

Challenge Activities - Junior Da Vinci

January is the first month of the year and for many it is a month of new beginnings.

This year we have decided to move away from termly and half termly JDV challenges and are using a monthly theme to suggest activities to challenge and interest pupils.

Bring any examples of activities that have been completed to Mrs Cowlshaw to share with the whole school.

January – Winter & New beginnings

Have you ever wondered why **January feels** so special? It's not just because it's the first month of the year. It's a time when we can start fresh and dream big.

In January, we often make plans for the year ahead. We might decide to learn a new skill, be kinder to others, or take better care of ourselves. It's a special time to think about how we want to grow and become better people.

Here are some activities to try.

Geography/Sustainability

Humans have great fun in the winter snow building snowmen, sledging and throwing snowballs.

Winter for animals is not so much fun, and this clip looks at the work animals put in with their continuing quest for food. [KS1 / KS2 Science: How winter affects plants and animals - BBC Teach](#)

How do animals find food to eat in the winter, and how can humans help them?

Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's largest garden wildlife survey. Every year, hundreds of thousands of nature lovers like you take part, helping to build a picture of how garden birds are faring. You could take part in this [Big Garden Birdwatch](#) to help record the birds of the UK.

Here are some ways that we can help the creatures in our areas.

Make a bird feeder [Make a bird feeder - CBeebies](#)

Bug hotels

Insects should be treasured, not squashed as they perform a vital part of our ecosystem, help them to get through the winter months by creating somewhere for them to live. There's a bug hotel suitable for every outdoor space – this super simple example uses an old plastic bottle. [Bug Hotel - Super Simple](#)

Lunar New Year

[Lunar New Year 2025: A Guide to the Year of the Snake](#)

Lunar New Year, also known as [Chinese New Year](#), is celebrated by billions of people each year and is the most significant holiday on the Chinese calendar. Many Asian countries observe Lunar New Year in their own ways. Can you explore the symbolism and traditions behind the festival?

Look at the different foods that are eaten at Chinese New Year- what do they represent? Write a menu for your own feast.

<https://youtu.be/-Efr-MVBKc> – this is the story of the Chinese dragon Nian.

<https://youtu.be/bJag2BvLnBY> - this is the story of the Chinese zodiac

Write your own version of one of these stories, or create a piece of artwork. This could be in any style of your choosing, if you combined them, you could create a picture book or comic strip.

What is your Chinese zodiac sign? Research the meaning behind the zodiac animal from your birth year.

Music

Vivaldi: Winter - <https://youtu.be/p1qNOfdMyGA>

The musical sounds created by Vivaldi were deliberately planned to evoke the season of winter. Listen to how he brings them to life. The icy wind is created by rushing runs of violin notes creating a swirling movement. Leaping violin notes give a sense of people stamping and chattering teeth are represented by repeated fast notes of the solo.

Debussy: The Snow is Dancing (*Children's Corner*) - https://youtu.be/6ptLUy_7dsA

This piano piece uses a twinkling flurry of staccato notes cascading down the keyboard, whilst light, delicate melodies emerge from the hazy mist of semiquavers.

Chopin: Winter Wind - <https://youtu.be/Ff4M7jCYloc>

After a simple, hymn-like start, Chopin's "Winter Wind" etude explodes into a terrifying depiction of a blizzard. A flurry of notes cascade in the right hand, calling to mind snowflakes being tossed about by the icy winter wind.

Rutter: Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind - <https://youtu.be/iQ7O4u6hAxx>

This is a magical setting of a song from the second act of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* for a choir. This sweeping wintery piece begins with ominous, piercing harpsichord and the icy tone of the sopranos, but gradually thaws with grounding lower voices.

Poetry

Haikus are known for their ability to paint a picture in just a few words. A traditional haiku has three lines, the first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables and the third has five syllables again.

Here is an example:

Over the Wintry – by Natsume Soseki

Over the wintry
Forest, winds howl in rage
With no leaves to blow.

Explore some other wintery Haikus here: [10 of the Best Winter Haiku Poet Lovers Must Read - Poem Analysis](#)

Have a go at writing your own Haiku, what scene would you paint with words? You could add a drawing or painting to go with your Haiku.

Recommended reads – have a look at some of these books to expand your reading horizons.

- **Penguin Huddle** – recommended for 4+ years. The penguin pack play all day long. And when the sun goes down, and the night grows cold and dark...“PENGUIN HUDDLE!” The penguins squeeze and squish together to stay warm and cosy. But one night, there is a freezing gale. And the next morning ... *the penguins are stuck!* They are frozen together like a giant penguin ice pop. What a penguin MUDDLE! Nobody in the Antarctic can figure out how to unstick them. But Pipsqueak, the smallest penguin of them all, has a brilliant idea...
- **Fox Goes North** - An extraordinary house on wheels is being towed along a forest track by doleful Moose. On board the house are philosophical Fox; distinguished Bear; theatrical Toucan, with his magnetic beak that always points north; argumentative Little Owl, and loving, excitable Young Llama. With nothing but her little blue suitcase, Fox has left home to join the animals' expedition to the Snowlands to see the Northern Lights.
- **Fia and the last Snow Deer** – Fia and her snow deer Solas have always had a powerful and unbreakable connection. But as Fia's village face a seemingly eternal winter, they turn their sights to Solas and an ancient prophecy that promises the return of sunlight and life, if the ultimate sacrifice is made . . .

I hope you enjoy these activities – please let me know how you get on, and bring in some examples of things you have found out!

Mrs Cowlshaw

