

## Recommended Reading List

To enrich the cultural studies activities at school, may wish to go to the library for books to read at home with your child. Some recommended books are listed below with suggested grade levels. Of course, the levels are not meant to be restrictive. Your child may enjoy any of these books. Our goal was to select books that give insight into Chinese culture in a way that is entertaining for students.

**Note: Books are available through the Lake Geneva Public Library's SHARE Libraries system.**

### Middle School

**Title:** Yao Ming

**Author:** Travis Clark

**Summary:** An easy-to-read biography about the life and accomplishments of Yao Ming, the Chinese basketball player, who played for the Houston Rockets and was considered one of the best centers of the NBA. Full of fun basketball trivia and interesting behind-the-scenes data about this exciting sports star. (64 pages) © 2009

**Title:** Little Green: Growing Up During the Chinese Cultural Revolution

**Author:** Chun Yu

**Summary:** An elegantly-written first-person memoir that provides a child's view of the struggle caused by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Chun Yu was born in a small city in China in 1966. Red Guards roamed the streets, slogans covered walls, and re-education meetings were held at work. Every family faced danger and humiliation. Chun's father was sent to the countryside to be re-educated in the ways of Chairman Mao. Chun and her brother stayed behind with their mother, who taught middle school. This memoir describes Chun's daily life and experiences growing up during the bloody conflict. (112 pages) © 2005

**Title:** Chu Ju's House

**Author:** Gloria Whelen

**Summary:** This is a great adventure novel told from the perspective of Chu Ju, a fourteen-year-old girl in modern China. To save her baby sister from being placed for adoption, Chu Ju leaves her rural home. She earns food and shelter by working on a fishing boat, tending silk worms, and planting rice seedlings. To help the son of a woman who provided her shelter, Chu Ju makes a dangerous journey to the city of Shanghai, all the while wondering if she will ever see her family again. This novel provides insights into modern Chinese culture and life. (227 pages) ©2004

## **Fourth and Fifth Grade**

**Title:** Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear

**Author:** Lensey Namioka

**Summary:** This novel is told in the first-person by nine-year-old Yingtao Yang, a boy who recently arrived in Seattle from China with his parents and three siblings. His father is a violinist. Musically untalented Yingtao is dreading an upcoming violin performance to attract new students for his father. He would rather be making friends and playing baseball. As the story unfolds, Yingtao and his family learn about differences between life in China and America, and make some surprising discoveries about themselves. This is one of several books in a series about the Yang family. (134 pages) © 1992

**Title:** A Young Painter: The Life and Paintings of Wang Yani – China’s Extraordinary Young Artist

**Author:** Zheng Zhensun and Alice Low

**Summary:** This biography was written in 1991, when Chinese artist, Wang Yani, was sixteen years old. By that time, she had painted more than 10,000 paintings, and had exhibits around the world. She paints whimsical monkeys, birds and other animals, as well as landscapes and still life. The book describes growing up in Gongcheng, China, her painting techniques and life on tour with her exhibits. (80 pages) © 1991

**Title:** Cat and Rat: The Legend of the Chinese Zodiac

**Author:** Ed Youngt

**Summary:** Introduces the Chinese zodiac, and tells of the animals' race, Rat's betrayal and why Cat is not one of the zodiac animals. While the text may be more appropriate for younger students, the complex illustrations of charcoal and pastels on a dark background cause this book to be included in the 4-5th grade level. (26 pages) © 1995

**Title:** The Chinese Book of Animal Powers

**Author:** Ai Chung-liang Huang

**Summary:** Large calligraphy-like illustrations depict each of the zodiac animals and explain their strengths and weaknesses. (32 pages) © 1999

**Title:** Exploring Chinatown: A Children's Guide to Chinese Culture

**Author:** Carol Stepanchuk

**Summary:** This book provides a tour of a fictitious generic Chinatown. The tour begins with food and table manners and ends with opera and musical instruments. In between, there's information about herb shops, acupuncture, the Chinese language and calligraphy, numbers and counting systems, holidays and festivals, family and religious life, brush art, theater, and martial arts. Includes recipes and suggestions for activities. (64 pages) © 2002

**Title:** Moonbeams, Dumplings and Dragon Boats: A Treasury of Chinese Holiday Tales, Activities and Recipes.

**Author:** Nina Simonds, Leslie Swartz & The Children's Museum of Boston.

**Summary:** Presents background information, related stories and activities for five Chinese holidays: Chinese New Year, the Lantern Festival, Qing Ming, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-autumn Moon Festival. (74 pages) © 2002

### **First through Third Grade**

**Title:** You Wouldn't Want to Work on the Great Wall of China!

**Author:** Jacqueline Morley

**Summary:** Part of the "You Wouldn't Want To Series," This book tells the story of what your life would be like if you were a poor farmer in China around 215 B.C. After Emperor Qin Shihuangdi comes to power, you lose your farm because you cannot pay your debts. You are forced to walk north for six weeks to build a wall to keep out invaders. You help clear land, cut logs and rocks, frame the wall, and pack in dirt. After three years, you are assigned to work in a guard station along the wall. Despite the horrible conditions, the story is told with humor and includes many amazing facts about Chinese history and culture. (32 pages) © 2006.

