

Marco Polo for Kids



HIS MARVELOUS JOURNEY TO CHINA



21 ACTIVITIES



JANIS HERBERT



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Front cover: (upper left) The Great Wall of China, courtesy of Northwest Archives; (bottom left) The Polos leaving Venice, courtesy of Northwest Archives; (middle) Medieval Tartar huts and wagons, courtesy of Northwest Archives; (middle, bottom) Marco Polo lands at Ormuz, courtesy of Northwest Archives.

Back cover: (upper right) Caravan on the great highway of Central Asia, courtesy of Northwest Archives; (upper left) Frontispiece from Polo's *Voyages*, published in Nuremberg, 1477, courtesy of Northwest Archives.

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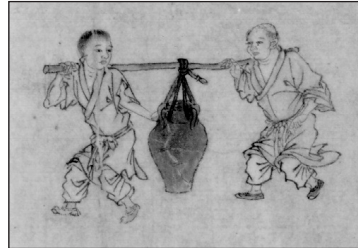
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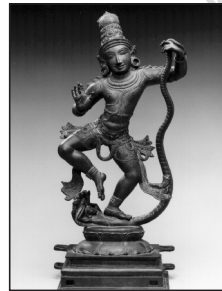
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A Tale Most Marvelous

Preface

“Tell me, Marco,” Rustichello begged, “another story of your journey!”

“What would you hear next?” Marco Polo asked his fellow prisoner. The days were long in prison, and telling the story of his travels helped them to pass a little faster. “Should I tell you about the great Khan’s pet leopards and the magicians at his court? Or of the conquests of his ancestor, Genghis Khan? Would you like to hear about the Old Man of the Mountains or of the desert which takes a year to cross?”

“Why don’t you start at the beginning this time,” said Rustichello. “I will write it all down, and make a book of your tale. Someday this book will be read the world over, and all shall know of the wonders you have seen.” Marco smiled. They would never believe it, he thought.

For three years, Marco had been a prisoner of the Italian city of Genoa, since his ship had been captured in a battle between that city and his home, Venice. Before that, he had only been home for a year. From the time he was 15

years old until he was a man of 39, Marco had traveled to places no European had ever seen before.

With his father and uncle, he had sailed from Venice to the Holy Land. From there they had sailed to a trading port on the eastern Mediterranean Sea. He had traveled by caravan through vast deserts and over steep mountain ranges, stopping in exotic cities and humble villages, until he came at last to the palace of Kublai Khan in far-off China. For many years, Marco had been a favorite of the Khan’s and had traveled as his emissary in the far eastern lands. Finally, he had come home, accompanying a Mongol princess in a fleet of Chinese ships.

He would tell the story of his journey—let them believe him or not! He had seen an ancient land and learned much about its people. He would share his adventures, his millions of stories.

“Speak slowly,” said Rustichello. “I want to get it all down.”



Time Line

1209 — Genghis Khan sets out on his conquests

Kublai Khan born — **1215**

1227 — Death of Genghis Khan

Mongols invade Eastern Europe — **1241**

1254 — Marco Polo born



Niccolo and Maffeo Polo set out for the east — **1260**

1264 — Kublai Khan gains the throne

Niccolo and Maffeo Polo return to Venice — **1269**

1271 — Mongol rule begins in China

Marco, Niccolo, and Maffeo Polo set out on their journey — **1271**



1275

— The Polos arrive at the palace
of Kublai Khan



The Polos set sail for home

1292

1294

— Kublai Khan dies

The Polos return to Venice

1295

1296

— Marco Polo captured in battle

Marco Polo tells his story

1298



1324

— Marco Polo dies


Mongol rule ends in China;
Ming Dynasty established

1368

明朝



4 The Eyes and Ears of the Khan



For the next 17 years, Marco explored the far-flung provinces of the Khan's conquered empire. He went to places that would not be seen by another European for centuries to come. He traveled through a land that had given birth to one of the world's most ancient civilizations, a land with traditions going back for thousands of years.

His travels took him throughout China, north to the Mongol city of Karakorum, and south to Burma (called Myanmar today), India, and Tibet. He sailed the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean and explored the islands of Java and Sri Lanka. Wherever he went, his most important task was to keep his eyes and ears open. Marco was careful to learn everything he could about the cities and provinces he visited, for he knew that Kublai Khan would want to hear every detail during Marco's return visits to the Emperor's court.

Marco set off on his first mission, excited to be traveling again. He journeyed by horse, stopping at post houses, which were spaced at regular intervals along the roads. These post houses were part of the Khan's imperial mes-

senger service, called the Yam. At each post house, horses were kept for the Khan's couriers. The couriers wore bells so they could be heard approaching from far away. By the time they arrived at the post house, a horse was already saddled and waiting for them. They leaped onto the new mount and continued on their journey. In this way, the couriers could travel 300 miles a day and deliver messages quickly to cities all over China.

Travel was pleasant through the green countryside. The tree-lined roads were shady and cool. Marco saw vineyards and orchards of mulberry trees, the leaves of which were used to feed the precious silkworms. He saw fields of ginger, bamboo cane, wheat, and rice. Peasants tilled the fields surrounding their small villages,



Still Growing

We know the Tibetan mountain Chomolungma as Mount Everest. At 29,035 feet above sea level, it is the highest mountain in the world. It is part of the Himalayan mountain range, which was formed millions of years ago when free-floating India crashed into the continent of Asia. India is still pushing up against the continent. Because of this, the Himalayas are still growing—at a rate of two inches a year.

making crops to sell in the markets of the bustling cities.

The cities! Marco was stunned to find, in one province after another, large and prosperous cities that made the cities of Europe look like villages. Transportation and communication systems were efficient and wide-reaching. Goods traveled by barge along canals and by wagon along the wide roads.

On this and all of his journeys, Marco rode long miles and traveled for months at a time. He crossed the wide, rushing Yellow River (the Huang He). In earlier times, a young woman had been thrown into the river every year as a

sacrifice to the river god. He crossed the Yangtze River (the Jian); at 3,400 miles long, the Yangtze is the longest river in Asia and third longest in the world. It was so wide that Marco thought it was the sea! He climbed a high mountain range and came to a wild region that had once been inhabited but was now empty of people. Its towns were in ruins, victims of Mongol attacks. Tigers, bears, and other wild animals roamed the streets.

Tibet

After weeks of travel south from the Khan's palace, Marco reached the border of Tibet (once an independent country, now it is a province of China). In this country of grasslands, forests, and steep, snow-covered mountains, the people wore thick furs against the frigid air. Men hunted with dogs and falcons and plowed small fields in mountain valleys with the help of their yaks. The women ground up the barley harvested from the fields and used it to make *tsampa* (barley cakes), which the families ate at home with cups of buttered tea.

