

# The Nian Monster



**Chinese New Year (Or Any Time of Year) Event Kit**

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## ABOUT THE KIT

Use this kit to celebrate Chinese New Year or Chinese culture any time of the year. It will work well in an early childhood or elementary classroom, library, or bookstore or at a child's party or play date. Best for ages 4-8.



In the picture book **The Nian Monster**, the creature of Chinese legend appears in modern Shanghai ready to devour the city. First, though, he plans to eat young Xingling! No worries, Xingling has a plan. She will feed the monster three Chinese New Year culinary delights to keep him too distracted and full to eat either her or the city.

This kit gives you all the materials to create a Nian Monster Mask so that one of your colleagues can play the hungry Nian Monster with a wide-open mouth. The kit also turns your audience into clever Xinglings, each equipped with a paper bag of "food" to "feed" the Nian Monster. In the end, the paper bag serves as a noisemaker to send Nian Monster away for good.

An included craft allows your readers to make a Nian Monster Origami Bookmark whose open mouth can chomp down on the corner of a book to mark the page.

The kit contains:

- Nian Monster Mask template
- Nian Monster Protection Kit labels and ideas for contents
- Nian Monster script to include a speaking Nian Monster and active Xinglings
- Nian Monster Origami Bookmark template
- Poster and copy to share your event
- Suggested preparation & dialogue

## OTHER RESOURCES

CuriousCityDPW.com has many other free kits and ideas for engaging children more deeply with the literature created for them.

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

### The Nian Monster

By Andrea Wang

Illustrated by Alina Chau

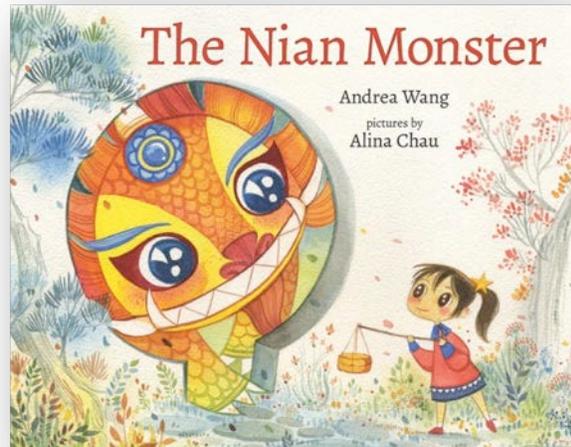
Published by Albert Whitman & Company

ISBN-13: 9780807556429

Lexile: AD450L

Age Range: 4 - 8 Years

*Tong tong!* The legendary Nian monster has returned at Chinese New Year. With horns, scales, and wide, wicked jaws, Nian is intent on devouring Shanghai, starting with Xingling! The old tricks to keep him away don't work on Nian anymore, but Xingling is clever. Will her quick thinking be enough to save the city from the Nian Monster?



“Wang’s story thrills but doesn’t threaten: Chau’s wonderfully vivid watercolors give the monster doe eyes and a round body that make him seem like a cranky, overgrown teddy bear, and Wang shares cultural information about the Chinese New Year with the lightest of touches.” —*Publishers Weekly*, **Starred Review**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

As a child, **Andrea Wang** made dumplings and took baths with orange peels to prepare for Chinese New Year. When not traveling, she lives in Colorado with her husband, two children, and a dog named Mochi. This is her first picture book. Explore more at [AndreaYWang.com](http://AndreaYWang.com).

**Alina Chau** received her MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. She spent over a decade working in the animation industry. She currently develops her own illustration projects and lives in California. Explore more at [AlinaChau.com](http://AlinaChau.com).

## PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

You will, of course, create your own grand program or lesson plan! The following are simply suggested ways to prepare for an event or classroom experience.

\_\_\_ Locate a copy of the picture book **The Nian Monster** by Andrea Wang and illustrated by Alina Chau (Albert Whitman & Company).

\_\_\_ If you list your events in newsletters and online calendars, here is some text that may help with those listings:

*Ai ya!* The Nian Monster has returned to Shanghai and he plans to devour the city! Don't worry; young Xingling has a plan to distract Nian Monster with Chinese New Year's many culinary delights. We'll be reading the picture book **The Nian Monster** by Andrea Wang and illustrated by Alina Chau (Albert Whitman & Company). Nian Monster might make an appearance, but we will have all the right foods to keep him busy. All welcome, but best for ages 4-8.

There is a book trailer on YouTube, which could be part of your outreach for this event.

\_\_\_ If this event is for the public, print out the event poster (page 9), add your date, time, and location, and duplicate it to advertise the event. If you prefer to adapt the poster on your computer, you can find a JPEG of the poster design on CuriousCityDPW.com. Simply search for "nian" and navigate to the Event Kit listing. The fonts on the poster are Palatino and Archetype.

## MAKING A NIAN MONSTER MASK

In this Chinese New Year (or any time of year) tale, Nian Monster is a larger-than-life character. His repeated threat to "devour the city tomorrow" is rendered almost charming by his "cranky, overgrown teddy bear" (*Publishers Weekly*) appearance. You can make your read aloud (and thus Nian Monster) come alive by creating a large Nian Monster Mask for a colleague to wear.

The mouth of the mask will be wide open so that your readers can "feed" him during your read aloud.



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## MAKING A NIAN MONSTER MASK (cont.)

You can see a slideshow of making the mask at [CuriousCityDPW.com](http://CuriousCityDPW.com). Simply search for “nian” and navigate to the Event Kit listing.

\_\_\_ Locate a piece of 22” x 28” poster board. Use foam core if you want a reusable or extra sturdy mask.

\_\_\_ Gather scissors, a glue stick, and masking, packing, or duct tape. (If you are using foam core, you will need a craft cutting knife.)

\_\_\_ Print out the Nian Monster Mask (pages 10-15) on card stock or regular paper. This is a six-page PDF that when assembled makes a 25” wide mask.

\_\_\_ On the individual pages, cut along the straight black lines to remove the margins.

