

WHEN IS
SEVENTH EVE ON
THE GREGORIAN
CALENDAR?

2006: AUG 30TH
2007: AUG 19TH
2008: AUG 7TH
2009: AUG 26TH
2010: AUG 16TH

SEVENTH EVE

Seventh Eve (Qi Xi Jie) is a day dedicated to love in China. The tradition originated from ancient folklore involving a story about a young cowherd (Niulang) and a weaving maiden (Zhinü), who fell madly in love only to be cruelly separated . . . and then reunited only once a year.

THIS ROMANTIC FESTIVAL—
EQUIVALENT TO THE WEST'S VALENTINE'S DAY—
IS CELEBRATED ON THE
7TH DAY OF THE 7TH LUNAR MONTH,
AND IS ALSO KNOWN AS
DOUBLE SEVENTH DAY,
DAUGHTER'S DAY,
SEVEN SISTERS FESTIVAL,
OR SEVEN-SEVEN.

According to the story, the seven daughters of the Goddess of Heaven were bathing in a river during one of their visits to Earth, when Zhinü (the seventh daughter of the Sun God of Heaven) caught the eye of Niulang. Since the cowherd had seen the maiden daughter Zhinü naked, according to the rules they had to be married.

The couple lived happily for several years and bore several children. But soon, the Queen Mother of the Western Heavens decided to punish them for neglecting their duties as herder and weaver and used a silver hairpin to create the Milky Way to separate them.

However, legend has it that on the seventh night of the seventh moon, magpies open their wings to form a bridge for Zhinü to cross over and be with her husband. It's a bittersweet reason to celebrate!

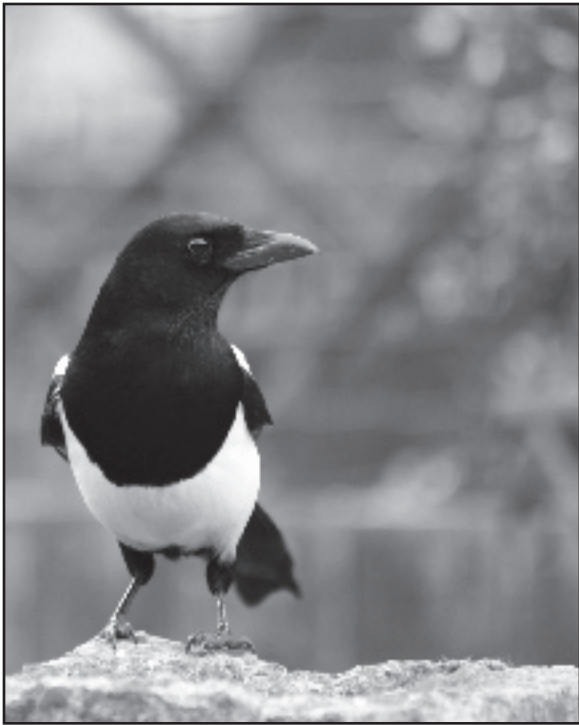
In the past, groups of women called the "Seven Sisters' Association" would build colorful paper shrines or towers



with fresh fruit and flowers in honor of Zhinü. While this does not occur as often today, many traditional Seventh Eve activities are still practiced in parts of China. Unlike our Valentine's Day, the Chinese do not give flowers, chocolates and cards to each other on this day.

Instead, girls of all ages celebrate this "Daughter's Day", sharing secrets, wondering about their future marriages, dressing in new clothes and engaging in Praying-for-Cleverness Ceremonies. Some test their talent at threading needles and sit under grape vines to hear the whispering of the two lovers.

Chinese grandparents will remind their grandchildren that if the sky is clear, no magpie birds will be found—



they have all gone to build the bridge for the Cowherd and the Weaver to meet. In the past, some Chinese people regarded the magpie as a sacred bird. It was also a royal bird for the Manchu rulers.

In years past, people enjoyed foods featuring fruits and round cakes during this time, particularly the qiao fruit (巧

meaning skillful). The qiao fruit is known as the red bayberry fruit (or strawberry fruit sometimes) in English. The bayberry is a native forest tree in China and provides fruit for food and medicine as well as ground cover.

People sit outside on this night, often enjoying a meal and placing fruits, melons, incense and candies on the table. If it is a clear night, star gazers look east of the Milky Way for Vega (representing Zhinü) and west for the star Altair (Niulang awaiting his love).

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SEVENTH EVE



SECTION ACTIVITIES

- #1, Needle Threading Games, page 31

Activity 1: Needle Threading Games

SPEED THREADING

Directions:

1. Determine how many needles you will thread. Arrange them in order of largest eye (hole of needle) to smallest eye if using needles with different size eyes. The smaller the eyes, the more challenging the game. (Seven is a lucky number and is often used as the number of needles in threading games.) You can give each player her own needles or you can share needles and take turns timing.
2. Cut 12" lengths of thread. You will need the same number of lengths as needles times the number of players. (For example, if you have seven needles and three players, you will need 21 lengths of thread, seven for each player.)
3. Give each player the needed lengths of thread.
4. On your mark, get set, go! If you have enough needles for everyone, race to see who can thread all the needles first. If you are taking turns, time each person while threading the needles and compare times.

THREAD THE NEEDLE GAME

This game is not Chinese (at least not exclusively) and does not include using real needles. It is an old folk game.

To play, you need to have at least 3 or 4 players, but you can have as many as you want. Two people stand facing each other and create an arch with their hands above their heads. If you have a lot of people, you can have everyone line up in two lines and create a long arch. Then one person (or the last pair in the line) run or even crawl through the arch (the needle's eye) to the front and then take a place at the front, making an arch. Continue until everyone had gone through the arch. You can enjoy this game to music, outside through sprinklers or on your hands and knees for fun.

HOW TO THREAD A NEEDLE

Sometimes threading a needle isn't as easy as it looks, particularly for younger children. Here are some tips that can help.

1. Cut the thread with a pair of scissors at a 45-degree angle. You might not be able to see the angle, but it can make a difference.
2. Put a white background behind the needle by holding the needle in front of a sheet of paper or index card (or anything white). The contrast helps you see the eye of the needle better.
3. Use moisture. Yep, there is a reason you see people licking that thread or putting it in their mouths—it works! The moisture makes the thread stiffer and holds together any frayed ends. You can also run the thread a bit in your hands or use beeswax if you would rather not put it in your mouth.

✂ Supplies:
Various sewing needles (different eye sizes will make the game more interesting)
Sewing or embroidery thread
Timer or watch
Pencil and scratch paper

🕒 Time:
15+ min.

✓ Discipline:
Traditions & Heritage

✎ Skills:
Kinetic

Relevant pages:
Seventh Eve, pages 6-7.
Cowherd and the Weaver, pages 8-10.

Age Adaptations:

- For younger children, you will want to use needles with large eyes, such as darning or tapestry needles. These needles also have blunt, not sharp, points.