In some of the homes, a man had more than one wife. More often, one woman was married to two or more brothers. When babies were born, their parents smudged their faces with soot (to hide them from demons). When

they were older, the children helped their parents by fetching water and gathering yak dung to use as fuel. Marriage ceremonies were simple, and the young bride showed her new adult status by donning a colorful apron. After death, people were given a sky burial. Their bodies were taken to a high rocky platform and fed to sacred vultures so their souls could be freed.

According to Tibetan legend, long ago their land was low and forested and almost entirely covered by the ocean. One day, five dragons emerged from the water, creating huge tidal waves and burning the forests with fiery breaths. The forest birds flew wildly against the hot winds and the animals ran in terror. Just as the dragons were about to destroy everything, five good spirits appeared. They commanded the sea to roll back and the dragons to withdraw again under its waters. When the waves withdrew they left behind a rich and fertile land. The spirits then turned into five mountains. Then, according to the legend, the Tibetan people made their appearance, born to a marriage between a monkey and a rock-demon.

From the distant time of the Seven Heavenly Kings (who climbed to the heavens on sky-cords) to the seventh century, the people of Tibet farmed and traded and lived as neighboring tribes. They were unified under Songtsen Gampo, who built the Potala Palace,



Yak

married two foreign queens, and began a powerful dynasty. Both of his wives were Buddhists, and Songtsen Gampo adopted this religion. He ordered the construction of Buddhist temples across the land. Soon thousands of pilgrims and monks (called lamas) bowed and prayed to golden likenesses of the Buddha. Yak-butter lamps sputtered in the dark temples, while outsize colorful flags waved in the wind.

Marco thought the Tibetans were magicians. “They cause tempests to arise, accompanied with flashes of lightning and thunder-



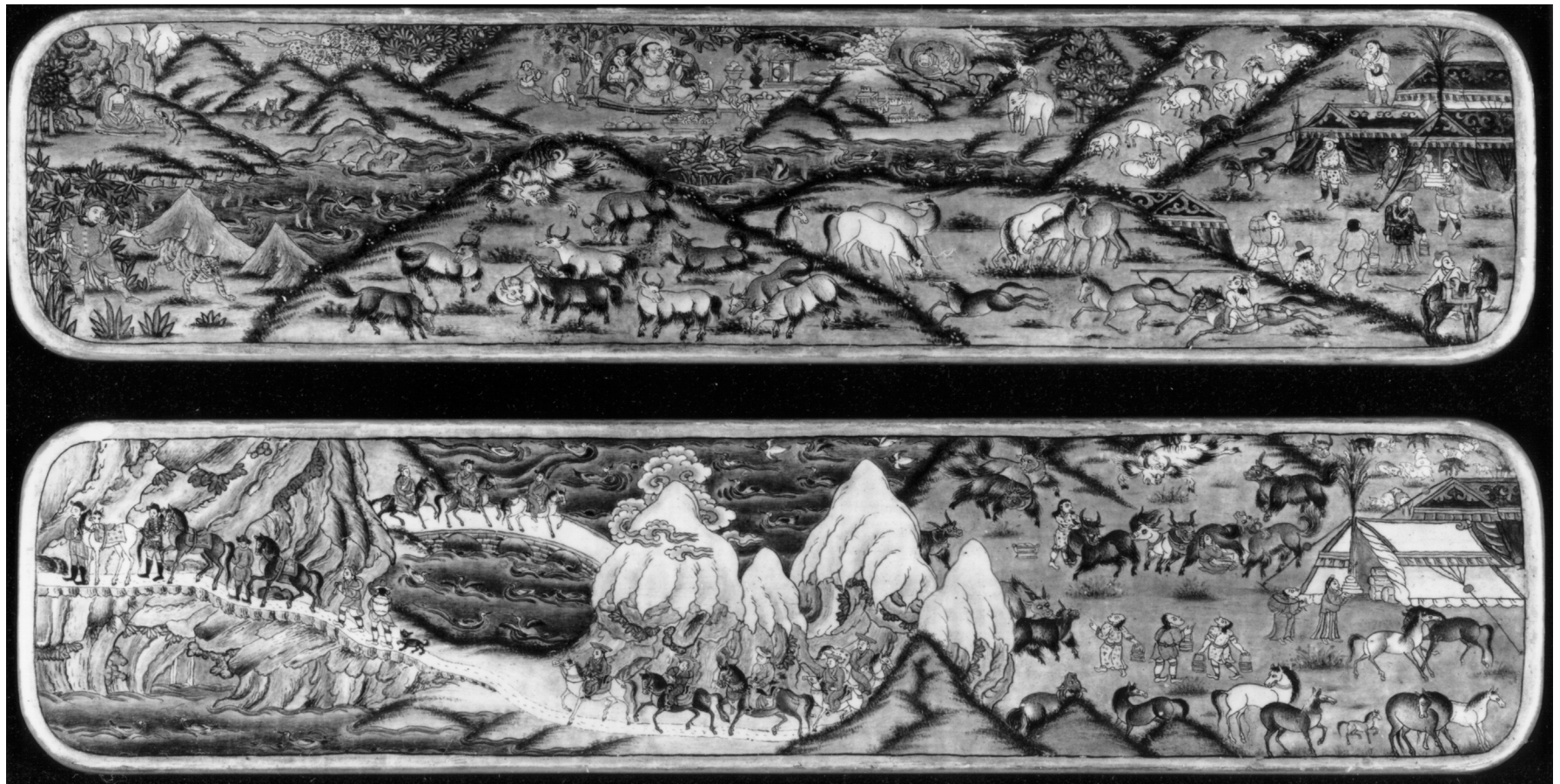
Simhavaktra Dakini

bolts,” he said. Back at the Khan’s palace, Tibetan magicians were ordered to stand on the roof and perform spells to keep bad weather from disrupting the royal schedule. The Khan converted to the Tibetan form of Buddhism (sometimes called Lamaism), which combined Buddhist beliefs with an ancient Tibetan religion called Bon. Magic and spirits were an important part of Bon beliefs.

The Dalai Lama

When the 13th Dalai Lama died in 1935, his regent (the monk who ruled in his place) had a vision of a house with a turquoise roof. He knew this would be the place where the Dalai Lama would be reborn. Groups of monks traveled throughout the country looking for the house with the turquoise roof. Two years later, one group found it. The head monk disguised himself as a servant, put on an old set of beads that had belonged to the Dalai Lama, and knocked on the door.

The two-year-old boy who answered the door demanded the beads, saying they belonged to him. He recognized and named the head monk, even though he was disguised as a servant, and named the others as well. They tested the boy further by placing different objects before him. Without fail, he chose only those that had belonged to him in his previous life. After many trials, the youngster was pronounced the 14th Dalai Lama. He is the Dalai Lama living today.



