One new moon, many celebrations

Reading for Years 3 to 6. Lunar New Year in China, Korea and Vietnam.

Lunar New Year begins with the new moon that starts the first month of the lunar calendar. In 2027 that is Saturday 6 February. Families in many countries, and in communities all over the world, celebrate it in their own ways.

China

In China it is called the Spring Festival. Before the day, families clean their homes and put up red decorations, because red stands for good luck. On New Year's Eve, family members travel home for a big reunion dinner. Children are given red envelopes with money inside. There are lion dances in the streets, and the celebrations end fifteen days later with the Lantern Festival.

Korea

In Korea, Lunar New Year's Day is called Seollal. Many families wear hanbok, Korea's traditional clothing. Younger family members give a deep New Year's bow, called sebae, to their elders, and everyone eats tteokguk, a soup of thin, coin-shaped rice cakes. Families play games such as yutnori, a board game with four sticks, and children fly kites.

Vietnam

In Vietnam the festival is called Tet. Families clean their homes and decorate them with peach or apricot blossom and little kumquat trees. A favourite food is banh chung, a square cake of sticky rice, mung beans and pork wrapped in leaves. Children receive lucky money in red envelopes.

In New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, many cities hold Lunar New Year festivals with lanterns, markets, music and dancing. Every family celebrates in its own way, so if someone in your class celebrates, they are the best person to ask.

Words to know

reunion
a time when a family comes together again

hanbok
traditional Korean clothing

elders
the older people in a family

kumquat
a small orange fruit that grows on a little tree

Sources: Royal Museums Greenwich; VisitKorea and Korea.net (Korea); Vietnam Tourism, vietnam.travel (Vietnam).

One new moon: compare and answer

Use the reading text to fill in the table, then answer the questions.

Name _____ Date _____

Country	What it is called	A food	Something people do
China			
Korea			
Vietnam			

1. What is Lunar New Year called in Korea?

2. Why do families in China put up red decorations?

3. What is sebae?

4. Name one thing families in China and Vietnam both do.

5. Which festival ends the celebrations in China, and how many days later?

6. Why does the last paragraph say a classmate is the best person to ask?

Answers: One new moon, many celebrations

Country	What it is called	A food	Something people do
China	Spring Festival	reunion dinner	red envelopes, lion dances
Korea	Seollal	tteokguk (rice cake soup)	sebae bow, yutnori, kites
Vietnam	Tet	banh chung (sticky rice cake)	blossom and kumquat trees, lucky money

1. What is Lunar New Year called in Korea?

Seollal

2. Why do families in China put up red decorations?

Red stands for good luck.

3. What is sebae?

A deep New Year's bow that younger family members give to their elders in Korea.

4. Name one thing families in China and Vietnam both do.

Clean their homes, or give children money in red envelopes.

5. Which festival ends the celebrations in China, and how many days later?

The Lantern Festival, fifteen days later

6. Why does the last paragraph say a classmate is the best person to ask?

Every family celebrates in its own way, so they know how their family does it.