This volume includes classroom projects developed by ARTS, Inc. in the elementary schools of the Chinatown area of the Lower East Side of New York since 1971. These projects are based on authentic, traditional materials, adapted for children living in the contemporary world by ARTS' staff and by the children themselves. They are carefully planned to be appropriate and convenient for public school classrooms, with grades 3 - 7.

The projects may be used in Bilingual or English as a Second Language classes, or in mainstream classes through the Social Studies or Language Arts curricula. They are intended for use in a wide range of classes, and to provide opportunities for cultural sharing between children of diverse races and languages.

CHINESE CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

by ARTS, Inc.

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CONTENTS

Chinese New Year Parade................................................. 1
(including how to make a dragon)

Using Large Props.......................................................... 13

Putting on Plays............................................................ 17

"The Legend of White Snake"............................................ 19
"The Monkey King in the Eastern Ocean"............................ 32
"The Zodiac Race".......................................................... 40
CHINESE NEW YEAR PARADE
In Chinese traditional culture, there are many kinds of lucky figures which are carried in parades and at festivals, symbolizing good wishes, or illustrating folk characters. In school, a Chinese New Year Parade can be organized, using one or two classes of kids who make large traditional props and perform with them. Suggested characters include:

- Lion and teaser (3 students)
- Giant and dwarf (2)
- Dragon (up to 20 or more)
- Lucky boat (2)
- Oyster Fairies (as many as you want)
- Musicians (at least five)
- People with firecrackers, lanterns, or on stilts
- Martial arts groups

In Chinese communities and villages at Lunar New Year, lions are the most often seen, dancing in the streets. Depending on the area, other symbolic characters parade to bring luck and happiness for the new year.

In America, the most popular kind of lion is the Southern style. This is the one often mistakenly called a dragon. It has a big papier mache head with eyes, ears, and mouth that move, and is decorated in many colors with paint, pom-poms, and glitter. Its body, or "tail" is a long piece of cloth with layers of scallops and tassels. One person plays the head, and a second the tail. The lion dances at Chinese New Year and other festive occasions to the beat of a big drum and cymbals. Lion dancing is actually a form of martial arts; the musical rhythms are very special too, and must be learned from someone who knows them.
The lion follows his "teaser" a fat, happy character in a round papier mache mask, carrying a fan, who represents Mi To Fu, a Buddhist divinity who loved animals. Lion groups are often asked to dance in front of stores to bring luck and drive away evil spirits. People throw firecrackers which also drive off evil. The lion is thanked for his services with a red envelope of money.

Another kind of lion, seen much less often, and never on the streets is the Northern style. He looks much more like a real lion. Two people wear a long hairy costume with a fancy gold head. They do all kinds of acrobatic tricks, led by a small child who carries a large decorated ball.

Probably the reason that Chinese lions do not look very much like real lions to us is that there were no wild lions in China. The "lion" copied the little Peking dog called the Lion-dog.
A simple kind of home-made lion or dragon head can be made out of cardboard boxes, wire, tape, and paint. Materials needed:

- 2 cardboard boxes - one the size of a soda carton for quart bottles, and one a little larger
- bailing wire - uninsulated iron wire
- paper tape - the kind you have to wet
- paint and brushes
- small saw - the best is a little one called an "Alway" saw, which can be bought at a hardware store.
- extra cardboard for horns, eyes, tongue

Attach the boxes together with wire as in the drawing, by poking holes through the cardboard, and "sewing" with pieces of wire. This makes it strong.

Then, using the paper tape, tape all around the crack. Paper tape is best used by cutting pieces, dipping them quickly in water, then smoothing them on to the cardboard with a sponge or paper towel to absorb the extra water. If you wipe them with a wet sponge to moisten, you often wipe off the glue.
Add horns and eyes the same way. Cut them out from the extra cardboard with the small saw.

Horn (cut 2, 24" long)

Eye (cut 2, 8" long)

Sew them on with wire, tape with tape.

When everything is really dry - the next day - cut out the mouth with the saw. Also cut a hole inside the mouth so the kid who plays the head can see out. (see "front view", above)
Paint dragon. Traditional colors are green with red, white, black and yellow. Horns should be yellow. Around the mouth there should be a pattern like this:

![Pattern Diagram](image)

Paint the eyes last, because tradition says that when you "dot the dragon's eye", he comes to life.