Tibetan message boards

At the time of Marco's visit, Tibet was ruled by a council of 20 high lamas under Mongol control. Not long after this time, a great monk appeared. The Mongols gave him his name, Dalai Lama, which means "ocean of wisdom." The Tibetans believed that this monk had reached the highest spiritual stage (called Nirvana) but had chosen to stay in the cycle of

life in order to help others. When this first Dalai Lama died, he reincarnated and came back again as the second Dalai Lama. In his fifth return, he became Tibet's spiritual and political leader.

Marco's adventures continued. He visited different Chinese provinces, each ruled by sons of the Khan. In one province, the people wore

Make a Mandala

Tibetan monks create intricate mandalas (circular sand paintings in geometric patterns) that symbolize the circle of life. They use these paintings as a focus during meditation. They spend days arranging colored sand into a patterned circle, picking up and placing one grain of sand at a time. When the mandala is finished, they hold a ceremony and sweep their hard work away. Combine art and geometry to make a sand mandala of your own. (Warning: for the last part of this activity, you might want to make sure you're outside.)

What you need

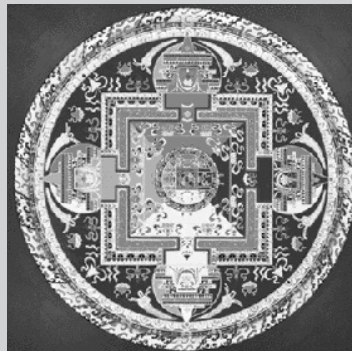
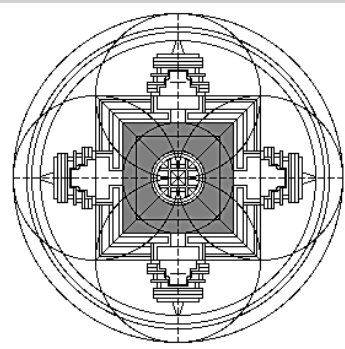
Paper

Pencil

Ruler

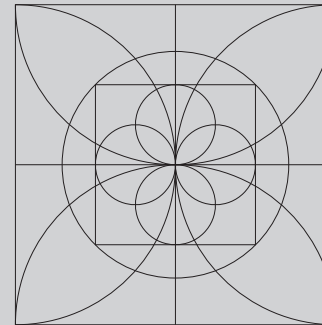
At least 4 plastic bottles with tips (like the bottles used on picnics for ketchup and mustard, or clean recycled honey bottles)

Colored sand in 4 or more colors (found at craft stores)



mandalas

- 1 Traditional mandalas start with outlines of geometric shapes. On your paper, draw the basic design shown here or create one of your own. Proportion and symmetry are important—traditional mandalas are exactly balanced and centered.



- 2 Fill each of the bottles with a different color of sand. Fill in one section of the mandala drawing at a time by squeezing the sand out of the bottle onto the drawing. Carefully fill in the remaining sections. When you are done with your drawing take a few moments to admire it. Then sweep it away!



heavy leather armor and carried poison arrows as protection against “huge serpents, ten paces in length, with glaring eyes and jaws wide enough to swallow a man.” (This was Marco’s first sight of a crocodile.) In another province, the people practiced an unusual custom after the birth of a baby. The woman immediately got out of bed and her husband laid down on it. There he stayed for 40 days. Friends and relatives visited the man to congratulate him on the birth of the child, while the mother cooked and cleaned and nursed the infant!

Myanmar

On another trip, Marco traveled far to the south, over mountains, across a wide plain, and through dense bamboo forests. He saw elephants and rhinoceroses (because of its single horn, he mistook the rhino for the legendary unicorn). Finally he reached Burma (today’s Myanmar). Marco described how its king, with an army of trained archers on the backs of huge elephants, faced the Mongol hordes across a large plain. Though outnumbered five to one, the Mongols triumphed in a battle “so great that the clangor of arms and shouts of men ascended to the skies.” Like so many others, the native people fell under Mongol rule. They had been in this land for as long as they could

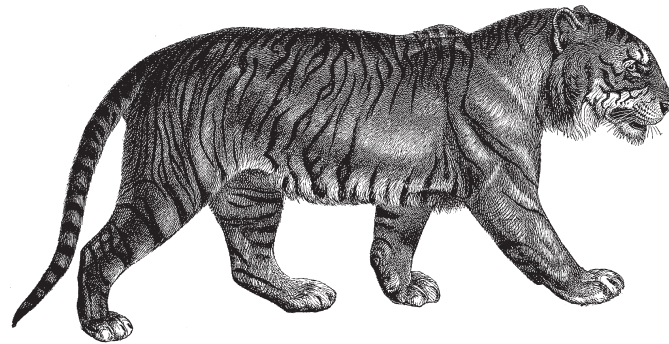
Tigers in Danger

Once found from Siberia to India, and from Iran to Japan, the tiger is now close to extinction. Three of eight subspecies of tigers became extinct in the 1900s. Scientists believe there are only between 3,000 and 6,000 tigers left in the wild today.

The tiger is the biggest member of the cat family, with Siberian tigers weighing nearly 700 pounds. These solitary animals need a lot of territory for hunting. They mark their boundaries with urine and scent glands so other tigers know to stay away. Tigers quietly track their prey (deer, wild boar, and other large mammals), then pounce for the kill. After a successful hunt they gorge—a hungry tiger can eat 40 pounds of meat in one meal!

A mother raises her cubs (usually two, born blind and weighing only three pounds) for two to three years. She teaches them how to hunt and care for themselves.

In many places, the tiger habitat has been destroyed. Poachers kill tigers for their beautiful striped pelts and for the body parts still used in Chinese folk medicines. The governments of India and other southeast Asian countries are making efforts to conserve tiger habitat, and the government of China has agreed to try to stop the use of endangered species in traditional medicines.



Tiger

remember. According to legend, their ancestors had followed a golden deer to this place, which they named “wondrous land.” It was so beautiful, they stayed forever.

When Marco entered the capital city of this kingdom he was awed at the sight of two pagodas (towers) gleaming in the sun, one covered with silver and the other with gold. They were temples built over the tomb of an ancient king. The Mongols had left them standing, since they considered it a sin to destroy or remove anything built in honor of the dead.

The people of this country were tattooed all over their bodies with figures of birds and beasts. Those with the most tattoos were considered to be the most beautiful. In a neighboring province, men and women wore bracelets of gold and silver on their wrists, arms, and

legs. Farther on, Marco came to a land where people made clothing from the bark of trees. This country was wild and was inhabited by so many tigers that people didn’t dare leave their homes except with their large and fierce dogs.