\_\_\_ Lay out and attach the pages. Pages 1, 2, and 3 make up the top horizontal portion of the larger image. Put a line of glue on the right margin of page 1 and the left margin of page 3. Place page 2 between pages 1 and 3. Lay page 2 over the margins of 1 and 3. You should now have one long horizontal image.

\_\_\_ Repeat this sequence with pages 4, 5, and 6.

\_\_\_ Run your glue stick along the bottom margin of the joined pages 1, 2, and 3. Place the joined pages 4, 5, and 6 over that margin to complete the image. Hello, Nian Monster!

\_\_\_ You will want Nian Monster’s mouth cut out so your readers can “feed” him. Cut out the interior of the mouth. Take away his tongue and throat and leave behind his “sharper than swords” teeth.

\_\_\_ Eventually, the Nian Monster connected sheets will be glued to the poster board to make the mask more stable. Lay the Nian Monster connected sheets on top of the poster board and sketch out an oval to be cut into the poster board. This oval should be in line with Nian’s “lips.” Cut out that oval to allow for the open mouth and overlapping teeth.

\_\_\_ Color in the Nian Monster.

\_\_\_ Glue the Nian Monster connected sheets to the poster board. You will want to, of course, place the open mouth over the cut-out oval.

\_\_\_ Cut out the outside contours of the Nian Monster.

\_\_\_ From the scraps, create two strips that are about 1.5” wide x 6.5” long.

## MAKING A NIAN MONSTER MASK (cont.)

\_\_\_ With a piece of cloth or paper, cover the backside of the mouth opening. Attach it only on the top so that it blocks the person behind the mask, but allows for an open flap to “feed” the monster.

\_\_\_ Tape the strips to the back left and right sides of Nian’s head to create curved handles. You are creating handholds that will allow your colleague to hold the Nian mask in front of his or her face. Experiment with the handholds until the placement feels comfortable.

## PREPARE YOUR NIAN MONSTER & XINGLINGS



At this event, one of your colleagues gets to play Nian Monster, and all of the children get to play the part of Xingling.

Your Xinglings will be given a “Nian Monster Protection Kit” when they arrive at the event. These will be paper lunch bags containing one of Xingling’s foods. Some will have cream-colored yarn (for noodles), toy plastic fish (for milkfish), and dry rice cakes (for sticky rice cakes). In the end (if you choose), the bags can be crumbled at the neck, filled with air, and slapped to create the sound of the exploding fireworks that

finally send Nian Monster away.

\_\_\_ Enlist someone to play Nian Monster. Provide them with the Nian Monster Script (pages 16-18). Your Nian Monster may not have to memorize his or her lines. The script *could* be able to be attached to the back of the Nian Monster Mask!

\_\_\_ Have your colleague take a look at the illustrations of Nian Monster. When they are playing the creature, their legs will show. What can they wear that looks a *little* like Nian’s legs?

\_\_\_ Estimate how many participants you will have at the event. Each reader will get a lunch bag with either yarn, fish, or a rice cake inside. Locate a package of paper lunch bags, a skein of cream-colored yarn, a packet of toy plastic fish (suggestion: vinyl goldfish - 144 pieces - assorted colors - 1 3/4 inch at Amazon), and several packages of common grocery store rice cakes.

\_\_\_ Print out the Nian Monster Protection Kit labels (page 19) and affix them with glue to the bottom front of the bags.

\_\_\_ Fill the bags. We suggest 2 feet of yarn for the noodle bags, 2 plastic fish for the milkfish bags, and one dried rice cake for the sticky rice cake bag. Make sure you have roughly equal numbers of each bag.

## PREPARE YOUR NIAN MONSTER & XINGLINGS (cont.)

\_\_\_ Prepare yourself to encourage your readers to “feed” Nian Monster by reviewing the Nian Monster Script (pages 16-18).

\_\_\_ Locate a chair with no arms for Nian Monster. It is best if that chair has a back with no open spaces (but any straight-back chair will do). Nian will place this chair with its back facing the audience and sit straddling the back of the chair. This will hide much of Nian’s human body!

\_\_\_ Locate a lightweight large bowl for Nian to keep in his or her lap. This bowl will catch the “food” that the Xinglings will feed the monster.

## OTHER EVENT ELEMENTS

\_\_\_ Will you play music as your readers arrive? Find a selection.

\_\_\_ Will you serve food at your event? Look to the book for inspiration!

\_\_\_ Will you decorate your space? The book opens with Xingling and her grandmother decorating. What kind of celebratory atmosphere can you create?

## MAKING NIAN MONSTER ORIGAMI

Nian Monster has both a prominent mouth and a prominent appetite! A craft has been created for the book that allows readers to create a Nian Monster Origami Bookmark. The creation of the monster bookmark will allow your readers to bite into other great books about Chinese culture.

\_\_\_ Look over the three-page Nian Monster Origami Bookmark instructions and templates (pages 20-22) and watch the Nian Monster Origami Bookmark video located on the Fiction page of [AndreaYWang.com](http://AndreaYWang.com).

\_\_\_ Decide what you would like to prep for your readers. Will you pre-cut the origami paper? Will you pre-cut the mouth and mane? Print and cut what you will need for each of your readers to make a bookmark.

\_\_\_ Gather crayons or colored pencils, glue sticks, and scissors (if you have not pre-cut the pieces) for the day of the event.

## SETTING UP THE DAY OF THE EVENT

\_\_\_ Get your Nian Monster chair, bowl and mask in position beside where you will read aloud.

\_\_\_ Set up a table with the Nian Monster Protection Kits. Separate them by type.

## SETTING UP THE DAY OF THE EVENT (cont.)

\_\_\_ Set up your craft table with Nian Monster Origami paper, Nian Monster cut-out mouths and manes, Nian Monster Origami Bookmark instructions, crayons or colored pencils, glue sticks, and scissors (if you have not pre-cut the pieces).

## EVENT ACTIVITIES

\_\_\_ As your readers arrive, give them each a Nian Monster Protection Kit. Let them know that while they will meet a monster in today's story, the contents of their bag will keep them safe from the monster.