Make a cloth tail of a long piece of decorated cloth, about one yard per child for little kids, more for older ones. Attach the tail to the back of the head with wire, or sew with string.

![Cloth Tail Diagram](image)

To perform, one kid carries a fireball on a stick to lead the dragon, one kid is under the head, and the rest of the class is under the cloth, holding on to it at one yard intervals. The dragon should serpentine around the entire auditorium. If you practice enough (practice with the cloth alone at first), the dragon can probably learn to go up on the stage and make a circle. This will be the biggest dragon your school has ever seen.
You can make a lion head using the same method. The cloth tail should be about 5 or 6 feet long.

Oyster fairies are traditionally part of the Chinese New Year Parade. They are girls dressed in long dresses, with big shells on their arms. They walk in the parade, opening and closing their shells. A simple shell can be made of two large pieces of cardboard, laced together at several places in the back, with wire handles added in front.
The lucky boat 船 (dry boat) represents the saying 一帆風順 (One sail, a favorable wind), which implies smooth sailing in the new year. The boat can be made with a frame like this:

![Frame diagram](image)

made of wood the thickness of yardsticks, but about 6 feet long, which you can buy at a lumber yard. The ends are wired and taped together, gently spread in the middle, and the two spacers of thicker wood are nailed in with tiny nails. Spacers should be about 18" long. The bottom of the boat is a decorated piece of cloth stapled onto the frame. The boat hangs from the shoulders of the child, sort of like suspenders. We tie sashes to the frame, crossing diagonally over the shoulders, and use another sash around the waist and spacer bar for stability. The rigging of the suspenders and the length of the cloth bottom depend on the size of the child, but is easy to figure out.

The boat should be played by a girl wearing a pretty costume and waving a red scarf. She should be followed by a person to represent the boatman, who rows with a single oar.

Chi Yeh 七 and Ba Yeh 八, the giant and the dwarf, are a charming and impressive addition to a parade. They are figures often seen in Taiwan, and represent friendship. The giant is not hard to make. Cut a large face and shoulders out of 1/4" plywood or "trivall" cardboard. Nail it to a stick at least 6 feet long, but do not try to use a broom stick, which
is too hard, and may split. Buy a piece of moulding such as "bull-nose" from a lumber yard. Also cut two hands about 1 foot long from plywood or cardboard.

Paint the face a fierce red, with slanted eyebrows - the model of a Chinese hero. (A red face indicates bravery). Decorate the helmet, and add pom-poms if possible. Add a cloth flap at the back, and glue on a full beard of black yarn.

The body is a large Chinese robe in a bright color with several feet of cloth added to the bottom and to the ends of the sleeves. It may be as plain or as fancy as you want. The hands are painted and stapled into the sleeves.

To play Chi Yeh a (large) kid gets under the robe and holds the pole up. Being able to see where he is going is usually not a problem - most cloth is quite transparent when viewed from the back. A little kid dressed in a similar costume walks holding the hand of the giant.
The parade should march around the auditorium, making lots of noise, and then cross the stage. As each group crosses the stage, a minute should be allowed for it to show off its special skill or appearance. The lion should do a lion dance, the lucky boat should float in a graceful circle, the troupe show its technique, etc. The musicians should sit on the edge of the stage playing loud rhythms as the other characters pass by.

In school it is usually forbidden to shoot firecrackers, and the sound of firecrackers on a taperecorder is very unsatisfactory. The best thing is to make as much racket as you can with rhythm sticks, small drums, pebbles in cans, etc. It is only the amount of noise which matters.

Simulated strings of giant firecrackers may be made of toilet paper rolls painted red, or rolled up red paper, sewed together and hung on a stick.
The real Chinese dragon has a head and a very long body carried on sticks. He follows a man carrying the firey pearl - a fireball on a stick. As many as 100 people are needed to play one of the really big dragons.

