



W H A L E C L A S S

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 18 • Beijing

18–22 January 2027 • 13 minutes a day • ages 2.5–6, English learners

大寒 Major Cold falls on Wednesday 20 January • 春节 is next — 除夕 on Friday 5 February

WEEK OVERVIEW



Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week

The city under our feet has a name. Beijing has a wall, red gates and stone lions — and our classroom is standing inside it. Every day ends by pointing at the floor, because that is where the lesson is.

FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

Beijing wall red lion home

Littles (2.5–3) — one word + a gesture is a win: “Beijing!” (point straight down — right here!), “Red!” (run and touch something red), “Lion!” (lion paws, big roar).

Bigs (4–6) — sentence frames: “I live in Beijing.” · “The Great Wall is very long.” · “My home is in Beijing.”

THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

- 2 MIN** Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object.
- 4 MIN** Teach — the day's word with the real thing in your hands. Get it wrong once on purpose.
- 3 MIN** Song — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.
- 3 MIN** Game — one named game, tied to the day's word.
- 1 MIN** Close — whisper → normal → SHOUT.

IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

Mon Beijing postcards and the biggest map of China you own · **Tue** a very long ball of string, and a bag of wooden blocks · **Wed** a photo of the red palace gate, a brass door ring and nine paper gold studs · **Thu** a small stone lion, and a 兔儿爷 or a paper 风车 · **Fri** every prop from the week, with the photo of our own front gate hidden at the bottom.

THE WEEK'S CLOSE

Everyone: “Beijing... wall... red... LION! BEIJING IS MY HOME!” (*point down · stretch wide · touch something red · lion paws · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

THEME SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

- 1** · Map of China puzzle — the map, a pot of little flags and the photo of our own front gate. *Control:* the outline of the board and the place names underneath. (From Monday.)
- 2** · Build the Great Wall — blocks and a photo card of a real wall section with its watchtower. *Control:* hold the build up against the photo. (From Tuesday; it stays up all week and grows.)
- 3** · Beijing 3-part cards — Beijing 北京 · wall 长城 · red 红色 · lion 石狮子 · home 家, plus the 12 老北京/新北京 sorting cards and the action cards. *Control:* the whole control cards; grey and blue dots on the sorting-card backs.
- 4** · Stone lion pairing — five pairs of lion cards, matched by the mane pattern and by ball-or-cub. *Control:* matching symbols on the backs. (Sensorial, from Thursday.)

CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 card a day on the map: 京 · 墙 · 红 · 狮 · 家. 北京 explained as *northern capital* (Monday) and 长城 as *long city* (Tuesday). 卢沟桥的狮子——数不清 on Thursday, with the 兔儿爷 passed round. 我的家在北京 said together on Friday, and 你好 at every stop of the bus tour. Wednesday is 大寒, the coldest day of the year: one line of the 数九歌 — 一九二九不出手, 三九四九冰上走 — and 冰糖葫芦 if you can get it.

FRIDAY'S DARK PHONICS SOUND

l — tongue up behind the top teeth and let it run; you can hold it as long as your breath lasts: lip, leg, log. “*Lazy lion licks!*” The week carries it everywhere: lion, long, look, live, love.

MONDAY · DAY 1

Where I Live

Today's words: **Beijing**

Grab: a handful of **Beijing postcards** in the Magic Box (the Great Wall, a red gate, a stone lion, a hutong) and the **biggest map of China you own**; one little paper flag on a stick for every child; a photograph of your **own kindergarten gate**; the 京 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is flat and light, and whatever is inside slides when you tip it. Whole class chants:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Tip it slowly — a soft papery slither. Peek in for a long time, then deal the postcards out one at a time like playing cards, holding each one up: a wall on a mountain, a huge red door, a grey stone lion, a narrow little street.

Teacher: "All of these came from **one place...** and we are **standing in it.**" (*point straight down at the floor and hold it*)

Everybody points down at the ground. **"Beijing!"**

4 MIN TEACH · BEIJING

Everybody stands up. Say it twice; the second time they do it with you:

Where do I live? (*shrug, hands out, look round the room*)

Right **HERE**, right here! (*stamp both feet on the floor*)

A wall, a gate, (*stretch both arms wide, then push two doors open*)

BEIJING is here! (*both hands down at the floor*)

Then the map goes on the floor and everybody kneels round the edge of it — nobody stands. Find China together, run one finger round its edge, then go hunting for the little dot up near the sea. Stick the first flag on it. Last of all, lay the photograph of **our own front gate** down beside the flag: our kindergarten is inside that dot.