Give a noodle bag to the first reader to arrive, a fish bag to the second arriving reader, and a rice cake to the third reader. Repeat! If you do it this way, you will get a few of each type in the event crowd.

\_\_\_ Read the picture book **The Nian Monster** by Andrea Wang and illustrated by Alina Chau (Albert Whitman & Company) while inviting Nian Monster to perform the monster's lines from behind the mask.

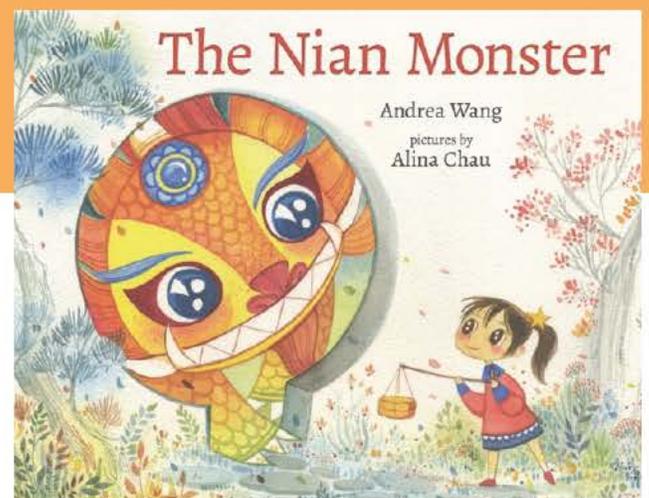
\_\_\_ When Xingling feeds the Nian Monster each food in the story, invite the readers with those foods to come forward and put that food into Nian's mouth.

\_\_\_ When it is time to light the firecrackers, demonstrate how to crumple the neck of the paper bag in your hand, fill it with your breath, and then bang or pop it with your hand.

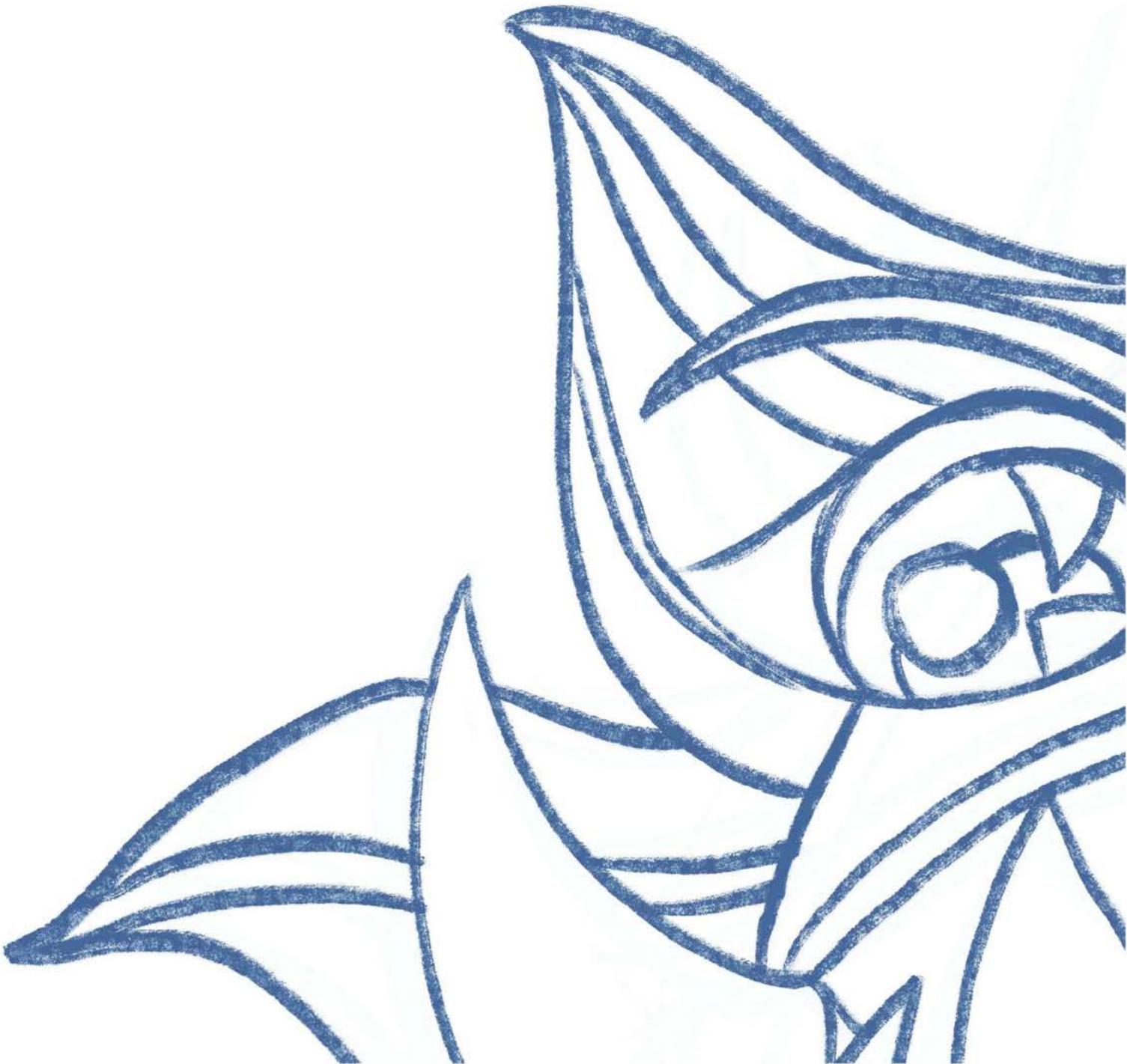
\_\_\_ Good work! You have kept the world safe from the Nian Monster for another year!

