

Explore the Lunar New Year and more in *All About China*

All About China: Stories, Songs, Crafts, and More for Kids

By Allison "Aixin" Branscombe

Illustrations by Lin Wang

Tuttle Publishing, 2014

Hardcover, 64 pages, \$16.95

By **Kate Hubbard**

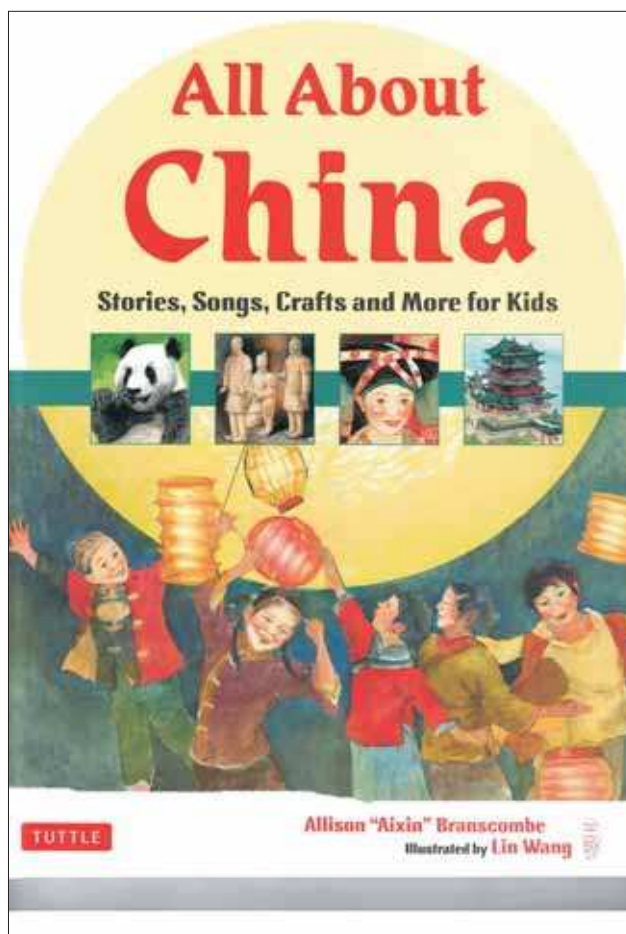
The Asian Reporter

February 8, 2016 marks the Year of the Monkey! If you're planning your upcoming Lunar New Year celebration, check out *All About China: Stories, Songs, Crafts, and More for Kids*, an informative book about China and Chinese culture. The book is packed with fascinating tidbits of history as well as a collection of crafts, activities, recipes, and more. The graphics-heavy format makes it entertaining to read for children and instantly accessible for adults.

Tuttle Publishing has a philosophy of offering books that span east and west. For young readers, *All About China* is a great, practical introduction to the country. Author Allison Branscombe uses a vivid mix of historical facts, legends, and hands-on activities to share the richness of China.

For example, readers learn about martial arts and get a sense of what kung fu and tai chi are all about. Then there are the thousands of inventions that originated in China and went on to change the world. One can read about acupuncture and herbalism and also practice some common words in Mandarin. Additionally, culture enthusiasts can sing the "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" song in Chinese while marvelling at the secret language Chinese women developed during the Qing Dynasty.

The arts are a rich cultural tradition in China, and the author conveys the wonderful variety of ancient practices. From calligraphy to folk dancing, porcelain to cloisonné, colorful illustrations illuminate the concepts while fully engaging one's attention. *All About China* will walk readers through food and crafts ideas for a festive Lunar New Year celebration.



Starting with the book's calligraphy lesson, you can make red Happy New Year cards for family and friends. The color red symbolizes celebration and is also the color that scares off Nián — the monster that used to attack on the last day of the Lunar New Year. According to legend, this is how new year traditions started. When villagers discovered Nián was afraid of red, they began hanging red decorations on windows and doors and setting off firecrackers to scare it away.

Next, read about how important family and celebration are on the holiday. People travel long distances to be home



CULTURE FOR KIDS. *All About China: Stories, Songs, Crafts, and More for Kids*, an informative book about China and Chinese culture, provides history about and ideas for Lunar New Year celebrations and more. Pictured are the book cover (left) and a Lion Dance (right) — a tradition featuring detailed movements together with loud drumming, gongs, and symbols to scare off evil spirits.

and gather for a New Year's Eve feast. The following day is spent visiting family and friends and sharing food and gifts. Different foods have deep symbolic meanings, and Branscombe summarizes some of them, such as the importance the direction the fish head faces when it is presented and not cutting long noodles. The gathering can also include *mahjong* and *tangram* brain teasers.

Young readers learn why it's important to incorporate feng shui into the home before guests arrive. To get ready, they can follow the directions in the book to create lanterns decorated with Chinese characters or the zodiac sign for 2016. There's even a retelling of the zodiac contest that resulted in the creation of the twelve-year calendar, with a handy chart that describes each zodiac animal and which years they represent.

Although not everyone is lucky enough to be born in the Year of the Dragon, we find out the origins of the Dragon and how different the dragon myth is in China compared to European versions. We learn about the dragon dance and how it comes last in a parade to wish everyone good fortune while marvelling at how the lion dance really works and discovering how the creatures

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LUNAR NEW YEAR

YEAR OF THE MONKEY

Sunday, February 7, 2016

Monday, February 8, 2016

**LUCKY MONEY TREE CASH DRAWINGS
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Red Envelopes with a Special Gift

LION DANCERS

Sunday, February 7, 2016



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