**Title:** Looking at China

**Author:** Jillian Powell

**Summary:** This textbook-style book is part of the "Looking At Countries" collection. The book includes large color photographs, easy-to-read text, a glossary and references to websites. A wonderful overview of China, including location, landscape, weather and seasons, Chinese people, family and school, country life, city life, Chinese houses, Chinese food, work and having fun. (32 pages) © 2008.

**Title:** Six words, many turtles and three days in Hong Kong  
**Author:** Patricia McMahon  
**Summary:** This book describes the daily activities, school, homework, and family life of an eight-year-old Chinese girl living in Hong Kong. Includes beautiful photographs and vivid descriptions. (44 pages) © 1996

**Title:** Chinese Children's Favorite Stories  
**Author:** Mingmei Yip  
**Summary:** A collection of thirteen children's stories that provide a basis for understanding various Chinese Traditions and beliefs. Of particular interest is the story of *The Ghost Catcher*, which has similarities to the Native American dream catchers. *The Mouse Bride* is a fun reminder to respect the abilities of others. *The Frog Who Lived in the Well* teaches that the world extends far beyond what we can actually see and touch. (96 pages) © 2005

**Title:** Celebrating Chinese New Year  
**Author:** Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith  
**Summary:** Follow 10-year-old Ryan as he and his family prepare for Chinese New Year in San Francisco. (32 pages) © 1998

**Title:** Chinese New Year Crafts  
**Author:** Karen E. Bledsoe  
**Summary:** Ten simple crafts for Chinese New Year. (32 pages) © 2005

**Title:** Happy New Year: Kung-his fa-ts'ai  
**Author:** Demi  
**Summary:** Basic information about the customs of Chinese New Year, profusely illustrated with Demi's detailed drawings. The original *Happy New Year*, (35 pages) © 1997, is larger in format and contains a little more information. The Book was reissued as *Happy, Happy Chinese New Year*. (18 pages) © 2003

**Title:** Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year  
**Authors:** Kate Waters & Madeline Sklovenz-Low.  
**Summary:** This is the first time 6 year old Ernie will be performing the lion dance in public. Follow him and his family in NYC's Chinatown as they prepare for and celebrate Chinese New Year. (32 pages) © 1990

**Title:** The Rooster's Antlers: A Story of the Chinese Zodiac  
**Author:** Eric A. Kimmel.  
**Summary:** Dragon and Centipede trick Rooster into giving up his beautiful golden horns. Also explains how and why the zodiac animals were chosen. The colorful illustrations are reminiscent of traditional Chinese paper cuts. (32 pages) © 1999

**Title:** Sam and the Lucky Money  
**Author:** Karen Chinn  
**Summary:** Set in a modern day Chinatown, Sam must decide how to spend his Chinese New Year "leisee" money. He is disappointed when he realizes that he does not have enough to buy the toy that he wants. In the end, he decides to give his money to a homeless man. (32 pages) © 1995

**Title:** Story of the Chinese Zodiac  
**Author:** Monica Chang.  
**Summary:** Illustrated with cut paper 3-dimensional collage, this folktale tells about the ancient Chinese method of tracking time. The story explains rat's treachery and why cat is not one of the zodiac animals. (30 pages) © 1994.

#### **4k and 5K**

**Title:** Kindergarten Day China and USA/Kindergarten Day USA and USA  
**Author:** Trish Marx and Ellen B. Senisi  
**Summary:** This is a "flip over" book that describes the similarities and differences in the daily routines of kindergarten children in China and the USA. One side of the book describes activities in the USA. When flipped over, the book describes parallel activities in China. © 2010

**Title:** My First Chinese New Year  
**Author:** Karen Katz  
**Summary:** Bright/vibrant collages illustrate this simple introduction to Chinese New Year. (2004)

**Title:** This Next New Year  
**Author:** Janet S. Wong  
**Summary:** A young boy describes how his Chinese-Korean family prepares for and celebrates the Lunar New Year. (32 pages) © 2000