The dragon was the symbol of rain, of imperial power, and of masculinity. Lions and dragons are both played at festivals to bring good luck and to keep away evil spirits.
USING LARGE PROPS*

ACTING OUT SONGS AND POEMS

Singing songs or reciting poems is a popular assembly activity. Unfortunately, it is not always very interesting for the audience. Here is a way to make these simple presentations more exciting.

Pick a poem or a song which has a lot of visual images in it: mountains, clouds, sun, animals, ships... As part of the class sings or recites the words, the other students act it out, carrying large cardboard cut-outs of the images. Music may be added to make the presentation longer.

The simplest format is the pageant. That is, during the singing, the actors just parade across the stage, making simple movements with their props. With experience, one can add a little choreography: clouds can dance and sway, the sun can twirl, and so on. Later, one could advance to simple interpretive dancing in a modern style, or using traditional movements from the students' cultures. However, with flat props, the children must face the front at all times. This means they cannot circle, since then their backs are to the audience half the time.

*Prop - a theatrical property - anything carried by an actor.
This technique also frees us from several problems: how to make the scenery stand up, and what to do with all the children. By using giant props, we gain flexibility and creativity, as well as something for the shy child to do: hold a tree. Sometimes, the trees can move, while the actors are stationary.

Large props are easy to make, using cardboard from large boxes such as refrigerator, mattress, or bicycle cartons, or bought from a shipping supply company (in sizes up to 4' x 6'). Cut out the shapes with a small saw (Alway saw, about $2-) and paint them with tempa. Poke a few sets of holes, and make handles out of wire or heavy string. Most important is that the props are large (at least 2' x 2'), bright, and plentiful. Since they are flat, they are easier to make, store, and use on stage.

If you need an ocean to float your fish, ships, and monsters in, use the traditional Chinese representation of water. Two or more lengths of cloth are stretched on the floor from one side of the stage to the other, and waved up and down by kids holding the ends. People and props can sink or swim between the two pieces.
LOTUS CAN BE PICKED SOUTH OF THE RIVER
Lotus can be picked south of the river.
How green are the floating leaves!
Fish play among the leaves:
Fish play to the east of the leaves;
Fish play to the west of the leaves;
Fish play to the south of the leaves;
Fish play to the north of the leaves.

-Han Dynasty, anonymous
SEARCHING FOR THE RECLUSE IN VAIN
Under the pines, I asked the boy.
"My master is gathering herbs", he said,
"Somewhere on this mountain,
Unknown deep in the cloud."

-Jia Pao
PUTTING ON PLAYS

The following scripts are for children's plays. They were written and adapted by ARTS' staff and the class which first performed them from the original Chinese traditional materials.

In our style of children's theatre, there is far more emphasis on scenery, mime and dance than on acting per se. The scripts rely mainly on a narrator to carry the story. In the original performances there was very little live talking: the narration was taped by the children, together with the background music, and the dances and mime were acted out by the children following the tape. This technique takes a burden off small voices and short memories, and frees the children's energy for movement. We encourage teachers working with elementary school children in drama to think in terms of parades, pageants, tableaux, scenery, and casts of thousands to fill out a play and make it exciting to the audience. Just the bare lines of a script makes a poor show. Think of the Hollywood musicals of the '40s.

"The Legend of White Snake" is the most famous Chinese legend and a favorite Peking Opera. "The Monkey King" is one episode from the long novel "Journey to the West!" which tells how the mischievous Monkey King assisted in bringing the teachings of Buddhism to China. This beloved folk hero is featured in many operas, stories, movies, and other art forms.
Chinese Opera is a very wonderful form of theatre, involving acting, dancing, acrobatics, mime, music, and singing. The stories are simple, usually moral tales in which the good are rewarded and the evil punished. There is often a lot of excitement, with fighting and supernatural events. The costumes are very brilliant and fancy. Many parts are for "painted faces", using full face colored makeup. All gestures and movements are highly symbolic. It is said of opera, "Each sound is a song, each movement is a dance."

Much of the action is carried out in elaborate pantomime. For example, a boatman has no boat, but only an oar. He moves sideways around the stage, rowing from the stern of the imaginary boat. When someone jumps on his boat, he and that person bob up and down like a seesaw, to show that the boat is rocking.

Flags, about 2' by 2', are used a lot, to represent armies, or the ocean, or a chariot.