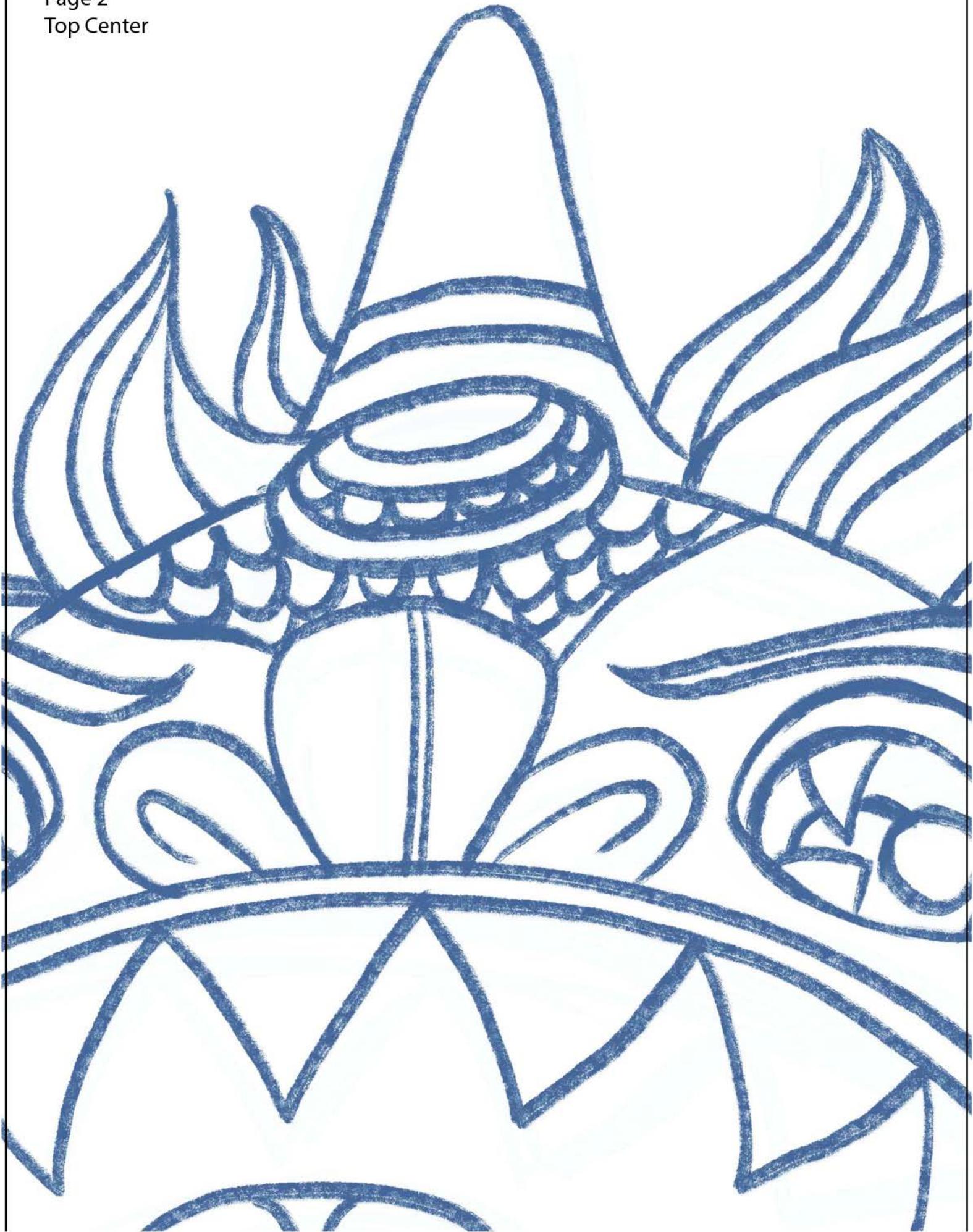


Illustration © Alina Chau

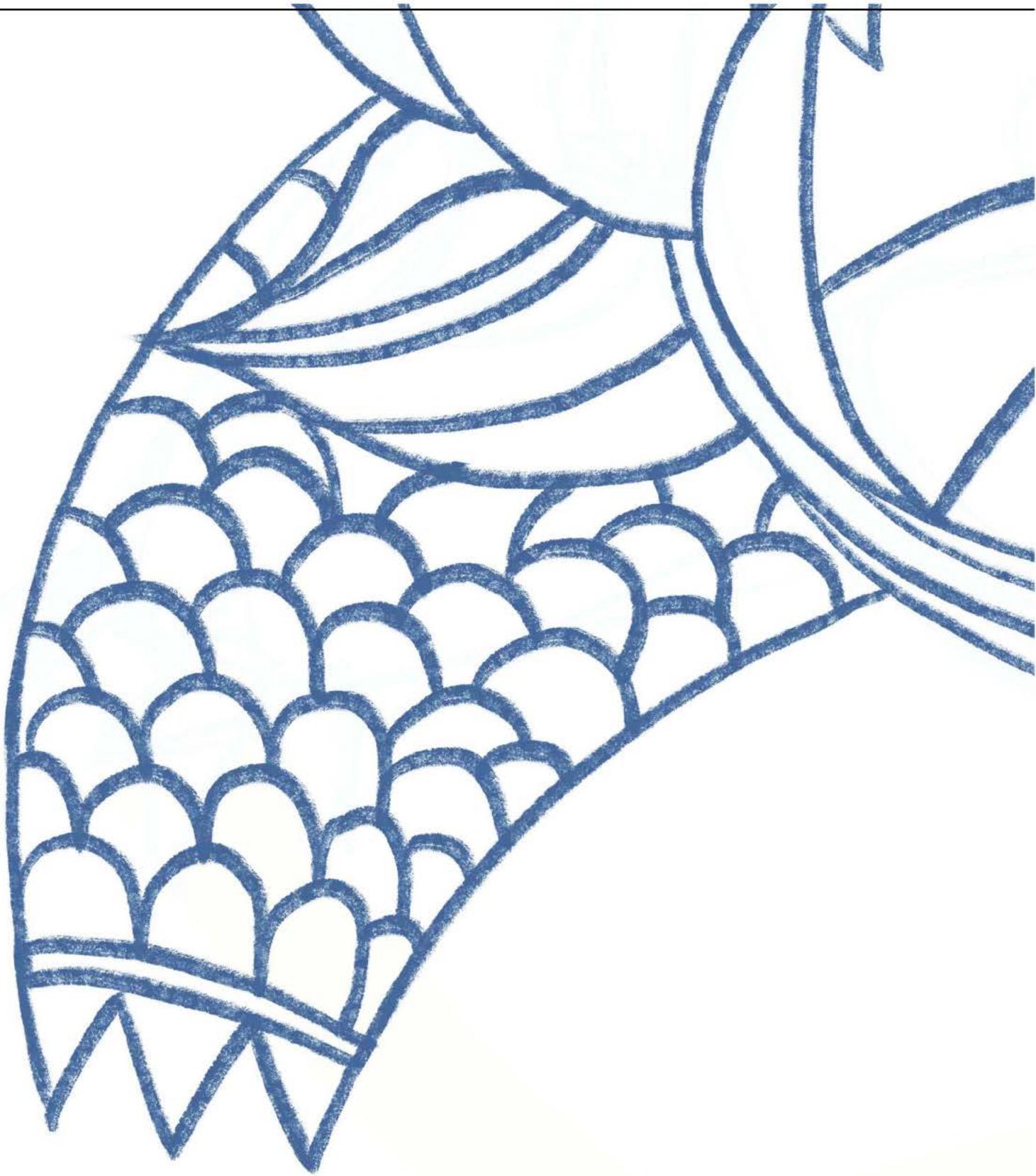