Southern China

In the southeast part of China, Marco found a more populated land. Its many cities and towns were all subject to the Great Khan’s rule. It had taken the Mongols many years to conquer these lands.

When the first Mongol invaders swept into China, one of the Chinese Emperor’s sons escaped and proclaimed himself the new Emperor of the Song Dynasty. He fled to the south and established his royal capital in a city that Marco called Quinsai (today’s Hangzhou). Years later, Kublai Khan sent his best general, Chinsan Bayan (“Old Hundred-Eyes”), to capture the city and the Song Emperor. As the general and his armies marched toward the Song capital, they destroyed towns and burned fields. Just before they reached the capital, the Emperor died, leaving his four-year-old son and the boy’s grandmother to face the Mongol army.

The boy emperor and his grandmother surrendered to General Bayan. (Marco said it had

been predicted that the Emperor would only surrender to a hundred-eyed monster. The Mongol general's nickname, Old Hundred-Eyes, fulfilled the prediction.) They were taken to the Khan's palace, where the youngster was treated well. In time, he became a Buddhist monk. His half-brother, who might have carried on the dynasty, escaped but drowned as he tried to flee from the Mongol army. Southern China and the great city of Quinsai were now under Mongol rule.

Quinsai

Marco had never seen anything like Quinsai, the "city of heaven." This magnificent city was the largest and most prosperous city in the entire world at that time. It was 100 miles around, with a million inhabitants.

Quinsai was surrounded by water, with a lake on one side and a great river on the other. Canals entered through gates in the high, white town walls and flowed through the city, reminding Marco of his hometown of Venice. Bridges arched over the canals, allowing tall-masted vessels to pass through the city. Boats of all kinds traveled along the canals. There were barges loaded with rice, small fishing boats bringing the day's catch to the city's mar-

What's in a Name?

The Chinese city that Marco called Quinsai is known today as Hangzhou. Not long ago it was called Hangchow. If you use older maps and books, you'll find that the cities and regions of China have different names from the names we use today. An old book might list China's capital as Peking; we call this city Beijing. In 1958, a new system of translating Chinese words into western languages was adopted. The letter *p* was replaced with *b* (that's how Peking became Beijing), *d* replaced *t*, and many other changes were also made.

kets, and boats carrying fruit, bright flowers, and vegetables. Other boats served as taxis.

The city overflowed its borders. Outside its walls, a jumble of houses and shops spilled over the landscape. On their outskirts, peasants fished, hunted, and tended crops. Whole families worked together, the boys in the fields and boats with their fathers, and the girls weaving fine silk or making fabric from hemp or cotton.



Inside the city's walls, multistoried houses stood side by side, their bright yellow and green roofs nearly touching. The shops of jewelers, calligraphers, hat makers, and book peddlers lined the streets. In other shops, astrologers told fortunes and doctors used herbs and acupuncture needles to restore qi (vital energy) to their patients. Horse-drawn carriages clattered down the streets, with finely dressed ladies peering out from behind their curtains.

Quinsai delighted all the senses. Pear and plum trees flowered and bore fruit. The city's 100 arched bridges were painted in bright colors. Statues of dragons and phoenixes guarded the rooftops of the buildings and stone lions snarled at the gates. Red lanterns hung over doorways. In 10 large markets, goods from all over the land enticed buyers. Pheasants and rabbits hung in stalls. Dried fish, noodles, and rice spilled out from large baskets. The smell of spices, perfumes, and incense hung in the air. Pet crickets sang from their wicker cages. People gathered in the city's gardens to hear storytellers shape tales of ancient heroes and watch acrobats tumble. They laughed and cried at the fortunes of characters in operas.

Others visited the city's gardens to paint—or to meditate on the water lilies, ponds, and rocks in preparation for painting. In Chinese



English words are made up of letters that represent sounds. You can "sound them out." Many Chinese words are represented by characters called pictographs (drawings that look like the things they are supposed to represent, like a tree). Others are ideographs. These are pictographs that, combined together, suggest an abstract idea (for example, the symbols for "ear" and "door" are combined to produce the symbol for "news"; the symbol for "escape" is a combination of the symbols for "mouse" and "hole").

It's easy to learn the English alphabet of 26 letters. How long would it take you to memorize the 6,000 characters that are in common use in Chinese? A really well-educated Chinese person might know as many as 25,000 characters!

Say It in Chinese

Tai chi and *feng shui* are Chinese words we already use (along with chop suey and egg fu yung!). China is so big and has such a huge population that, though everyone understands a common written language, at least eight different spoken languages are used throughout the country. The following words are from Mandarin, the most commonly used Chinese language:

Hello: Nǐ Hǎo (*knee how*)

Goodbye: Dàì jiàn (*zye jen*)

Please: Qǐng (*ching*)

Thank you: Xiè xiè
(*shee-yeh shee-yeh*)

Yes: Shì (*shy*)

No: Bù (*buh*)

art, it was very important to capture the true essence (the *qi*) of the landscape or animals the artist painted. The best artists spent time contemplating nature. They meditated on the essence of the mountain or the cat until they

felt complete understanding of that mountain or that cat. When the *qi* of the artist and the *qi* of the animal, plant, or mountain became one, then the painting could begin.

Traditional landscape painting was called *shanshui* (meaning “mountains and water”). By placing both mountains and water in their paintings, artists showed harmony and balance. Mountains represented the strength and force of *yang*. Water represented the serenity of *yin*. Landscapes were detailed and realistic, made with simple brush strokes, and painted on long, hanging scrolls. If people were placed in the landscapes, they were very tiny figures. This reflected the belief that humans are only a small part of nature.

People of all kinds thronged the streets. Wealthy women, dressed in silks, their hair pinned up with ivory combs, were followed by servants carrying their purchases. Beggars cried out for their attention; thieves quietly tried to pick their pockets.

The wealthy merchant and mandarin families of Quinsai kept many servants. Musicians and tutors taught their children. Gardeners tended perfect miniature gardens, complete with small lakes crossed by exquisite bridges, circular moon gates, and tiny waterfalls. Within the walls of the residences, separate buildings housed the family and the servants. Other



Chinese street scenes

buildings held altars that were visited on special occasions.

Furnishings were sparse. Carefully arranged flowers were placed on low rectangular tables. Wooden beds were hidden discreetly behind painted screens. The wealthy families had furniture painted in black lacquer (red was reserved for the emperor). Landscape scrolls hung on the walls. Spoiled, fat cats slept on low chairs.

