

When I became a preschool teacher for an hour



When I offered to visit Daniel's preschool classroom to talk about Chinese New Year, his teacher immediately said yes.

So Friday morning I gathered my tools:

- *Card stock with dragon masks printed on it*
- *Duct tape to tape the masks*
- *Paint sticks for the back of the masks*
- *Fortune cookies (which are not Chinese, but they are Chinese-American)*
- *Two books: *Fortune Cookies* and *Bringing in the New Year**
- *A roll of bubble wrap so we could pretend to set off fireworks*
- *Red Chinese envelopes full of lollipops (though traditionally they should hold money)*



This is our family's fifth year celebrating Chinese New Year, and our goal is simple: make it fun. We can't teach our sons everything about their Chinese heritage and language and culture, but we want to give them as much as we can so they will want to learn more.

When I sat down in the teacher's rocking chair—feeling a bit like an imposter—I looked out at the children, all sitting criss-cross-applesauce, and wondered where to begin. So I asked them what they had done to celebrate the New Year. They talked about fireworks and parties and blowers.

Then I started telling them about Chinese New Year and fireworks and parades and dragons. I

was so happy that they were listening and responding. Then as I was reading my first book, one of the boys stopped me.

“What is China?” he asked.

Oops. I hadn’t thought to explain that. Maybe I’m not a natural teacher after all.

But guess who is: our younger son. Daniel spent the whole time playing teacher.



He carried the *Fortune Cookies* book around to let the children take turns pulling the fortunes out.

He refused to make a mask because he was too busy taping paint sticks on the back of the masks.



As the teacher, he marched in the back of our dragon parade, waving a paint stick. Then he slipped the paint stick into his pants, perhaps more like a construction worker than a teacher, and walked around handing out fortune cookies.



He even showed his friends how to pop their bubble wrap. They jumped on it to make it pop, and then sat down quietly to pop each individual bubble they had missed.



As for me, I loved seeing Daniel so happy and proud. I already can’t wait to go back next year.

In fact, I’m not sure I can wait for the Year of the Ram. Maybe I’ll go back in two weeks to celebrate the Lantern Festival.

Making lanterns would be fun! I just need to find a way to incorporate paint sticks, duct tape, and bubble wrap again.