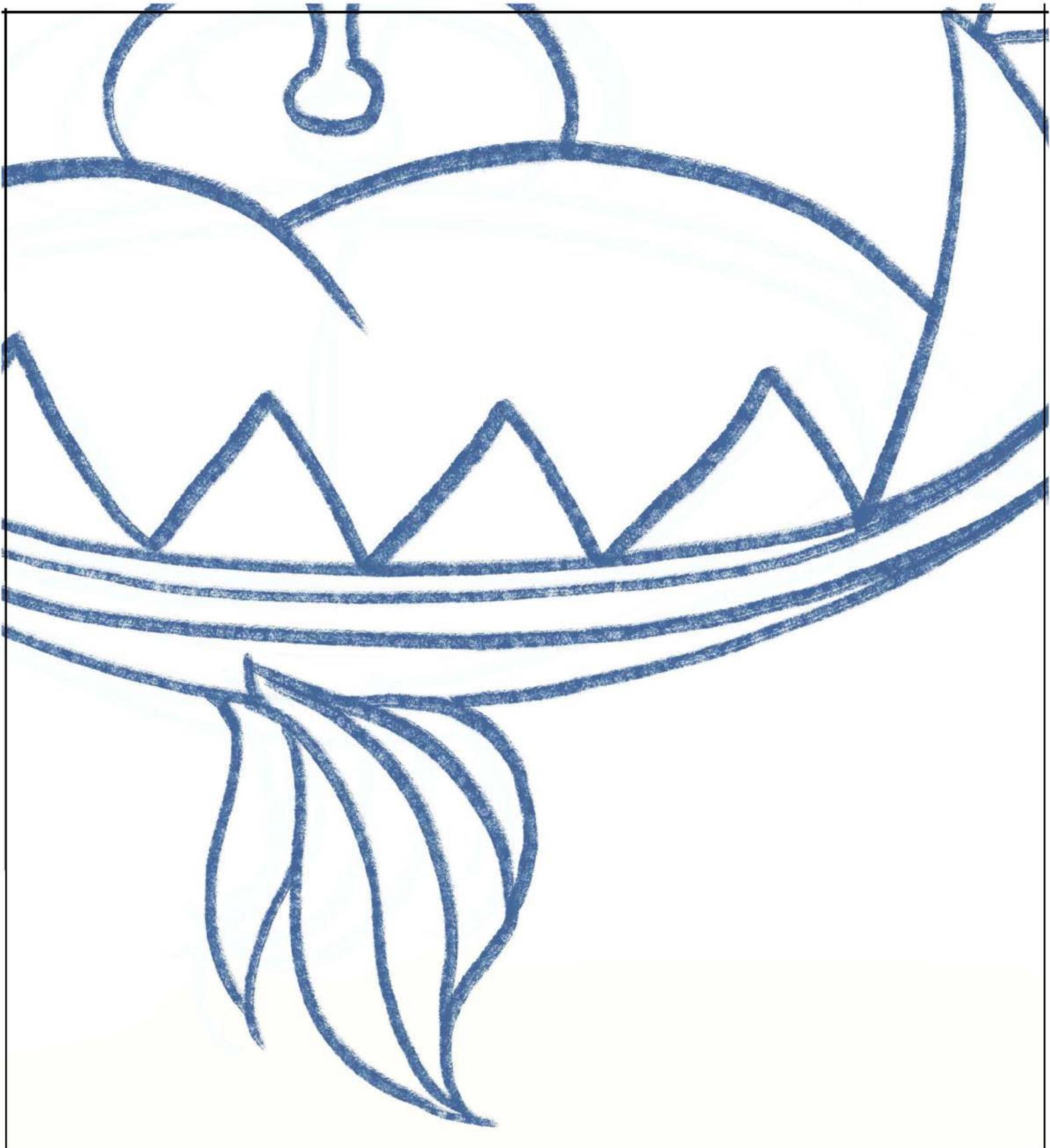
*Can you outwit this creature of Chinese legend & save the day?*

