

Best Writing – Expository Texts (Cycle 17)

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Kongming Lantern: Sky Lantern

Launching Sky Lanterns is one of the most renowned folk activities during the traditional Chinese Lantern Festival in Taiwan and the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival. Legend has it that sky lanterns was first used by armies as signalling devices a hundreds of years ago, which was invented by Zhuge Liang in the Three Kingdoms period.

Nowadays, people write their messgaes on the sky lanterns and send them up into the sky, and it's used to convey their wishes to heaven. The Chinese believe that the Sky Lantern takes away their troubles and brings good luck in the future. The Taiwanese see the the flame in the lantern as knowledge and it's widely believed that if the lanterns are offered to monks, people will receive wisdom in return as the light will guide them to the right path of their lives.

How are sky lanterns made

Sky lanterns are constructed from simple materials. Sky lanterns are manufactured from oiled rice paper or mulberry paper on a bamboo frame, and inside it contains a small candle or fuel cell composed of a wax or other flammable material. When it's lit, the lantern will rise up into the air.

Dangers

As sky lanterns contains a flame, there are concerns about the safety of it. There is the danger that the flame in the lantern may cause a fire when landing on flammable ground. Therefore launching them in strong winds is not recommended, as the lanterns can float to quite a height. After the balloon lands, the leftover thin wire frame may present a hazard to any animal tempted to swallow it. China has banned sky lanterns due to hazard to aircraft

Ecologically friendly lanterns today

Most parts of the lantern are biodegradable, except for the metal parts. Plus, Sky Lanterns are perfectly safe to use and do not produce any harmful or toxic gases.

In 2010, lanterns have been developed to become 100% wire-free. Instead of metal, flame resistant wool is used which can be ingested without causing any harm. Therefore, the Lantern Festival is still popular and are widely celebrated in Asia.