

Kite Program – Kites from Ancient China

(Target Audience: All ages)

Kites were probably invented in China. The first ever mention of them is in the following story, which is over 2000 years old:

Long ago there was a General named Han Hsin who wanted to overthrow a wicked and powerful Emperor in battle. He was a small man and had hardly any soldiers, but he was very clever. He tied himself to a kite and flew over the Emperor's palace at night, shouting out to the soldiers below that they would lose the battle. They couldn't see who was speaking to them and were terrified. The next day the brave little General was able to win easily as most of the Emperor's soldiers had run away home!

Another, more probable, version of Han Hsin's story is that he flew the kite (without being attached to it) over the Emperor's palace and marked the length of the string. Then his soldiers dug a tunnel to exactly the same length under the palace walls and into the courtyard and used that tunnel to launch a surprise attack in the night.

At first, it appears that Chinese kites were used mainly for military purposes, but they began to be flown for fun during the Song dynasty (AD 960-1126). Soon festivals were organized to show off flying skills. Kites were also flown for religious reasons, as they are seen to connect heaven and earth.

Activities

Read a story about kites and talk about the history of kite building in China. Below are only some suggestions for books. Use whatever books you own that fit the theme. Then build a kite using directions from a book about building kites or a web site (use Google to search under making kites).

Kite Stories:

- *The Moon Dragon* written by Moira Miller; illustrated by Ian Deuchar.
- *The Emperor and the Kite* written by Jane Yolen; illustrated by Ed Young.
- *The Story of Kites* written by Ying Chang Compestine; illustrated by Yong Sheng Xuan.
- *The Warlord's Kites* written by Virginia Walton Pilegard; illustrated by Nicolas Debon.
- *The Most Beautiful Kite in the World* written by Andrea Spalding, illustrated by Leslie Watts
- *Kite Building Books: Fun with Kites: 10 Exciting Designs with Easy Instructions* written by John and Kate Dyson
- *The Magnificent Book of Kites; Explorations in Design, Construction, Enjoyment & Flight* written by Maxwell Eden
- *Step-By-Step Making Kites* written by David Michael; illustrated by Jim Robins.
- *The Great Kite Book* written by Norman Schmidt.

Decorative Kites:

Materials needed:

- Coloured Construction Paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- String or Yarn
- Ribbon
- Crayons or Markers
- Tape

1. Draw a kite pattern (elongated diamond shape) onto colourful construction paper.
2. Cut out the kite.
3. Draw or cut out decorations for your kite.
4. Glue decorations to the kite and allow time to dry.
5. On the back side of the kite, glue string or yarn to bottom point. Let dry. Add a piece of tape to make extra strong.
6. Make a tail by tying a small ribbon roughly every 10 cm along the length of string.
7. Hang on a door, or around your room. Make several and hang them in your program room