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## **Chinese Dragons**

**Genres:** Art  
Social Studies

**Grade Level:** Kindergarten--Second Grade

**Time Period:** One 50-60 minute class period

**Narrative:** While most westerners, especially children, think that dragons are vicious, fire-breathing, man-eating creatures, in China they're thought of as quite the opposite. In fact, the dragon is one of China's most beloved symbols. It represents strength and goodness. Once a year, the dragon appears at the much anticipated Chinese New Year celebration, wishing everyone good luck, wealth, and prosperity. The dragon is the most sacred animal, and is the emblem of Chinese emperors.

The most anticipated character of the famous New Year Parade is of course the dragon. Many people participate in making the life-size dragon come alive. Its gigantic head is most often made from papier-mache because it's so lightweight. Most colors you will see or that of bright reds and oranges, which symbolize joy and happiness. Endless decorations from streamers to glitter are added to adorn the head. The body portion is usually made with dyed silks or other fabrics.

**Procedure:** Children will talk about what types of characteristics they know about dragons. As a class, brainstorm some of these ideas, and list them on the board. Have books available about dragons so that children can have different visuals to look at too. Read *The Chinese New Year Dragon* by Judith M. Austin. Milk cartons from the cafeteria will need to have already been saved, washed out, and cut properly (cut only the top off, leaving an open cube.) Each child will then be given a milk carton and a Chinese Dragon Head Pattern. Children are to cover their milk carton with red construction paper on all five remaining sides. The open side will be the back of the dragon's head, and what was the bottom side of the carton will now become the front of the dragon's face. Insert a small hole in what will be the bottom of the dragon head for a straw or a wooden dowel. Place the dragon head pattern on a folded piece of paper, in order to get a two-sided dragon head. The milk carton will be glued in the center of the paper. Have students continue to enhance the dragon's head by adding glitter, ribbons, and/or streamers. Have students then engage in their own "Dancing Dragon Parade."

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed informally as we review the importance of China's most sacred animal, the dragon.

**Materials:**

- School sized milk carton
- Chinese Dragon Head Pattern
- Red, black, and white construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Straw or wooden dowel
- Tissue paper streamers
- Ribbon
- Glitter

*Teacher Created Resources, Inc.* "Multicultural Art Activities," Betty G. Cavanaugh