

## China: The girl in the red dress

**Level:** Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

**Age:** Young adults / Adults

**Duration:** Approx. 60 minutes

**Aims:** In this lesson the students will:

1. learn about the Chinese New Year;
2. practise extensive and intensive listening and a range of listening sub-skills, including listening for specific information and gist;
3. complete a memory recall comprehension task to consolidate the story and new language;
4. write their own stories using a variety of archetypal story-telling phrases / devices such as: *I have a story to tell you; there once was (once upon a time); suddenly; unexpectedly; this is where my tale ends.*

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (introduction); Track 2 (remaining audio) and Track 3 (full audio) - all downloaded from onestopenglish.

**Summary:** Join time traveller Amber Adams as she is transported to a village in China for New Year. Will Amber and travelling merchant Hongjun be able to save the villagers from Nian, the evil monster who steals children?

### Warmer

**Aim:** to introduce students to the character of Amber, the secret watch and the context of the episode

1. Play Track 1 (introduction). At this stage, don't worry about pre-teaching vocabulary; encourage your students to simply listen for enjoyment. Stress that they don't need to write anything down.

2. After listening to the introduction, discuss the answers to the following questions with the whole class:

- What story is being told?
- Who is Nian?
- Who is Amber Adams?

### Chinese New Year task

**Aim:** to introduce students to the theme of the Chinese New Year

1. Write *Chinese New Year* on the board and find out what students already know about it. They may know about the traditional lion dance or the giving of money in red envelopes. Write any answers on the board.

2. Put students into pairs or small groups and hand out the worksheet. Ask students to read the excerpt taken from *China – A Macmillan Cultural Reader* by Jennifer Gascoigne and answer the questions below it.

### Vocabulary task

**Aim:** to pre-teach a range of more complex language taken from the listening passage

Direct your students to the vocabulary task on the worksheet and ask them to match the words to their definitions. All the definitions are taken from [macmillandictionary.com](http://macmillandictionary.com). Feedback on the answers as a group.

**Key:** 1. ghost; 2. shiver; 3. merchant; 4. barn; 5. shadow; 6. crunch; 7. roar; 8. monster; 9. legend; 10. hero

### Listening task

**Aim:** to practise listening for gist

1. Direct students to the listening task on the worksheet and explain that they need to listen for the answers to the questions.

2. Play Track 2 (remaining audio).

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**Key:** 1. because a child called Yang has been taken by Nian; 2. the colour red

### Memory task

**Aim:** to allow students to fully consolidate what they have heard

Put students into small groups and ask them to work together to see how much of the story they can remember.

**Key:**

1. She's doing a school project about the Chinese New Year.
2. She's scared that Nian will come as it is the first day of the new year.
3. He's a travelling merchant.
4. a red dress
5. He is taken away by Nian.
6. He lives in a cave up in the mountains.
7. He asks Nian to stop attacking the villagers and free Yang.
8. Amber's red dress
9. Nian is very scared of the colour red.
10. They placed red paper on their doors.

### Writing task

**Aim:** to practise creative writing using a variety of archetypal story-telling phrases

1. Direct your students to the writing task and explain that they are going to write their own story using some of the language from the listening passage. Ask them to look at the words and phrases in bold in the box. Check that they understand them.

2. Discuss ideas for what makes a good story. Write all suggestions on the board. Read out the following questions to help your students think about their stories:

- Where is the story set?
- Who are the characters?
- Is there a hero and a villain?
- Is there a problem that needs solving?
- What happens at the end?

3. Give students ten minutes to write their stories. Monitor closely, helping with language and ideas.

### Be the storyteller

**Aim:** to encourage learners to consider pace and intonation whilst speaking for an extended period to bring a story to life

1. When the students have completed their short stories, ask them to practise reading their stories aloud to their partner. Tell them to listen carefully to each other and offer any tips to improve the story and the way it is read. You could read out the questions below to help the students give advice to their partners.

#### The story

- Is the story dramatic or exciting?
- Could you guess the ending?
- Was the problem resolved?

#### The storyteller

- Did the storyteller emphasize the words in bold? What effect did this have?
- Did the sentences sound natural?
- Did the storyteller speak slowly and clearly?
- Did the storyteller speak with confidence?

2. Place students in new pairs to read their stories again using the feedback from their first partners.

3. Feedback on the task as a group. Ask your students to discuss how they felt reading and listening to each other's stories. Did they enjoy it? How did it affect the way they spoke? Did they learn anything?