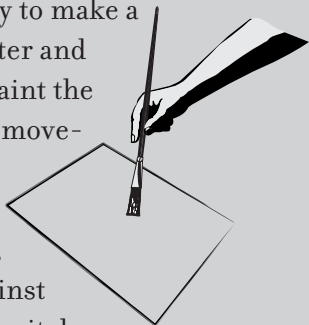
The families ate their meals at the low tables, with many courses served in small

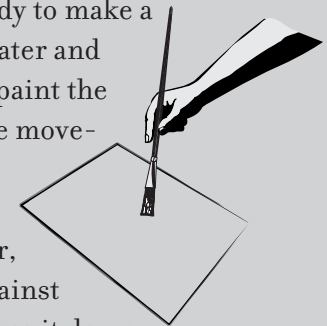
porcelain dishes. Slurping bird's nest soup with porcelain spoons was considered quite proper! They pushed rice, noodles, and bean curd to their mouths with chopsticks, and they drank their rice wine hot.

The women of wealthy families were encouraged to be timid and delicate; some were even confined to their homes. They wore white makeup, plucked their eyebrows into thin lines, and painted their nails with polish made from pink balsam leaves. Perfume sachets swung from their belts.

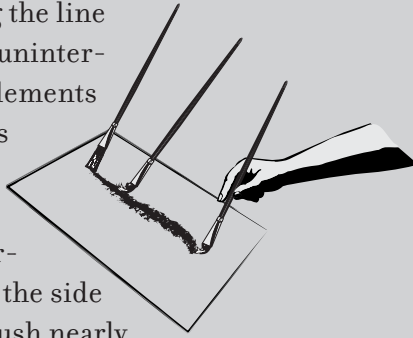
What you need

Cup of water

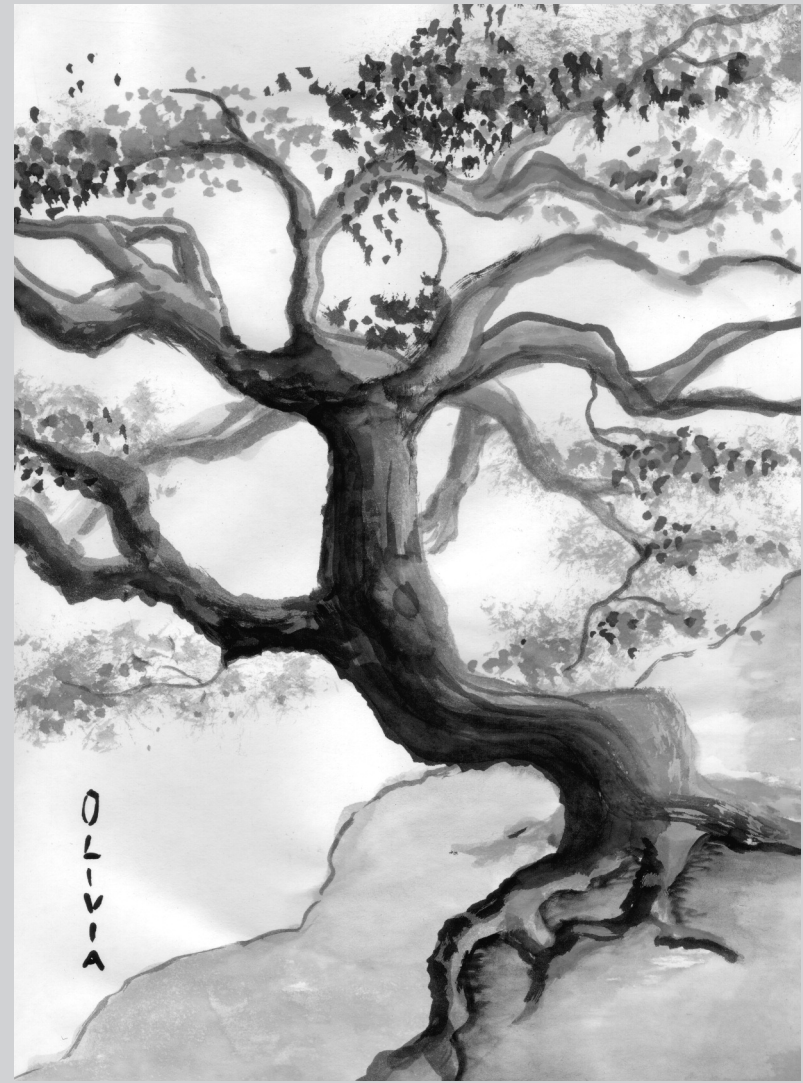
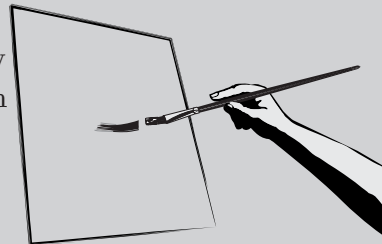
- 2** When you're satisfied that you've reached a deep understanding of your surroundings, you're ready to paint. Lay newspaper out to cover your work surface, then set out the watercolor paper. Plan the composition of your painting. For a vertical painting you will want elements of height—tall trees will bring a forceful yang element to your painting. You can balance this with the yin of a lake or river and the addition of small details (like a sparrow or a tiny human figure).
- 3** To paint in the Chinese style, use the traditional brush strokes ancient artists developed for calligraphy (the art of writing). For the bone stroke, hold the brush vertically (upright) and don't allow your hand to touch the paper. When you are ready to make a stroke, dip the brush with water and paint, lower it to the paper, paint the intended line or mark in one movement, then lift the brush up again. (It takes practice!) To gradually make a line thicker, touch the tip of the brush against the paper, then gradually press it down
- 
- An illustration showing a right hand holding a traditional Chinese brush vertically. The brush is positioned just above a rectangular piece of paper. The hand is shown in profile, with the thumb and fingers gripping the handle. The brush has a dark, tapered tip. The paper is light gray and is tilted slightly to the right. The background is a solid light gray.



harder as you move along the line (see drawing). Use long, uninterrupted lines for the yin elements and short, choppy strokes (called ax-cut strokes) to show the movement and energy of yang. The water-drop stroke is made with the side of the brush. Hold the brush nearly sideways, press it against the paper, and lift it up.



- 4 Chinese painters finished their paintings by writing a short poem on it. Add a poem that reflects your feelings about your painting.



by Olivia Lenny Hill, age 15



At the time of Marco's visit to China, it was possible to tell someone's class and rank by the clothes they wore. Only a high-ranking mandarin official would dare to wear green! Umbrellas (a Chinese invention) were carried only by princes of the royal family. A merchant could be recognized by his trousers. Servant girls wore bangs and pigtails, and military men sported long mustaches and goatees. Silk was a luxury of the rich; peasants wore clothing made of hemp.