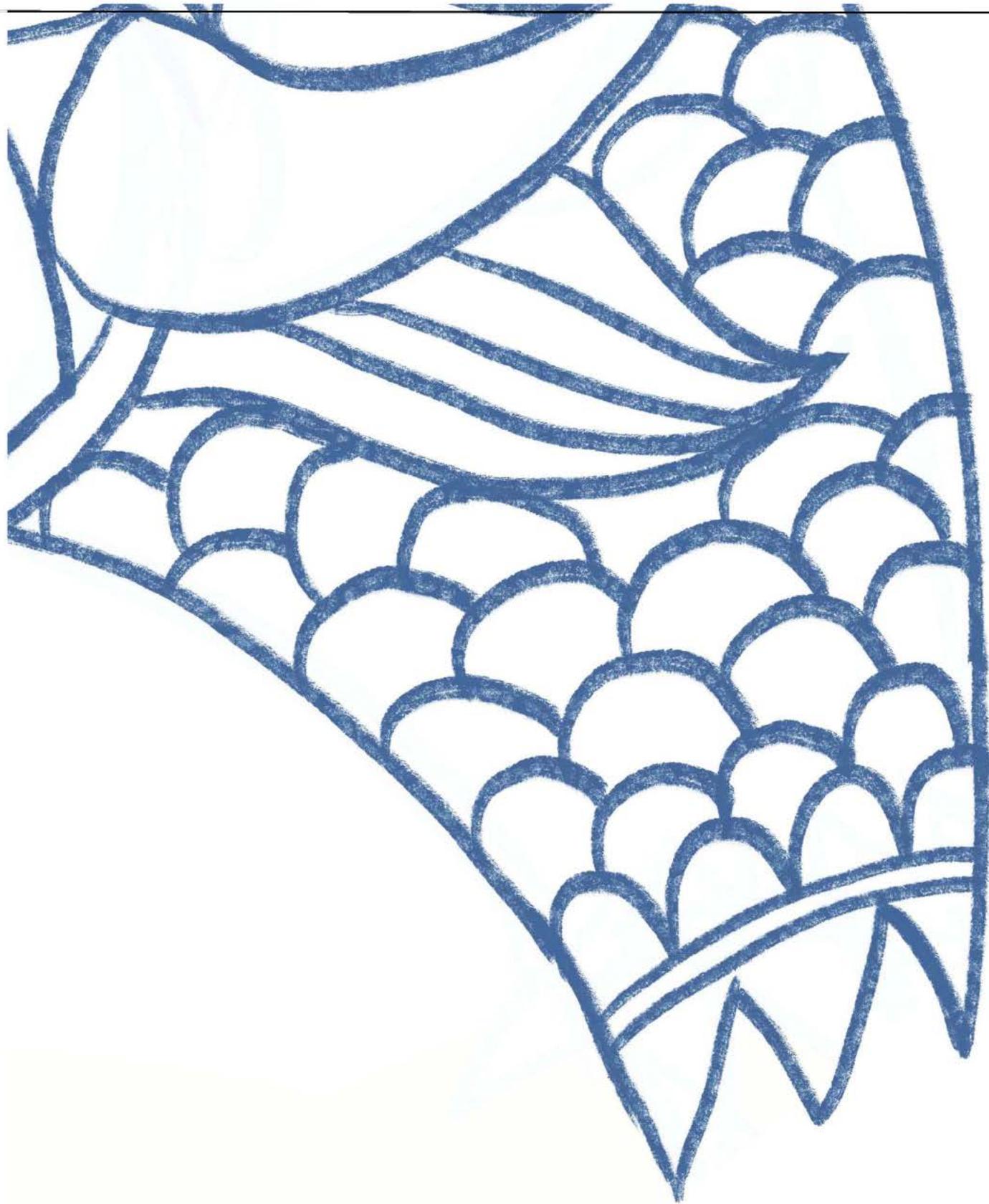












# The Nian Monster

## Script

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...There on the balcony crouched a horrible beast. His jaws were as wide as caverns. His teeth were sharper than swords. “*Ai ya!*” Xingling cried. “Nian has returned!”

**NIAN:** (*growling*) I have come to devour this city!

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...Xingling pointed to the city below. “We have red banners! Lanterns! Gongs and drums! Why aren’t you scared?”

**NIAN:** *Pei!* That was thousands of years ago. Those old tricks don’t frighten me anymore. I am starving! You will make a tasty appetizer.

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...“Wait!” Xingling scanned the kitchen. “Have a bowl of long-life noodles first. If you live longer, you can conquer more cities.

**NIAN:** (*stroking horn*) You are wise, little one. Noodles first, then you, then the city.

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...Xingling ran to the best noodle shop in Shanghai. She asked the head chef to prepare a special dish just for Nian. All day, the chefs mixed and kneaded and pulled. Finally, they pushed the giant bowl in front of Nian.

**INVITATION TO XINGLINGS:** Now I think you can all be as brave and clever as Xingling. Open your bags and look inside. Does anyone have noodles in their bag? Yes? Can you bring them forward and feed them to the hungry Nian Monster?

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** Nian slurped. And slurped. And slurped.

**NIAN:** (*makes slurping sounds as fed.*)

**NIAN:** (*groaning*) My stomach is too stuffed to eat more.

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...The chefs had made only one noodle. Just one! The longest noodle in China.

**NIAN:** (*belching*) I will devour the city tomorrow.

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...The next day, Nian glared down from the Jin Mao Tower and stretched his wide, wicked jaws. “Wait!” Xingling yelled. “Eat fish first, so you will have good fortune all year long.”

**NIAN:** You are wise, little one. Fish first, then you, then the city.

# The Nian Monster

## Script

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** “Good. Wait for me by the river.” Nian bounded over to the Oriental Pearl Tower and circled the largest globe. Xingling ran to the best fishing fleet in Shanghai. She asked the captain to catch a special kind of fish just for Nian. All day, the fishermen baited and hooked and scaled. Finally, they rowed the fish across the Huangpu River to Nian.

**INVITATION TO XINGLINGS:** Open your bags and look inside. Does anyone have fish in their bag? Yes? Can you be brave and come up and feed them to the hungry Nian Monster?

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** Nian gulped. And gulped. And gulped. The fish bones pricked and poked.

**NIAN:** *(make gulping noises as fed.)*

**NIAN:** *(croaking)* My throat is too sore to eat more!

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** The fishermen had caught only one kind of fish. Milkfish! The boniest fish in the sea.

**NIAN:** *(coughing)* I will devour the city tomorrow.

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...In the morning, Nian prowled through Yu Garden and stretched his wide, wicked jaws. “Wait!” said Xingling. “Tonight is New Year’s Eve. You need some rice cake to sweeten your future.”

**NIAN:** You are wise, little one. Rice cake first, then you, then the city.

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...All day, the grandmothers stirred and steamed and fried. Finally, they rolled the enormous rice cake to Nian.