### Extension activities

#### Group storytelling

If time allows, ask if anyone would like to volunteer to read their story to the group. You could set the classroom up as though the students are sitting around a fire.

#### Mini research project

In pairs or small groups, ask the students to research legends in their own countries and make comparisons to the legend of the girl in the red dress.

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### Reading task

Read the following excerpt about the Chinese New Year and answer the questions below it.

## SPRING FESTIVAL (CHUN JIE) - CHINESE NEW YEAR

This is the most important Chinese festival and celebrates the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The exact day depends on the date of the new moon, but it is always between 21st January and 19th February. The festival lasts fifteen days and tens of millions of Chinese people travel to their hometowns to be with their families.

In the days before New Year, people clean their homes. Duilian – long pieces of red paper with short poems in beautiful calligraphy on them – are put on both sides of the door and everyone buys new clothes. On the evening before New Year's Day, the family gets together in the evening for a big meal.

Jiaozi dumplings, noodles, chicken and fish are all traditional New Year foods. After dinner, hongbao, red envelopes containing money, are given to children. At midnight the bells ring and the celebrations start with fireworks.

A traditional lion dance, which is thought to bring good luck, is often performed at New Year. Two

dancers – one for the lion's head and the other for the body – dance through the streets to loud music.

Adapted from *China* (Macmillan Cultural Readers)  
by Jennifer Gascoigne © Macmillan Publishers Ltd 2013



1. When is the Chinese New Year?
2. How long does the celebration last?
3. What do people do in the days before New Year?
4. What foods are traditional?
5. What dance is performed and why?

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### Language Task

Match the words to the definitions.

shadow	monster	hero	ghost	barn
shiver (v)	merchant	legend	roar (n)	crunch (v)

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is the spirit of a dead person that somebody sees.
2. If your body shakes because you are cold or frightened, you \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an old word for someone who buys and sells goods.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a large building (normally on farm) where animals and machines are kept.
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an area of darkness created when something blocks light.
6. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to bite something hard causing it to make a loud noise.
7. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a loud deep sound that lions often make.
8. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an imaginary creature that is large and frightening.
9. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an old story about famous people and events in the past. Legends are not usually true.
10. Someone who has done something brave, for example saving a person's life or risking their own life, is called a \_\_\_\_\_.

### Listening task

Listen to the story and answer the questions below.

1. Why do Amber and Hongjun go to look for Nian?
2. What do they discover Nian is scared of?

### Memory task

In small groups, discuss the questions below. How much can you remember?

1. Why is Amber in China?
2. Why does the villager take Amber inside?
3. What is Hongjun's job?
4. What does Amber buy from Hongjun?
5. At the party what happens to a small boy called Yang?
6. Where does Nian live?
7. What does Hongjun ask Nian?
8. What did Nian see as the sun shone through a crack in the cave's roof?
9. When they return to the village, what does Amber tell the people?
10. After this event, what did villagers begin do before New Year's day?

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### Writing task

Now you can create your own story!

Look at the box below. Some of the language comes from the listening passage but you must fill in the gaps with your own ideas. The story you write could be from your imagination, a true story or even a legend from your own country.

The darkness is closing in. Come closer to the fire so that I can see your face.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and **I have a story to tell you - this is the tale of** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**There was once / Once upon a time** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Unexpectedly,** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Suddenly,** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **immediately** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

And **this is where my story ends.** After that, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Be the storyteller

Practise reading your story aloud in a dramatic and interesting way.

Don't read too fast and try to emphasize the language in bold. Practise reading and listening to your partner. Do you have any advice for your partner to help them improve their story?

Once you have practised a few times, find another partner and read your story to them.

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**Old Hongjun:** The darkness is closing in. Come closer to the fire so that I can see your face. My name is Hongjun Laozu and **I have a story to tell you - this is the tale of** how the Chinese New Year began.

Track 1

**Old Hongjun:** **There was once** an evil monster called Nian who lived in the mountains above a village. Nian would come to the village on the first day of each New Year and eat the people who lived there, and he especially liked the children! But one year a great hero arrived who defeated the monster! That hero was me. But I was helped by a girl. A very special girl. **This is the story of** the girl in the red dress.

**Amber:** Hi! I'm Amber, Amber Adams! Now keep this to yourself, but I've got something amazing to show you! OK, it's a watch, but it's not just any old watch - listen to what happens when I touch it! I can use it to travel through time to anywhere I want to go! So what do you reckon? Are you ready to come on an adventure?

**Old Hongjun:** After travelling through the mountains I arrived at the village as the sun was going down, at the same time as the girl in our story. **Unexpectedly**, she appeared from nowhere and looked very different to the locals, so I decided to sit in the shadows and watch her for a while.

