

Chinese Paper Cutting

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Background Information:

Chinese paper cutting is a traditional art form that has existed for thousands of years. When paper was first invented in China it was considered a precious resource, making it very expensive. People with access to paper were usually nobles or from wealthy families. From the 7th to 13th century, paper cutting became more popular as paper was more widely available.

Today, paper cuts are chiefly decorative. They are used as ornaments for walls, windows, doors, columns, mirrors, lamps, and lanterns in homes and are often given as gifts. Entrances decorated with paper cuts are supposed to bring good luck. For this reason, people frequently decorate their homes and doorways with paper cuts during the Chinese New Year Festival, or Chūn jié 春節. Paper cut themes usually reflect the aspirations and wishes of the Chinese people featuring themes like good fortune and a prosperous life or harvest in the farm.

Many patterns and designs used for paper cuts are derived from the Chinese language. Because the language has many homophones, words that have the same sound but different meanings, there are many symbols in China that represent fortune, good wishes, or luck because of how the word sounds. For example, sticking the paper cut Chūn 春 upside down means the arrival of spring, because the Chinese word "Dào" 倒, or "upside down", sounds similar to "Dào", 到 or "arrive".

Directions:

1. Choose one of the paper cut templates.
2. Fold paper in half on dotted line. Carefully cut away all of the black paper so that only the colored design remains.
3. You have now completed your own Chinese paper cut! Put your design on your window :)