The stage is bare, except for a small table and two chairs draped in embroidered covers, and sometimes a "wedding curtain". Scenes shift rapidly into each other without a break. Characters usually enter from Stage Right, and exit Stage Left.
THE LEGEND OF WHITE SNAKE

List of Characters

Bai Su Jen, the White Snake
Shiau Ching, the Blue Snake, her maid
Shiu Shien, the Scholar
Fa Hai, the Abbot of Golden Mountain Temple
The Jade Emperor
Heavenly Soldiers and Spirits
Boatman
Immortal of the South Pole
Deer Spirit
Crane Spirit
Other Attendants
Sea Spirits
Monks

The Stage is set as for opera - bare, with a table upstage, center, flanked by two chairs. The table and chairs are covered in brightly embroidered cloth.
PROLOGUE

Narration: A long, long time ago, the Jade Emperor of Heaven was having a big party.

(Curtains open. Heavenly soldiers enter in pairs SR, circle the stage, line up on both sides of table, upstage, center. Jade Emperor enters SR with maids and attendents following, sits in front of table. Spirits enter SR, dance.)

Narration: Bai Su Jen, the White Snake, and Shiau Ching, the Blue Snake, after thousands of years of meditation, now have the power to transform themselves into any creature. In the form of beautiful girls, they attended the emperor's party.

(When the dance finishes, Blue and White Snake leave the group, wait on SR until other girls exit SL. Jade Emperor and attendents also exit.)

Blue: Sister Bai, we have been in heaven for many years. I am bored with the same thing happening every day. Why don't we go down to earth and find out what it's like down there?

White: Sister Ching, what you're saying is quite true. Let me open the clouds and have a look at the earth below.

(White and Blue mime looking down on earth. They look at each other; they are happy. Exit SL.)
Scene 1. Borrowing the umbrella by the lake.

Narration: White and Blue Snake left the party in Heaven. They arrive at West Lake in Hangjou, and are enjoying the beautiful view.

(White and Blue enter SR)

White: I left O-Mei Mountain and came to West Lake.

Blue: Sister, the view of West Lake is really beautiful.

Narration: All of a sudden it began to rain. White and Blue Snake didn't know what to do.

(White and Blue try to cover themselves with their hands from the rain, look around for shelter, and run to SL corner. They try to dry themselves under (imaginary) tree. Enter scholar SR, holding an umbrella and a fan, wandering in the rain, enjoying the view. He sees the two girls, walks to them and bows; they bow back.)

Scholar: Ladies, where do you want to go?

Blue: We want to go to the Chien-Tong gate.

Scholar: It's raining hard, please take my umbrella.
White: But what about yourself?

Scholar: It doesn't matter!

Blue: Why don't we all share the umbrella!

(The three get under the umbrella. Enter old man SR, rowing a boat.)

Scholar: There comes a boat. Let me escort you home. Boatman, please row your boat over here!

Old man: O.K.

(Old man rows to center; the three mime getting into boat, one at a time.)
Scholar: Please take these two ladies to the Chien Tong gate.

Old: Yes, sir.

(They mime being in a boat in a storm, circling the stage.)

Blue: Sister, look! The rain has stopped. West Lake looks even prettier now.

(Boat has arrived at shore; they get off. Blue does a magical gesture with her hand, and it starts to rain again.)

Blue: Oh dear, it's raining again. The umbrella...

Scholar: You two take it. I'll get it back another day.

White: I am embarrassed...

Scholar: Don't mention it...

White: Thank you very much.

Scholar: Not at all...

(White and Scholar are staring at each other, Blue smiles, then elbows White. White, suddenly shy, runs off SL. Blue smiles at scholar, exits SL.)
Scene 2. The wedding

Narration: Not long after that romantic meeting, the Scholar marries Bai Su Jen.

(Blue is decorating the room. Center, is the red wedding curtain, in front of it is a pair of red candles on the table. On one side of the curtain is the umbrella. Blue dances with the duster. Scholar and White enter SR. She is in red wedding costume, head also covered with a red veil. Scholar leads her by a wide red ribbon with a big bow in it. White holds the other end, but hangs back. When they reach the center, she stops; he pulls. Blue gestures to him to pull, and she will push. They do so. Scholar and White exit SL. Blue is happy, also exits.)