Within each household, several generations of a family lived together. According to Confucian custom, the youngest members of the family showed strict obedience and respect to their elders. They did not answer back when their parents spoke to them and never sat down when an elder was present. But even though they were taught to be polite and very obedient, children were rarely disciplined. Only especially naughty children were told that Big-Eyes Yang (with the terrible, booming voice) or Liu the Barbarian would come to eat them.

Boys from well-to-do families went to school to learn to read and write, use the abacus, and play music. As they grew older, they studied ancient texts and poems in the hopes of passing the examinations to become a mandarin. Some girls also attended school, but most simply learned how to embroider, sing,

Noodles

Many people think that Marco Polo brought noodles back with him from China and introduced Italians to pasta. Not true! Marco did see Chinese people eating noodles and wrote about it in his journal, but the people back home had been eating pasta for some time. Pasta is mentioned in an Italian cookbook from the year 1000 and in a twelfth-century travel book about Sicily. In 1279, before Marco's return, an Italian lawyer listed "a basket of macaroni" among the items owned by his client.

Arabs had been eating dried pasta for years. It was excellent ready-made food for desert travel. The Chinese had been making noodles for centuries—possibly as far back as 1100 B.C. In 300 B.C., a Chinese scholar wrote a poem about noodles!

In China, noodles are sometimes wide, sometimes thin, but they're always long. Long noodles symbolize long life, making them a common dish at birthday celebrations. Chinese noodles are made of wheat or rice or bean paste and served hot or cold, steamed, fried, or boiled. Marco might have seen noodle-makers pulling dough at the market, stretching and twirling it until the strings were long and thin. This was an improvement over the method of Italian cooks at the time, who kneaded pasta dough with their feet!

Chinese Stir-Fry

Stir it up and get wok-y! You might even like vegetables if you make them Chinese-style. This recipe serves 4.

Adult supervision required

What you need

1 cup white rice

Saucepan with lid

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Wok or frying pan

1/2 teaspoon chopped ginger

1/2 teaspoon chopped garlic

1/2 cup each of four different chopped vegetables
(use red, yellow, or orange peppers, snow peas,
broccoli, mushrooms, bok choy, or any other
favorite vegetable)

Wooden spoon

1/2 pound tofu, cubed

Soy sauce

Green tea

Serving bowls and cups

Chopsticks

- 1** Cook the rice in the saucepan according to the directions on the package.
- 2** Heat the oil over medium-high heat in the wok or frying pan. Add the ginger and garlic and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. (Be careful of spattering oil.) Add the vegetables and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Add the tofu and cook and stir for 1 minute longer. Remove from heat. Add soy sauce to taste.
- 3** Boil water and make a pot of green tea.
- 4** Place the rice and vegetables in large bowls. Set them on the table with the pot of tea, serving dishes, tea cups, and chopsticks. Toast the health of your guests with your tea, and dig in!
- 5** Make sure you fill your guests' teacups whenever they are empty. If they are Chinese, they know that if they don't want any more tea, they should leave some in their cups.

and play musical instruments. Peasant children helped their families. In middle-class households, the boys usually followed their fathers' footsteps and became merchants or craftsmen. Girls became servants, seamstresses, cooks, musicians, or concubines.

When girls turned 15 and boys 20, they were considered adults and ready for marriage. Marriages were arranged by the families. Often the bride and groom had never met! Arrangements were made with the help of astrologers and go-betweens (the go-betweens were women who worked in pairs). The families gave them cards with the prospective bride's and groom's names and birth dates. The go-betweens took the cards to an astrologer to see if the match would be lucky. (No engagement would take place unless the astrologer foresaw a fortunate match.) The families then exchanged information about their ancestors and their property.

If all seemed well, the bride and her family visited the groom's home for the Ceremony of the Cups. The parents exchanged promises over cups of rice wine, and the groom placed two hairpins in his fiancée's hair. The groom's family gave gifts of gold and rice wine; the bride's gave cloth, two sticks, and two bowls of goldfish.

On the wedding day (chosen by the astrologer for the best possible luck), the bride

and her family marched in a procession to the groom's family home, while people along the street showered her with seeds, beans, and coins. A young girl walked backward in front of the bride, holding a mirror. When the bride stepped into her new family's home, she was taken into a curtained room to await her husband. She was now part of a new family, and rarely—if ever—could she visit her own parents again. Even if her husband died, she stayed with her in-laws to care for them when they grew old.

Emperors and other members of the royal family could take more than one wife. It was not uncommon for concubines to be brought in as members of a wealthy household. They added to the family's honor by bringing more children. It was considered an especially great honor to become a concubine in the Imperial Palace. If no son was born to the Empress, a concubine's son could become emperor.

The birth of a child was awaited with much anticipation, for then the family name could continue. Because a daughter left to become part of her husband's family, it was considered very important to have sons. The son and his future wife would care for his parents in their old age and provide grandchildren.

In middle-class families, one month before a baby was due, its grandparents gave presents

A Fishy Story

Chinese fishermen used an unusual technique to catch fish—they trained birds to do it for them! They tied cords around the long necks of cormorants so they couldn't swallow the fish, then sent them diving underwater to fish. When the fishermen's baskets were full, they slipped the cords off the birds and allowed them to dive again to catch food for themselves.



How to Use Chopsticks

Using chopsticks can be tricky. Place one so that it rests on your third finger and goes between your thumb and first finger. Press against it with your thumb. Hold the other chopstick above it just like you would hold a pencil, using the tip of the thumb and the first and second fingers to move it. The bottom chopstick should remain stationary; the top one does all the moving. Hold them close to the eating end—they'll be easier to control.

When eating rice, it's proper to bring your bowl up to your mouth and "shovel" the rice in with your chopsticks. It's considered rude to leave rice uneaten (an insult to the farmers who grew it). When you're finished eating, place your chopsticks across your empty bowl.

to hasten the birth, enticing it with beautiful clothing and silver platters piled with delicious foods. When the baby was born, its parents wrote down the exact minute and hour of the birth for the astrologers. After the baby turned one month old, it received its first bath (in a silver bowl) and first haircut. Its baby locks were stored in a golden box. The mother then held the baby and kowtowed to each family member in turn. On its first birthday, another special ceremony was held. The baby was set down in the middle of the floor and objects were placed around it—a book, needle and thread, flowers, a jeweler's scale. Whatever object the baby reached out to grab foretold its future occupation.