**INVITATION TO XINGLINGS:** Now who has rice cakes in their bags? Can you be brave and come up and feed them to the hungry Nian Monster?

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...Nian chewed. And chewed. And chewed...

**NIAN:** *(make chewing noises as fed.)*

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...Nian’s wide, wicked jaws were stuck fast. The grandmothers had used only glutinous rice flour. The stickiest kind! So sticky it had been used to build the Great Wall. Nian rolled one monstrous yellow eye.

**NIAN:** Rrrrrun mmuhmm unnhhh umgg

# The Nian Monster

## Script

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** The fireworks master held a match to the thick fuse. “Good-bye, Old Year.” Xingling waved. “Good-bye, Nian!” Nian thrashed his mane and lashed his tail. But he couldn’t blow out the flame.

**NIAN:** *(making blowing noises)*

**INVITATION TO XINGLINGS:** Shall we make some fireworks of our own to chase away Nian? *(Demonstrate crumpling the neck of the paper bag, filling the bag with air, and on the count of 3 have them slap or pop their bag.)*

**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** ...*Pili pala!* Nian and the chair blasted into the air.

**NIAN:** *(pop up from the chair and zoom away.)*

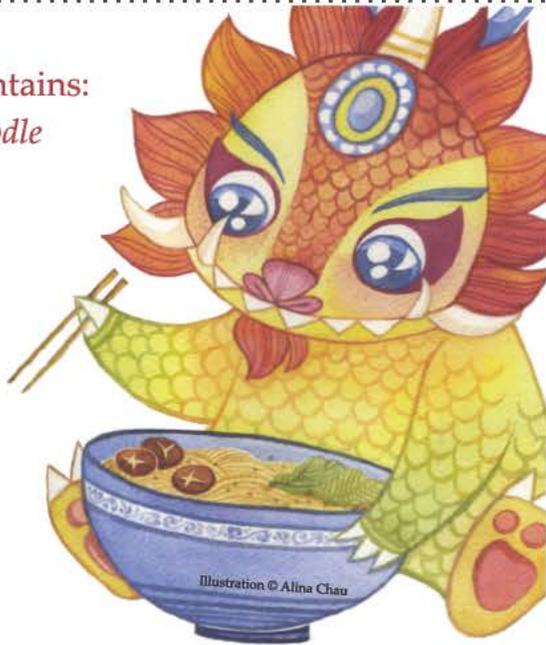
**CUE FROM BOOK TEXT:** Nian’s claws tore a hole in the fabric of the sky. Just before he shot through, Nian shouted...

**NIAN:** I’ll be back next year! *(disappear!)*

# The Nian Monster

# Protection Kit Labels

Contains:  
*Noodle*



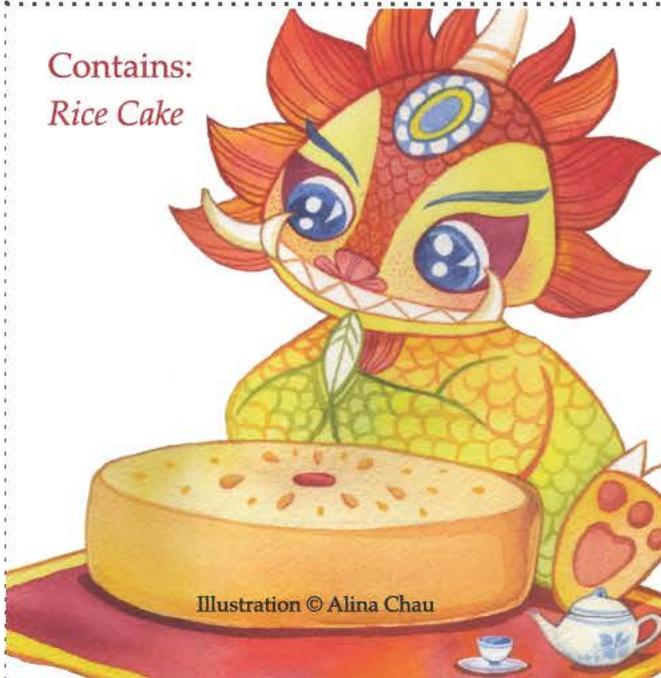
The Nian Monster  
*Protection Kit*

Contains:  
*Fish*



The Nian Monster  
*Protection Kit*

Contains:  
*Rice Cake*



The Nian Monster  
*Protection Kit*

# The Nian Monster

## Origami Bookmark: Page 1

As Xingling discovers in the picture book **The Nian Monster** (Albert Whitman & Company), the creature has an enormous mouth and an even bigger appetite! Let's create a Nian Monster who can devour any book you attach him to. Watch the origami video at [AndreaYWang.com](http://AndreaYWang.com) or follow the instructions below!

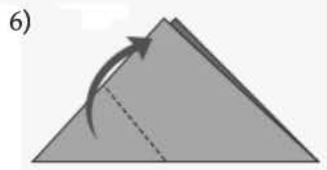
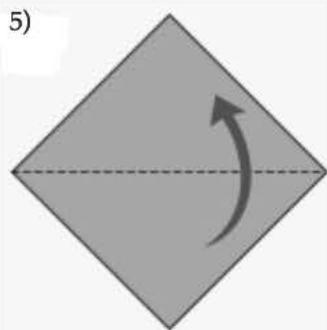
### INSTRUCTIONS

1) Cut out the square of paper on page 2.

