

# Easy ways to celebrate Chinese New Year, homework issues, a road trip, and the Statue of Liberty

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Xīn Nián Kuài Lè! Gung hay fat choy! Happy Chinese New Year! Today we start the Year of the Dog, which is somehow much more exciting than the rooster or the goat. We are all quite excited about it.

If you haven't been counting down to the Year of the Dog for weeks—or, in our case, since your Year of the Rooster party—here are a few quick and easy ways you can celebrate:

- **Enjoy some Chinese food.** You might want to wait until it's not a Lenten Friday, of course, but the good news is that Chinese New Year is celebrated for two weeks straight—or more like a month in our household.
- **Make a Chinese New Year craft.** I will be the first to admit that I can get a little carried away with the Chinese New Year crafts, but there are some really easy ones out there. [Here are two that look really straightforward.](#) And [making a paper lantern is also fun.](#) Or just Google “Chinese New Year coloring pages” and print out a few.
- **Fill red envelopes for the children in your life.** Amazon has quite a selection or you could fold your own out of red paper. Traditionally you would fill it with cash, though I've also used chocolate coins. This year I'm filling them with [scratch-off fortunes.](#)
- **Set off faux fireworks.** Put bubble wrap on the floor and let the kids jump

all over it.

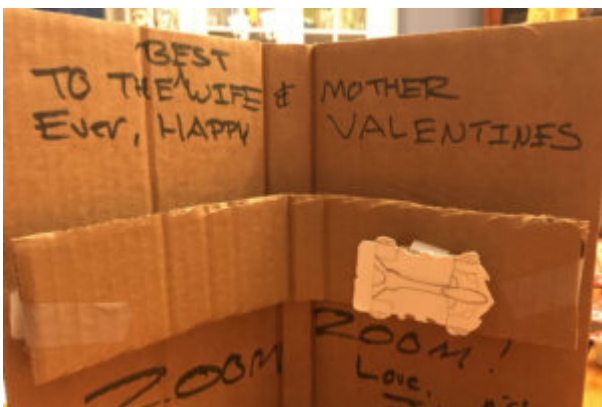
- **Clean your house.** This is an actual tradition, but sadly you are too late. You're supposed to do it before the Chinese New Year begins. If you clean your house today, you'll be dusting and vacuuming away all the good luck for the New Year. So you'll just have to wait a few weeks now.
- **Pull out all your stuffed dogs and throw a dog party.** Who doesn't love a dog party?

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In my enthusiastic cleaning to prepare us for the Year of the Dog, I threw away lots of schoolwork that had been sitting around. Unfortunately, I also tossed Daniel's math homework that was due today. It was a packet he had worked hard to complete, and it is buried somewhere deep in our recycling bin.

I'm sure his teacher was very impressed. And she doesn't even know that the Year of the Dog ate his homework.

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We celebrated both Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday this week. We gave the boys their treats on the eve of Valentine's Day because there was some candy involved. Then John and I exchanged gifts on Valentine's Day. He also asked Daniel to make me a card, and he did, using a cardboard box to make a pop-up card for me.

We don't always do much for Valentine's Day, but we got engaged 14 years ago on that day. One of my friends pointed out that since we got engaged 14 years ago on

the 14<sup>th</sup>, that might be a special golden date in some way. I'm not sure, but it was fun.

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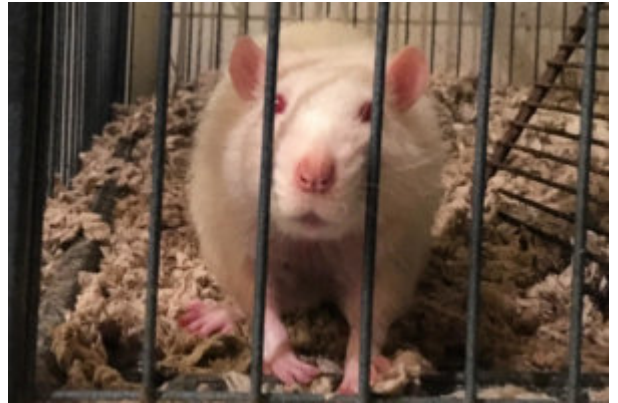
Daniel had a field trip this week, and I got to be the chaperone. When the teacher had asked for volunteers, I signed up. I had chaperoned Leo's trip in the fall, and it seemed only fair that I would also try to chaperone Daniel's. But what were the chances I would be picked?

And I won the field trip lottery! We went to see a performance of [Cirque Zuma Zuma](#), and the children loved it. I did too, because it was really well done and entertaining, especially since the performers were acrobatic and talented at balancing on a tower of chairs and spinning things and in so many ways.

Daniel loved having me along and insisted on sitting with me on the bus. I love watching him grow, but if he decides to stay 8, that's just fine with me.

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The boys and I traveled to visit my sister and her four children last weekend. We hung out with their pet rats, of course, and I made tacos and a ridiculous amount of guacamole. We visited a new church and our sons each made their three wishes.



Oh, and we watched *Wonder*, which is an absolutely beautiful film.

On our four-hour drive home, the boys and I talked about *Wonder* and racism and all kinds of fascinating other subjects. It started pouring and got a little dicey, so we said two Rosaries—and our second grader led us through one of them.

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We took my dad with us on our trip to visit the cousins, and he mentioned that on one trip he had gone to see the Statue of Liberty on the way.

So we hopped off the New Jersey Turnpike and went to find [Liberty State Park](#).

We took a few wrong turns, but we made it in the end, and jumped out, saw the Statue of Liberty across the water from us, took a few photos, caught a Pokemon, hopped back in the car, and drove the rest of the way.

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When we went to Mass on Ash Wednesday evening, we sang one of my favorite church songs, “Ashes.” We never sing that song, and I love it. It seemed like a great way for us to start off our Lent. I hope yours is going well, too.

***Find more quick takes at Kelly’s blog, [This Ain’t the Lyceum](#), and have a wonderful weekend!***