Scene 3. The Frightening Change

Narration: The scholar and Bai Su Jen were very happy after their marriage. One day, on Dragon Boat Festival, an old monk named Fa Hai came to visit the scholar.

(Scholar enters SL, sits, reading. Monk enters SR, walks to middle, pantomimes knocking at door.)

Monk: Is Master Shiu at home?
(Scholar walks to center, mimes opening door.)

Scholar: Why, it's the old master! Please come in.

(They step over threshold, and sit.)

Monk: I haven't seen you for such a long time. But... your face has an evil look! You must be haunted by an evil spirit.

Scholar: Where is this evil spirit?

Monk: It's right next to you.

Scholar: No, there is no evil spirit...

Monk: Your wife is actually a snake spirit. She married you to wait for the right time to eat you up.

Scholar: Is this true? What am I going to do?

Monk: Today is Dragon Boat Festival. Ask her to drink some Shiong Huang wine with you. You'll see what I mean. If there is any problem, you can find me at the Golden Mountain Temple. I must go now. Goodbye.
Scholar: Thank you very much, old master.

(They stand, bow, and mime opening door at center. Monk exit SR,)
(White and Blue enter SL.)

Scholar: My dear, you are already up...

White: Yes, have you eaten yet?

Scholar: I was drinking with a friend to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival. He wanted to toast you in a glass of Shiong Huang wine.

(He hands her a cup of wine. White and Blue glance at each other. Blue gestures for White to stop.)

White: I'm not feeling very well; I'd better not drink.

Scholar: You must drink a little.

Blue: She is not feeling well. She can't drink.

Scholar: I can take care of her. You can go now.

(Blue looks worried, exits SL.)

Scholar: Come. I'll drink first.
White: I...I...

(She drinks)

Scholar: You can drink! Have another.

White: No, no...

(He makes her drink again.)

White: Ching, Ching...

(She runs out, behind curtain.)

Scholar: She doesn't feel well; I made her drunk. Let me go and have a look.

(He starts to walk behind curtain. Suddenly, a big white snake pops out from the center. He is frightened, faints. White and Blue enter SL, help him get up and exit SL.)

Narration: White Snake and Blue Snake decide to up to the mountain to get the magic herb to cure the scholar.

Scene 4. Stealing the Herbs

(Deer Spirit and Crane Spirit enter SR, doing acrobatic and martial arts skills. Magic herb on table, center.) Deer and Crane: By our Master's order, we're guarding the magic herbs. Nothing will happen to them!
(They exit, SL. White and Blue enter SR.)

White: My husband saw me in my true snake form. This made him so ill he couldn't leave his bed. I must get the magic herb to cure my poor husband.

(Goes to center, starts to take herb. Deer and Crane enter SL, stop them.)

Deer: You demon! How dare you come to this fairy mountain?

White: I came to borrow the magic herb to cure my husband.

Crane: The magic herb belongs to this fairy mountain. How could we lend it to you?

(They fight. More spirits come to help Deer and Crane. White and Blue almost defeated. The Immortal of the South Pole enter SR, stands on table, center. Everyone kneels, facing Immortal.)
Immortal: How dare you come to this fairy mountain to steal the magic herbs?

White: Merciful Immortal, please save my husband. My own life is not important.

Immortal: I see that you really love him. I will give you some herb to cure your husband. You may leave the mountain.

White: Thank you very much, oh Immortal.

(White and Blue take the herbs from Immortal. They exit SR. The others exit SL.)

Scene 5. Golden Mountain Temple

Narration: White and Blue Snake took the herb, and returned home. They saved the scholar's life. But the Monk, Fa Hai, came to see the scholar again, and persuaded him to come to Golden Mountain Temple to protect him from White Snake.

(Monk and scholar enter SR, walk across, exit SL.)

Narration: White and Blue Snake decided to go up to the mountain to find the scholar.

(White and Blue enter SR, find a boat. Mime as before, getting on boat, rowing around stage.)
(Sea Spirits - shrimps, crabs, fish, lobsters - enter SL, doing acrobatic skills, Circle the boat.)
Spirits: Master, where are you going?