Track 2

**Amber:** Ah, this looks like the right place. Hello! I wonder if you can help me? I'm doing a school project on the Chinese New Year and ...

**Villager:** Who are you? What are you doing outside? Is Nian here?

**Old Hongjun:** Nian! The monster! **Suddenly** I was very afraid! I quickly climbed inside a barn but I continued to watch the girl.

**Amber:** Who is Nian?

**Villager:** You don't know? Nian is a monster who comes like a ghost in the night on the first day of each New Year and eats the people from our village!

**Amber:** Oh dear, that sounds nasty! Erm, what day is it?

**Villager:** The first day of the New Year!

**Amber:** Oh. Err, can I come in?

**Villager:** Quickly!

**Old Hongjun:** I lay there shivering in the barn all night, too scared to move. However, Nian didn't come and eventually the morning arrived, so I left the barn. I had some items to sell and the villagers offered me shelter and food and kindly asked me to join them that evening for their New Year celebrations. I saw the girl from the night before and went to talk to her.

**Young Hongjun:** Hello, my name is Hongjun, and I am also a visitor here - a travelling merchant.

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**Amber:** Nice to meet you, I'm Amber. Hey, if you're a merchant, then I don't suppose that you have any clothes for sale? I've been invited to the party tonight and I don't have anything to wear.

**Young Hongjun:** It just so happens I have a dress that I think will look perfect on you! It's bright red and very fashionable.

**Old Hongjun:** So, I sold Amber the red dress and we waited for the night to come and the celebrations to begin.

**Villager:** You dance well, Amber!

**Amber:** Thank you! I always like to ... Quick!

**Young Hongjun:** This way!

**Amber:** Over here.  
Well whatever that was, it's run away now.

**Girl:** It ... It took Yang ... It took Yang ...

**Villager:** No! My Yang! My sweet beautiful boy. Who can help me?

**Young Hongjun:** I'll help you. Don't worry; I'll get your son back.

**Amber:** And I'll go with you Hongjun, I'm not afraid of someone or something who steals children!

**Villager:** Oh thank you, thank you so much! Please, take this torch, so you can see where you are going. Nian lives in a cave, high up in the mountains.

**Old Hongjun:** We left **immediately** and began to journey up into the mountains. The night was dark and the path was difficult to climb, but with the low light of the torch, we pushed on into the darkness. The sun began to rise in the east and we finally arrived at Nian's cave. As we got closer we could hear the roars of the monster inside.

**Young Hongjun:** Amber, stay back. I will go in first.

**Amber:** OK, but be careful Hongjun, it's dark inside the cave. I'll be hiding right behind you.

**Old Hongjun:** Trying to control my fear, I spoke in a deep, loud voice:

**Young Hongjun:** Nian, I am Hongjun Laozu and I have come to ask you to stop attacking the villagers and let the boy go!

**Nian:** Hmm, you're just in time for breakfast, I will enjoy crunching on your bones.

**Young Hongjun:** Let the boy go or else!

**Nian:** Or else what? I don't see an army standing behind you?

**Amber:** I may not be an army, but I'm not scared of you! Let Yang go!

**Nian:** Dinner as well! It must be my lucky day!

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- Old Hongjun:** As Nian spoke he began to move towards us. Outside the sun was rising and it shone through a crack in the roof of the cave. It shone right on Amber's red dress.
- Nian:** No, No!
- Amber:** What's going on? What's Nian scared of?
- Young Hongjun:** It must be your dress?
- Nian:** No! Not red, take the red away!
- Amber:** He's ... He's scared of my red dress?
- Nian:** No! No!
- Amber:** Quick, Hongjun, grab Yang and let's get out of here!
- Old Hongjun:** I put the boy on my shoulder and we ran out of the cave. We ran down the mountain trail and the angry roars of the monster disappeared behind us. Eventually we arrived back at the village.
- Villager:** Oh, Yang! Yang! Thank you so much, you brought my son back to me!
- Amber:** Listen everyone; you don't need to be afraid anymore! Nian is very scared of the colour red. And my red dress made him scream in fear!
- Young Hongjun:** From now on, you should wear red clothes and put red on your houses at the New Year. Then Nian will be too scared to return and you will be all safe!
- Old Hongjun:** And **this is where my story ends.** After that, the villagers put red paper on their front doors before New Year's Day and Nian never came again. I was a hero! Although I couldn't have done any of it without Amber, the girl from the legend. The girl in the red dress.
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