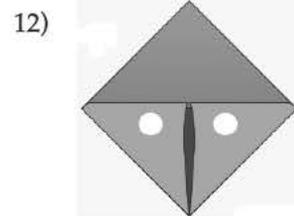
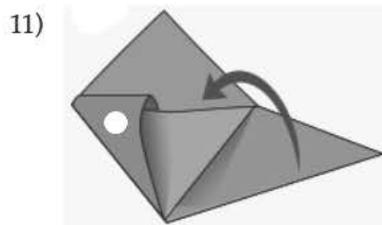
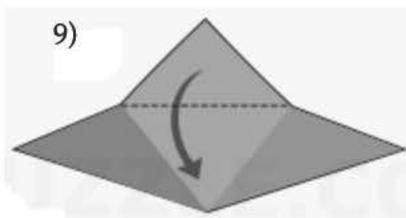
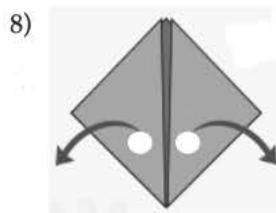
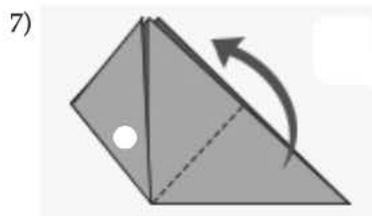
2) Flip the paper over so that the printed side is facing the tabletop.

3) Position the paper so that the corner with the writing on it is farthest away from you (and still facing down.)

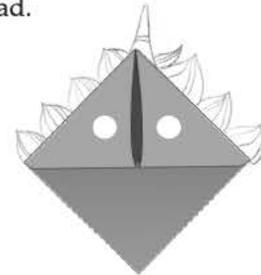
4) Pay close attention to where Nian Monster's eyes are in the fold. They are marked with dots on the folding diagrams.



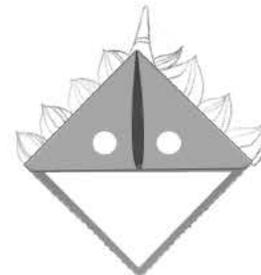
This side of the triangle should be blank. Is the printing on the opposite side?



13) Color, cut out and glue Nian Monster's mane from page 3 to the back side of his head.



14) Color, cut out and glue on the mouth from page 3.



15) Use scrap paper to make Nian Monster a set of upper teeth.

16) Let Nian chomp down on the corner of your favorite book to mark your page!

# The Nian Monster

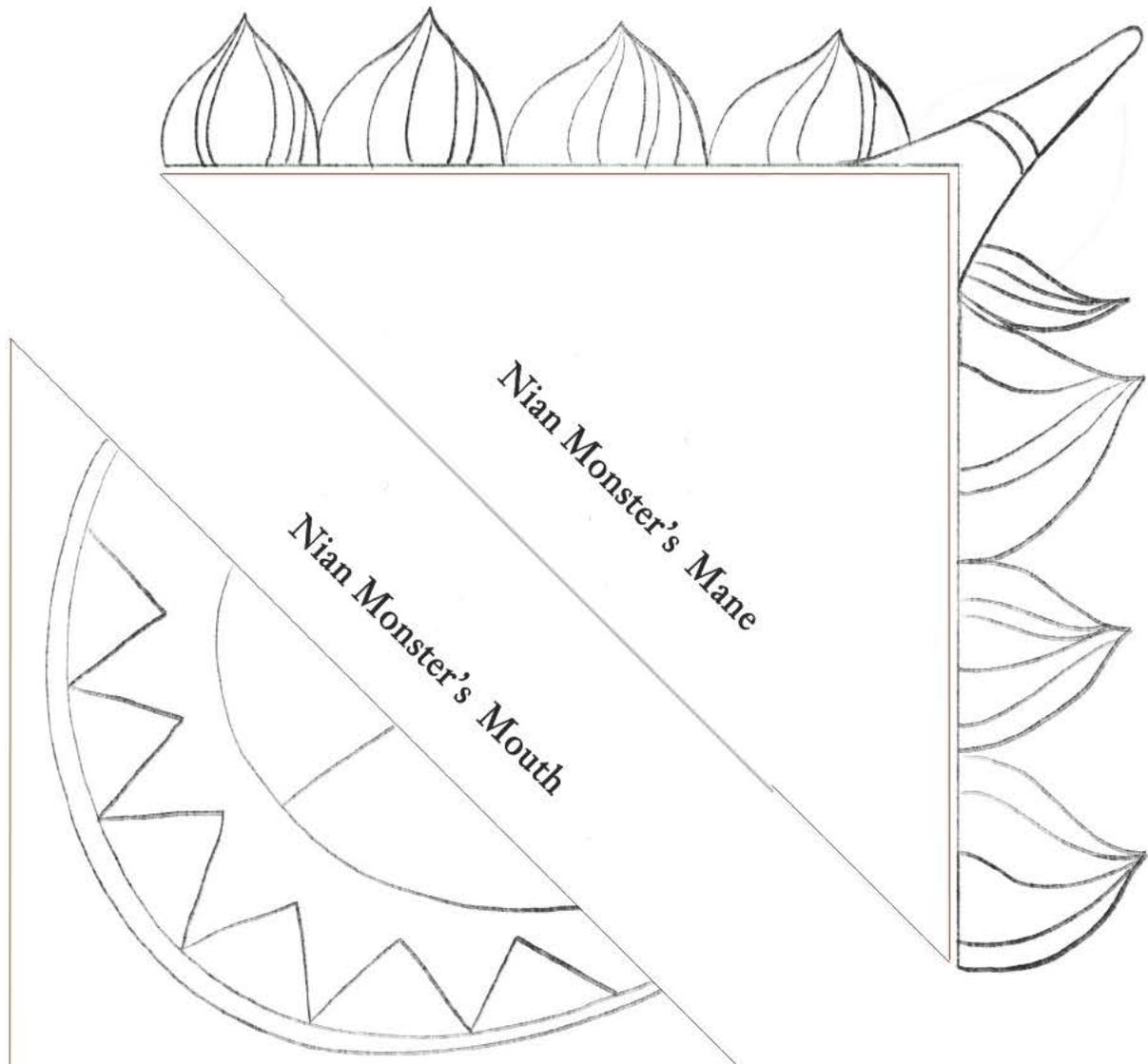
Origami Bookmark: Page 2



For further adventures,  
read **The Nian Monster**  
by Andrea Wang and  
illustrated by Alina Chau  
(Albert Whitman & Company)  
and visit [AndreaYWang.com](http://AndreaYWang.com)

# The Nian Monster

Origami Bookmark: Page 3



Use the scrap paper to make Nian Monster a top row of teeth!