White: I am going to Golden Mountain Temple to find my husband.

Spirits: If you are in trouble, we can help you.

White: Wait underneath the water.

Spirits: We will.

(Spirits exit, SL.)

White: Sister Ching, hurry the boat!

(They row, arrive at shore, get off, wait SL corner. Monks and Fa Hai enter SR. Fa Hai sits on top of the table, monks line up on the sides. White walks center.)
White: Fa Hai! Return my husband!

Monk: Your husband is not here. Go look for him elsewhere!

White: Three days ago, my husband told me he was coming here? Please release him so we can be together again.

Monk: I will tell you the truth. Your husband has already become a monk in this temple. He cannot return home!

White: We have our vows. How can you separate us! Old Master, please spare him, let him go!

Monk: Evil Monster, say no more. You should return home. Take this.

(Monk throws his staff with a blue dragon head at White. White and Blue fight with the monks. They are outnumbered. Blue exits SR, enters with sea spirits. They carry square green flags, representing flood waters. Both groups fight. The monks win. Sea Spirits exit SL. White and Blue, defeated, kneel in front of Monk.)

Monk: Take these evil demons! Protect my holy temple!

Monks: Yes, sir.

Narration: So, White Snake and Blue Snake were imprisoned by the monk under Thunder Mountain for a long time. White Snake gave birth to a son by Shiu Shien the Scholar. Many years later, this boy was able to rescue her.
Narration: Once upon a time, in the Water Curtain Cave, on Flower Fruit Mountain, there lived many monkeys. Their Monkey King was very powerful and magical. He could travel 108,000 miles in a single cartwheel. He could transform himself into 72 different forms.

Scene 1. Water Curtain Cave

MK: Life in the Water Curtain Cave is wonderful. I can do many marvelous tricks! But I don't have a good weapon to practice with - that's really a bore!

(a monkey messenger enters Sr, and kneels to the king)

Messenger: Sir, the Ox Demon is here.
MK: Ask him in!

(Ox Demon enters SR, bows to MK; they sit)
Ox: It's such a fine day. Why don't we go outside and practice our martial arts skills?

MK: How can I practice, when I don't have a good weapon?

Ox: Why don't you get a weapon from the Dragon King of the Eastern Ocean?

MK: I don't know him very well. How can I ask him?

Ox: If you get into any trouble, I can always help you out from the shore.

MK: That's good! I'm leaving for the Eastern Ocean Palace!

(they exit SL)

Scene 2. Under the Eastern Ocean

(Daughters and maids of the Dragon King are playing and dancing in the Palace Garden)

Princess: What a bright clear day. The winds are calm, the waves are smooth. Truly a beautiful view!

(they play and dance)
Princess: It's getting late. Let's go back to the Palace.

(they exit SL)

Scene 3. The Palace of the Dragon King

(Shrimp and crab soldiers enter SR, and line up on each side of the throne. Dragon King sits on throne, center. Daughters enter SR, dance, line up. Shrimp soldier enters, SR. Kneels to DK)

SS: There is a skinny monkey outside, who says he is your close neighbor.
DK: I haven't got any close neighbors. Throw him out!

SS: Yes, sir.

(SS exits, SR, comes back again, followed by a turtle soldier.)

SS: My lord, what a powerful skinny monkey... he has forced his way into the palace!

DK: Send him in!

(MK enters SR, bows to DK, They sit.)

DK: My close neighbor!

MK: Great Dragon King!

DK: May I ask in which fairyland does my neighbor reside, and what is his honorable name?

MK: I am one of the spirits of the Heavenly Kingdom, living in the Water Curtain Cave, on the Flower Fruit Mountain. I am here to borrow a good weapon, so I can train my soldiers.

DK: The Master is here to borrow a weapon. Open the gate to the Weapon Room!

(SS open the gate. MK picks up a javelin)
MK: Not good enough!

(throws it away; picks up a steel fork.)

MK: What is this?

SS: That is a steel fork.

(MK tries it)

MK: No good.

(Throws it away)

SS: My Lord, he doesn't like any of them.