There were also ceremonies when death came. Each member of the family grieved according to the required custom. They cut their hair and put on coarse clothing. The women wailed and beat their chests. Paper images of horses and servants were burned so that the dead person would be accompanied by them in the next world. Feng shui masters were consulted about the proper burial place. Everyone followed the coffin down the streets, playing musical instruments and singing in honor of their ancestor. When they came home again, they placed a tablet with the name of the person on an ancestral altar. This way, the per-

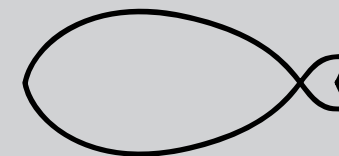
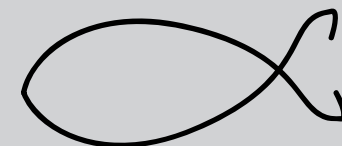
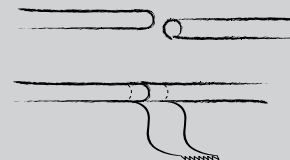
Make a Paper Lantern

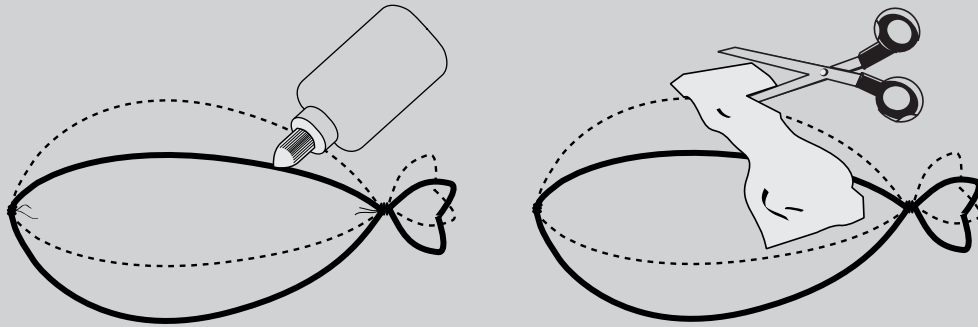
The Lantern Festival is still held in China. People compete to see who can make the most beautiful paper lanterns. They shape them like dragons or horses, or even like an emperor on his throne. Make this lantern in the shape of a fish, or try other shapes.

What you need

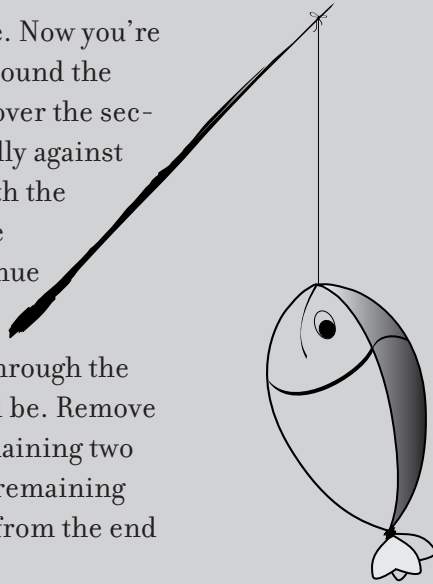
6 18-inch paper-wrapped wire floral stems
(available at craft stores)
Tape
2 twist ties (from bread bags or garbage bags)
Newspaper
White glue
Brightly colored tissue paper
Scissors
Needle and thread

- 1 Tape two of the stems together to make one long stem. Bend them into the shape of a fish and tape the tail end. Tape two more stems together and make an identical fish shape. Use the twist ties to tie the two fish shapes together—one at the base of the tails and one at the very front of the fish. Twist tightly and tuck the ends toward the inside of the fish.





- 2** Carefully bend the two tails away from each other. Give the fish a three-dimensional body by pulling out on the stems near the middle (see drawing).
- 3** Spread newspaper out on your workspace. Now you're ready to cover the lantern. Spread glue around the edges of one section of the fish. Gently cover the section with tissue paper and press it carefully against the glued edges. Trim it very carefully with the scissors, cutting as close as you can to the stems. Now cover another section. Continue until the fish is entirely covered.
- 4** Thread the needle and carefully push it through the paper right where the fish's mouth would be. Remove the needle from the thread. Tape the remaining two stems together, and tie the thread to the remaining stem so your fish looks as if it's hanging from the end of a fishing pole.



son's spirit would continue to reside in the home. On birthdays and during special festivals, they burned incense and candles in front of the tablet.

Chinese Festivals

Many festivals were celebrated throughout the year. Soon after the big New Year holiday, the Feast of Lanterns was held. Lanterns in every color decorated the homes and shops. Women in silk dresses played flutes and stringed instruments. Tightrope walkers balanced precariously over the streets, walking across ropes strung between buildings. Boxing matches and juggling and storytelling contests were held all night long.

The anniversary of Buddha's entry into Nirvana was honored with streamers, flowers, and visits to monasteries. People bought turtles, fish, and birds in the markets and set them free in a ceremony called the "Liberation of Living Creatures."

The Festival of the Dead was celebrated in the spring. For three days beforehand, all fires were put out. People ate cold food or none at all. When the holiday arrived, a palace official kindled a fire by drilling two sticks together. Torches lit from this small flame were brought to homes around the city so people could light

their fires again. Everyone decorated their homes with green branches and brought offerings to the graves of their ancestors. They drank new rice wine and danced in the streets. Drummers led crowds to the lake outside the city's walls to watch the Jousting of the Dragon Boats. In this event, six ships decorated with flowers and flags faced each other in pairs. When a giant gong beat the signal, the sailors rowed toward their opponents. Then they picked up long pikes and tried to push each other off the boats. The spectators on shore laughed and applauded wildly when the sailors fell into the water, then they walked home in the dark, happy and tired.

The fifth day of the fifth month was not a festival—it was considered to be a very unlucky day. This day belonged to the scorpion, wasp, centipede, snake, and toad. People wore lucky charms and bought special cakes made in five colors to ward off evil spirits. The seventh day of the seventh month was the Festival of Weaving. On this day, everyone wore new clothes. Girls caught spiders and put them in boxes. They set them free the next morning, after the spiders wove a web for them.

Autumn brought the Moon Festival. An ancient legend told that the moon was devoured every month by a black toad. On this night, people stayed up late and sat on their

Your Chinese Name

Chinese names are different from ours in the western world. They place the family name (our last name) first, and the given name (our first name) last (and often in two parts). Marco Polo might have been Polo Mar-co. If you meet a man named Li Po, address him not as Mr. Po, but as Mr. Li. Chinese names are often references to objects or characteristics, such as "Precious Pearl" or "Worthy Friend." (See Web sites on page 121 to find out your Chinese name.)

roofs, playing music and eating special moon cakes. They watched the moon move across the sky and looked for the black toad.

Even ordinary days in Quinsai seemed special. The city began stirring before sunrise when bells rang at the Buddhist and Taoist monasteries. Those who didn't hear the bells were awakened by monks who walked the city streets banging on drums and calling out the day's weather and news. Merchants opened

their stalls and peasants streamed in from the countryside with supplies. Peddlers sold hot water for washing up. At home, people ate breakfasts of fried tripe and steamed pancakes.

