

# Nian: The Monster of Lunar New Year

Once upon a time, long, long ago there lived a monster in China called the Nian. He lived under the sea in a cave and slept most of the year. He only awoke for one day each year, the last day before the lunar New Year began. Then the warmer weather woke him and he arose from the sea, hungry and ferocious.

Nian was a man-eater and he would come to the villages of China each year on the same night to devour people and wreck the houses. Many had tried to battle with the mighty Nian, many had tried and all had failed.

The villagers of one particular place were so terrified that every year they fled to the hills to try to escape the wrath of Nian.

One year, on the eve of the lunar New Year an old traveller came to the village. He was bent and weary from his travels and he desperately wanted food and lodging.

He went to the door of a house to beg for the food but the woman inside just turned him away. She had no time for beggars, she was packing food and preparing for the move up to the mountain.

The old man tried to ask a young girl on the street for

help next but she was too busy as well. She had to find her brothers and sisters and start the long walk up the mountain to escape the monster.

The only person who paid the old man any notice at all was an old woman. She was sweeping outside her house when she saw the weary traveller and realised that he needed food. She walked inside and returned to the man with a bowl of noodles.

While the old traveller ate he sat and watched the villagers running about.

He asked what all the fuss was about and the woman explained that the Nian was coming that night and the villagers were going to hide in the hills to ensure that their village was overlooked by the monster.

The woman looked worried and the old man asked her why. The old woman didn't think she'd be able to make the trip to the hills that year – her bones were old and she was weary.

The old man smiled to himself. He knew how to repay the old woman's kindness.



1. **Find** and **copy** the word that tells you that the old traveller is feeling weak and exhausted.

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2. Why are the first two people that the old traveller speaks to unwilling to help him?

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3. Why do you think that the old woman decided to help the old traveller?

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4. *'The old man smiled to himself. He knew how to repay the old woman's kindness.'* What do you think the old man is thinking of doing?

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# Nian: The Monster of Lunar New Year Answers

1. Find and copy the word that tells you that the old traveller is feeling weak and exhausted.  
**weary**
2. Why are the first two people that the old traveller speaks to unwilling to help him?  
**The first woman had no time for beggars as she was packing food and preparing to move up the mountain. The young girl on the street was also too busy – she needed to find her brothers and sisters so they could all escape the monster.**
3. Why do you think that the old woman decided to help the old traveller?  
**Accept reference to:**
  - **she noticed how weak he looked and felt concerned that he needed food or he would become ill.**
  - **she was a similar age to him and felt compassion for his situation.**
4. *'The old man smiled to himself. He knew how to repay the old woman's kindness.'*  
What do you think the old man is thinking of doing?  
**Accept predictions that refer back to what has been read so far:**
  - **he will help the old woman on her journey up the mountain.**
  - **he will find a way of stopping Nian so that the villagers no longer have to fear the monster.**