DK: Oh dear, oh dear...

Daughter: My Lord, there is a needle on the Eastern Sea Island, which calms the waves. It has been shining brightly these last few days. Maybe it is time to give it to this Master.

DK: That needle weighs 13,500 kilos. How could he lift it?

OK: Oh dear, oh dear...

MK: Dragon King, where is that magic wave-calming needle?

DK: It is on the Eastern Sea Island.

MK: Get it here and let me look at it.

DK: No one can carry it - you'll have to get it yourself.

MK: Oh! Turtle, you lead me there.

T: Follow me.

(T and MK walk around the stage)

T: Here we are on the Eastern Sea Island. Look!  
(shows weapon)

MK: Hmm, it looks good. But it's too big and thick. Let me change it a little.

(does spell; practices with weapon)

T: What happened to the wave calming needle? It's gone.

MK: This is not the wave calming needle. This is the Golden Ring Staff. It can be big or small. I'll put it behind my ear. Now, take me back to the Palace.
(they walk around stage again)

DK: Master, is it all right?

MK: It's all right.

DK: It's yours.

MK: Thank you, Dragon King. By the way, that crown that you're wearing. Can you lend me that too?

MK: Say no more! I'm not a simple monkey who can be pushed around.

DK: Neither am I! You're under arrest!

MK: Come and get me!

(MK exits SL)

DK: Follow that monkey!

(Soldiers line up, exit SL, following MK)

Scene 4. On the edge of the Eastern Ocean

(Ox Demon and monkeys enter SR, and do some acrobatic tricks. MK runs in SR, followed by DK and soldiers. Big fight. At the end, MK wins. DK takes off his crown and gives it to MK)

*If you want to try face painting, it is perfectly safe to use artists' acrylic thinned with water on faces. Red, black, and white are common on warriors, gold and green on spirits, and white blending to deep pink around the eyes for women.
THE ZODIAC RACE

List of Characters:
Jade Emperor/Empress (may be played by teacher)
Narrator (may read his part)
Animals:
  Dragon, Horse, Cat, Rat, Dog, Pig, Ox, Bear, Rabbit,
  Monkey, Rooster, Sheep, Tiger, Snake
Additional parts:
  Trees, sun, JE's attendants, clouds, river, Finish Line
  attendants, other animals

Setting: Countryside, a long time ago
Scene 1

(animals onstage, pushing and shoving)

N: Once a long time ago, all the animals on earth and in heaven were running around and being very bad, and fighting all the time. Each one wanted to be the leader.

Animals: Me first! No, me first! Stop shoving! C'mon, c'mon, let's fight! I hate you! You pushed me! Boo-hoo-hoo! Me first! What do you mean, I'm too little? You got in my way. You stepped on my foot! Do what I say or I'll hit you! Me first! (etc.)

N: The earth and the heaven were ruled by the Jade Emperor. He got very tired of listening to all the fighting and complaining, so he called all the animals together, and told them to shut up.

(JE appears, hands over ears; makes the animals line up.)

JE: Dear animals, I am sick of your fighting. I am going to have a contest to see which of you will be the leader. I will give twelve prizes. The prizes will be to have a year named after the winners, and to rule that year. So, every twelve years, each winner will have a chance to rule for a year. The contest will be to race around the world once. Are you ready? On your mark, get set, go!
N: And so, all the animals ran off to try to win the race.

(you may close the curtain at this point, with the animals all lined up to start, and then open it again for the following individual scenes. Or you may let the children "race" off the stage, around the auditorium, and back into one of the wing exits, then release them a group at a time for the individual scenes. All exits should be from one side, all entrances from the other, to give the idea of movement.)

Scene 2.

JE: Well, dragon, aren't you going to run?

D: Yes, sir, but I don't have to hurry. I can catch up. I just wanted to tell you an interesting story I heard from the King of the Eastern Ocean last week....

(they move to one side, and pantomime gossiping.)

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(enter pig)

P: Oh dear oh dear oh dear, which way do I go? I am so confused. Did they go that way? Or that way? (runs off the wrong way)

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Dog: (entering with bone) Wow! that was a yummy dinner. I love to eat! Now let me just hide this bone and save it for later.

