

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reproduce a Chinese Invention

The Chinese invented many things. Here are some Chinese inventions you can make.

MAKE A KITE

Kites were more than toys. They were very important tools in ancient China. Kites were used in construction. Materials were lifted with a kite. Kites were used in battles as well. Messages attached to kites were flown over enemy lines until they reached their allies, and then the lines were cut, and the kites and the messages fell to the soldiers below. Kites with hooks and bait were used for fishing. Kites were even fitted with whistles to make musical sounds while flying.

Listed below are simple directions for making a kite. While a kite made in this way may fly, it will not be very durable. The purpose is to make a very colorful kite that might be similar to one made by the ancient Chinese. Directions for more durable and more sophisticated kites can be found in craft books.

Materials:

- Large sheet of construction paper
- String
- Paint
- Tissue or crepe paper

Directions:

- Fold the construction paper in half.
- Cut out the shape of your kite. You might choose the shape of a butterfly, bird, or dragon.
- Color your kite with watercolors or finger paint.
- When dry, tie the string to one end and attach tissue paper scraps to make a tail.

MAKE A BALLOON ROCKET

The Chinese originally used gunpowder for fireworks, but then they developed rockets that could be used in war. The materials needed are common household items.

Materials:

- Balloon
- String
- Paper clip
- Tape
- Straw

Directions:

- Inflate the balloon and close the end with a paper clip.
- Carefully tape the straw to the side of the balloon.
- Thread the string through the straw, stretch the string straight, and then tie the ends of the string to two different chairs that are placed apart.
- Release the paper clip.
- Since the air inside the balloon pushes out in all directions, when the paper clip is removed the air escapes out the open end. As the air escapes in one direction, it will push the balloon in the opposite direction along the string.

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MAKE A COMPASS

The magnetic needle compass made sea navigation possible. While this invention revolutionized history, you can make one in a few minutes with materials you have around your house.

Materials:

- Needle
- Magnet
- Cup of water
- Tape
- Slice of cork
- Marking pen

Directions:

- Magnetize the needle by stroking one end of a magnet along the entire length of it about 20 or 30 times. Always stroke in the same direction.
- Tape the needle to a broad, flat cork, and float the cork in the cup of water. The needle will rotate until it's pointing in a North-South direction. Since you probably know which general direction is north, use the magic marker, to place a spot on the end of the needle that points to the north.

MAKE MOVEABLE TYPE

The Chinese invented printing with moveable type, which made it possible to publish books faster and cheaper. This was four hundred years before Gutenberg printed the Bible. Because of the complexity of Chinese writing, however, it was not widely used.

Materials needed to make a printing block:

- Sharp kitchen knife which should be used only under the supervision of the teacher
- One small, unpeeled potato
- Marking pen
- Paper
- Water
- Small sponge
- Tempera or acrylic paint
- Newspaper

Directions:

- The student or teacher should cut the potato in half.
- With the marker, draw your initials on the part of the potato you have just cut. Since the stamp will print backwards, make sure you draw your initials backwards.
- Either the student or teacher should cut away the potato around the initials you drew. Make sure the initials stick up about 1/4 inch.
- Dampen the sponge and then dip it in paint.
- Place the sponge on the newspaper, press your stamp against the sponge, and then press the stamp against your paper. Your initials should be printed. It may be necessary to recarve part of your initials if they are not quite right.