Crowds thronged the markets, noodle shops, and tea houses until evening.

As the sun began to set, scholars

walked to the city's gardens to play chess or write poetry. Children played in large groups in the streets until their parents called out to them to come home.

Marco returned again and again to Quinsai. He always found it hard to leave, but his duties to the Khan called him back to the Imperial Court.



Three Chinese Games

Jug (or “Narrow-Neck”)

This game was popular in 13th-century Quinsai. Play this version with one or more friends. Place three containers, each one smaller than the next, in a line (for example, you can use a big bowl, a gallon milk jug with the top cut off, and an empty coffee can). Stand back and take turns trying to make a ping-pong ball bounce once off the floor and into the largest container. Then try to bounce it into the next smaller container. Good luck trying to bounce it into the smallest one!

Stone-Paper-Scissors

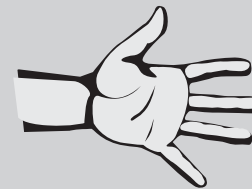
You may have played this game, which was invented in China. Two people face each other. Each makes a fist with one hand. Call out “Stone-paper-scissors” and, on the last word, quickly put this hand out in front of you in one of three positions—flat for paper, in a fist for stone, and with two fingers out for scissors. Who wins? Stone beats scissors (by crushing them), scissors beats paper (by cutting it), and paper beats stone (by covering it up). If two players make the same gesture it’s a tie!

Eagle and Chicks

This is a rowdy outdoor game for a group of kids to play. One person is the eagle, one a mother hen, and the rest are baby chicks. The chicks line up behind their mother, holding onto each other’s waists, with the first chick holding onto Mom’s. The eagle tries to catch a chick by getting around the mother to tag one. The mother hen spreads her wings and tries to stay in front of her chicks, facing the eagle no matter where he goes. When the eagle tags a chick, that chick becomes the eagle.



Stone



Paper



Scissors

Moon Cakes

Traditional moon cakes are more like cookies. They are baked with fillings like red bean paste, yams, or nuts. (Later, you'll read how the Chinese people baked moon cakes with secret messages in them!) This recipe makes 18 moon cakes.

Adult supervision required

What you need

2 mixing bowls

Beaters

Spatula

Wax paper

Saucepan

Rolling pin

Round cookie cutter

Cookie sheet

For dough:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup softened butter

1 cup sugar

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

$2\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

For filling:

1 cup ground walnuts

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

1 tablespoon butter

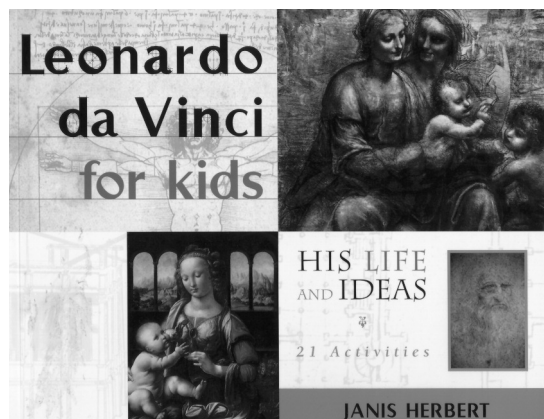
1 tablespoon milk

- 1** To make the dough, beat the butter, sugar, eggs, and vanilla in one bowl until smooth. In the other bowl, stir together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Add these ingredients to the butter mixture and stir until blended. Remove the dough from the bowl, wrap it in a sheet of wax paper, and put it in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
- 2** While the dough is chilling, make the filling. Put the ground walnuts in a bowl with the sugar. Place the butter and milk in a pan and heat on low until the butter is melted. Add it to the walnut-sugar mixture and stir.
- 3** Heat the oven to 400° F. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. Roll out the dough on a floured surface. For each moon cake, cut two round cookies with the cookie cutter. Put one of the rounds on the cookie sheet. Place a teaspoon of the filling in the middle of the round and spread it out a little. Cut a crescent moon shape in the middle of the other round, then place the second round on top of the filling. Press the edges together with your fingertips. Place in the oven and bake for 10 minutes, or until edges are slightly brown.





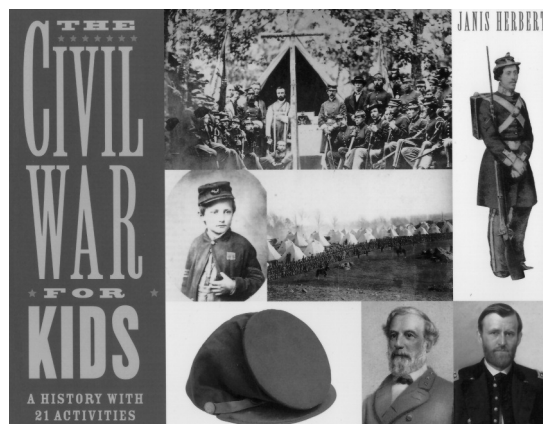
Other children's activity books by Janis Herbert



Leonardo da Vinci for Kids: His Life and Ideas, 21 Activities

“A lively biography of the ultimate Renaissance man. Herbert describes Leonardo’s life while also providing a good deal of historical information about art.” —*School Library Journal*

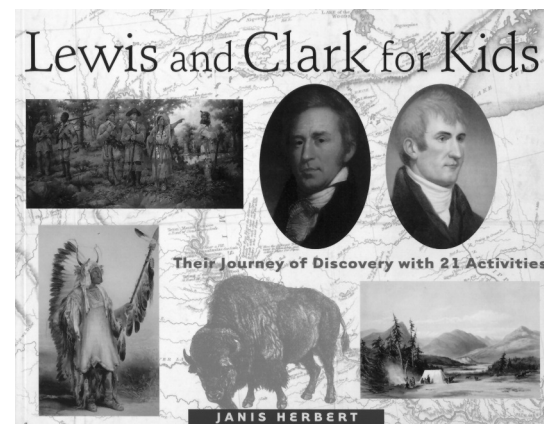
“Thoroughly illustrated and well designed, this is a fine purchase that rises above the current bounty of available books on the subject.” —*Booklist*



The Civil War for Kids: A History with 21 Activities

“For children who *really* want to know what it felt like to take an active role in the past, *The Civil War for Kids* is it!”
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—D. Scott Hartwig, Historian, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania



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“The Lewis and Clark expedition was not only one of America’s greatest adventures, it was one of our nation’s greatest leaps in learning. Geography, ethnology, zoology, botany, and literature—the Corps of Discovery made important contributions to them all. This book invites readers to join Lewis and Clark’s epic journey and helps them make their own discoveries along the way.” —Dayton Duncan, author of *Out West: American Journey Along the Lewis and Clark Trail*