(D puts bone down, and starts to look among the trees for a hiding place. Monkey, scratching and giggling, sneaks in and takes the bone. D comes back to look for it, and the monkey keeps hiding it in different places.

N: So the monkey tricked the dog, and they both wasted a lot of time. (exit D and M)

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N: The horse ran the fastest and thought she was going to win.

(horse prances around the stage. exit)

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N: In those days, the cat and the rat were best friends. (they enter)

C: Boy, we really ran fast!

R: I think we're ahead of everyone.

C: I'm so tired; I'm going to take a nap.

R: I'm not sleepy

C: Wake me up pretty soon, okay?
(they lie down; the cat sleeps; rat thinks for a little, then gets up and leaves)

R: Too bad for you. I want to win.

(The ox enters, plodding along, not tired and not hurrying.)

R: Hey, maybe I can hitch-hike! (they exit)

N: So, the rat jumped onto the ox's head, and hid behind his ear. He got a free ride.

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Bear: (entering) Yummy, yummy, yummy, good for the tummy... (rubs tummy; finds dog's bone, sits down to eat it. Stretches and yawns) I think I'll take a little nap.

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Rabbit: (entering) Hey, dragon, how come you haven't started yet?

D: Oh wow, it's late; I was just telling the Emperor some exciting stories. Gotta go, sir.

JE: Run along now, dragon.

R: Dragon, I'm so tired. Be a pal and carry me for a little bit. (exit)

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Sheep: (entering with tiger) Oh tiger, that was exciting—
we make such a good pair.

T: Sure, kid, we can really run.

S: Let's rest for a minute.

(They sit. T washes himself, licks his chops, and looks at
the sheep.)

T: Hey, kid, come over here. (S comes over) Kid, I think
I'm going to eat you up..

(S screams, and starts running around; tiger chases, roaring.)

Je: Tiger, tiger, shame on you! Do that again and I'll throw
you out of the race.

(tiger exits; sheep hides behind JE for a while; they exit)

(Sun appears; Rooster enters)

R: My, that sunlight turns me on! I feel like singing.
(pantomimes singing to a Chinese or American popular record.)

Snake: (entering) Hey, that music turns me on; I feel like
dancing. (dances)
N: So, while the rooster and the snake have a good time partying, the race goes on. (they exit) Now, it is nearly the end of the race. There is only one river to cross. On the other side is the finish line!

(Attendants bring out Finish Line and river - see page 20 for river method)
(The animals enter and act out the following scenes)

N: Look, here comes the horse; she is going to win! No, no she can't swim; she's in trouble in the river.
Here comes the ox - he's going to win! No, what's that? It's the rat! The rat jumped off the ox's head and is first! Ladies and gentlemen, the rat is number one! And the ox is second. Here comes the tiger for third place. Now, here comes the dragon; but look, he's carrying a rabbit. He will be number four. But look, folks, the dragon has stopped. He's helping the horse get out of the river - what a good sport! So the rabbit is number four, and the dragon is fifth. Here comes the snake for number six, and there goes the horse for number seven. The sheep is eighth, and the monkey is ninth. Next is the rooster for number ten, and the dog is number eleven. Who's coming next? Who will it be? It's the pig, for the last spot on the ticket!

P: Oh dear oh dear oh dear... Is this the right place?

(everyone cheers)

JE: Dear animals, line up to get your prizes. (to rat) You will be king of 1972, and 1984 and every twelve years after that. (JE calls each winner by name, and gives him a card with a year on it: 1973/1985 for the ox, etc.)

JE: Now that we have decided which animals will be the leaders, I hope that there will be peace in heaven. Go Home, dear friends. (animals begin to exit)

Cat: (wakes up under tree) What happened? Is the race over? What's going on? (sees rat) I'm going to get you, you cheat, you creep, you rat! (jumps off stage, chases rat around the auditorium)

THE END
"The Zodiac Race" was written by the class which first performed it in 1973, based on a traditional Chinese story explaining why each lunar year is assigned an animal symbol: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. These 'year animals', in the above order, were used as a pre-calendar method of keeping track of time in the rural villages of old China. The lunar year beginning on February 6, 1989, is the year of the Snake.