR WOMAN:

You see: Nian is not stronger than us when we work together. Now let's celebrate the New Year!

EVERYBODY:

Happy New Year!