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Introduction

Radical Families Card Games

Based on the traditional Happy Families card game, each of the five Radical Families card decks teach children to recognise, pronounce and write 8 commonly used characters. Each family consists of: a character card, a mnemonic card, a stroke order card and a pronunciation card.

What is the Radical Families Activity Pack?

The accompanying Activity Pack consolidates and extends language learning beyond the game. The 10 photocopiable activities develop:

- the ability to use stories or visual mnemonics to help with remembering character meaning;
- recognition and pronunciation of up to 40 single-character words;
- recognition and pronunciation of an additional 20 two-character words;
- the ability to ask and answer the question: Do you have...?
- an understanding that most Chinese words are formed with more than one character;
- the ability to work out the meaning of unknown two-character words by using knowledge of 40 basic characters;
- an understanding of the main characteristics of a Chinese fable;
- the ability to retell well-known Chinese fables.

The pack includes a variety of activities from reading puzzles to writing fables. There are opportunities for children to work alone, in small groups or as a whole class. Activities can be used as a series or as standalone lessons.

Who is it for?

The Activity Pack is designed for specialist and non-specialist primary teachers. Background information and clear step-by-step teaching notes are included to guarantee a quality lesson every time.

Activities have been extensively trialled in classes of 7–11-year-olds. Where appropriate, differentiated versions of worksheets are included. Each activity has an extension task and a link to a relevant IT based resource.

YCT (Youth Chinese Test) compatible

To help schools working towards YCT, more than 25 characters from Level 1 appear across the 10 activities.

Cross Curricular Links

There are clear links with UK primary English curricula. Children learn about the main features of Chinese fables and compare the main characteristics with fables they already know (3.7). There is an extended writing activity (3.10) where children plan and write their own version of a fable. Learning about the strict rules for writing Chinese characters (3.6) gives children opportunities to compare character and letter handwriting practises. Activities 3.8 and 3.9 focus on Chinese word formation and children can compare how words are formed in Chinese with what they know about word formation in English.

Character	Meaning	How do I say it?	Memory hook
鱼		yú (you)	
羊		yáng (yes/bang)	羊
马		mǎ (more/are)	
鸟		niǎo (need/meow)	鸟
羽		yǔ (you)	
虫		chóng (chin/song)	
毛		máo (more/owl)	毛
牛		niú (need/leo)	牛

3.9 Using What You Know – Making New Words

LOs:

- Know that some Chinese words are made up of two characters.
- Use knowledge of 25 commonly used characters to work out the meaning of 18 new words.

ACTIVITY TYPE

reading puzzle

LOGISTICS

Individual / pair

SKILLS

KAL

reading

writing

speaking

listening

VOCAB FOCUS

女王	王子	人鱼
火山	小雨	大雨
一月	十月	毛虫
大门	小羊	小牛
小马	口水	大人
水手	火车	大刀

TIME

40 mins

MATERIALS

a copy of the Word Detectives worksheet per child, Radical Families ppt.

Before Class

- Make a copy of the Word Detectives worksheet for each child (two versions are available – one with and one without Chinese character definitions).

In class

1. Give each pupil a worksheet and ask them to look at the chart at the top of the page.
2. Tell them to write English definitions for each character.
3. Correct collectively using slide 60 of the Radical Families ppt.
4. Draw children's attention to the table under the grid and explain the activity by example. Tell the pupils they are going to have a go at writing 18 new words using the grid references to help them. Say 1B and allow them time to find the character. Write 小 small on the board. Repeat the procedure for 4A and write 羊 sheep to the right of 小. Explain that the English definition for this new word is one of the words in the box at the bottom of the sheet. Discuss how the literal meanings of these two characters makes it easy to choose the correct definition of this new word: small + sheep = lamb.
5. Pupils work individually or in pairs to write and work out the meaning of the remaining words.
6. Circulate to monitor and help.
7. Correct the activity collectively (see slide 61).
Note:耳 ear is the unused character from the grid.

Extend

- Use MDGB the online dictionary to check your answers. At the same time as checking your words, listen to their pronunciation.

Are you able to mimic the pronunciation of any words?

Are any words easier to pronounce than others?

Correct collectively and encourage children to feedback on how they found the pronunciation of the two-character words.

Links

- [Online Chinese Dictionary - MDGB](#)

3.6 Writing Practice

Squares

- When you write a character, imagine writing it inside a square (see link below for free printable squared paper). It's thought that characters look more beautiful if they are evenly spaced, fit into equal sized squares and look symmetrical.
- Printable Character Writing Practice Paper

Stroke order

- The order in which you write the strokes of a Chinese character is important as it can help learners memorise characters more easily (a bit like cursive writing in English can help children with spelling).
- Primary aged children should have an awareness of stroke order and try to follow the two general rules:
 1. Write top to bottom.
 2. Write left to right.
- These rules don't apply to all characters but are detailed enough for now.
- For more information visit: [Chinese Stroke Order Rules - Skritter](#)

3.7 Using What You Know - Fix the Fables

Fable 1: Catching the Moon

- Huǒ jiā pronounced **loch/war** - **jeep/yak** (pronounce coloured letters only)

Fable 2: Chasing the Sun

- Kuā fù pronounced **come/quack** - **fat/moo** (pronounce coloured letters only)

3.8 Using What You Know – Big and Small

Characters for big and small

- The ancient and modern characters for big 大 are like a person standing with two hands and feet apart:



Pronunciation of big = **dà** (**door/are**)

- The character for small 小 originally comprised of three small marks, symbolizing grains of sand or tiny things:



Pronunciation of small = **xiǎo** (**ship/meow**)

How many characters make a word?

- Most Chinese words are made up of two characters.

Two-character words beginning with big or small

大海	ocean	大家	everyone	大象	elephant
大水	flood	大力	energetically	大风	gale
大门	entrance	小妹	younger sister	小猫	kitten
小吃	snack	小鸡	chick	小时	hour
小学	primary school	小狗	puppy	小孩	child