Littles point straight down and say **"Beijing!"** Bigs owe you the sentence: **"I live in Beijing."** **"My home is in Beijing."**

Teacher fails: plant your flag far out in the middle of the sea, step back and admire it. "There we are. Beijing." Fold your arms. Wait.

Chinese moment: lay the 京 card on the map beside the flag and say 北京 once — 北 is north, 京 is capital: *the northern capital*. Leave the card there; the row grows by one card a day.

3 MIN GAME · FIND OUR CITY

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The map stays flat on the floor. Everybody gets one little flag.

Teacher: "Walking feet... put your flag on **our city...** and **tell us its name.**"

One child at a time crosses to the map, plants the flag and says the word while everybody else chants it back. Littles say **"Beijing!"** and that is a full win. Bigs plant it and give the sentence: **"I live in Beijing."**

By the end there is a little forest of flags on one spot — twenty children all living in the same place, which is exactly the picture you want.

Use one **very big** map on the floor, not a wall map. At three years old a country is something you kneel on and touch, or it is nothing at all.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing round the map. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Beijing... wall... red... LION! BEIJING IS MY HOME!" (*point down · stretch wide · touch something red · lion paws · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Maisy Goes to the City* (Lucy Cousins) — read it, then close it and ask what **our** city has that **Maisy's** has not. They will say lion before you do.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Monday's verse → chorus, standing round the map and pointing down on every "Beijing".

"Where do I live? I live right here — / Beijing, Beijing — my home, my dear!" (*shrug, then stamp both feet; hands over your heart*)

TUESDAY · DAY 2

The Great Wall

Today's words: **wall** (*Beijing comes back every day*)

Grab: a **very long ball of string** in the Magic Box — the longest you can find — and a bag of **wooden blocks**; a photo card of a real wall section with its watchtower; a clear stretch of shelf edge or carpet to build along; the 墙 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is heavy on one side, and something inside **rolls** and thumps when you tilt it.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Roll it side to side — thump, thump. Lift out the ball of string, hand the loose end to one child, and walk backwards out of the circle unrolling it: down the mat, past the shelf, out of the door if the corridor is free.

Teacher: (*calling back from a very long way off*) “Is it finished yet? ... **NOT YET!**”

Come back winding it up. Arms stretched as wide as they go: **“Wall!”**

4 MIN TEACH · WALL

Everybody stands. Say it twice, small and slow first, then enormous:

Up the hill (*one hand climbing up in front of you*)

and **down** the hill, (*the same hand running down the other side*)

The wall goes **ON...** (*one arm sweeping right across the room*)

and it's going **on** there still! (*both arms as wide as they go, and hold it*)

Now the photo card: a grey stone wall, walking over a mountain, with a little tower where the soldiers watched. It was built to keep people **out**, a very long time ago — long before your grandmother's grandmother. Then the blocks come out and the class starts its own wall along the shelf edge.

Littles stretch their arms wide and say **“Wall!”** Bigs owe you the sentence: **“The Great Wall is very long.” “The wall goes up the hill.”**

Teacher fails: build your bit of wall by piling every block into one tall wobbling tower. Stand back proudly. “A wall.” Wait for the roar, and let them flatten it out for you.

Chinese moment: the 墙 card joins 京 on the map. Then say the real name once: 长城 — which is not “long wall” at all, it is *long city*. A wall so long that it is a city.

3 MIN GAME · BUILD THE WALL RELAY

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” The blocks are in one basket. The wall grows along the shelf edge, left to right, one block at a time.

Teacher: “**One** block each — and we **count** as it grows.”

Child walks up, lays one block on the end, and the whole class counts the wall out loud from the beginning: one... two... three. Everybody adds exactly one, nobody adds two. Littles carry the block and shout the last number; Bigs tell you where theirs went: **“This is block number nine.”**

Leave it standing all week and let it grow a little every day — it is Tuesday's Magic Box object living on the shelf, and it is Tray 2. Never let one child build the whole thing; a wall that twenty people built is the actual history lesson.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing in one long line beside the block wall, arms wide. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Beijing... wall... red... LION! BEIJING IS MY HOME!” (*point down · stretch wide · touch something red · lion paws · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *The Great Wall of China* (Leonard Everett Fisher) — the words are far too old for them, so do not read them. Turn the pages slowly and let them point.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Tuesday's verse → chorus. On “a wall so long” everybody stretches out towards the block wall.

“The Great Wall is long, long, long, / up the hill — big and strong!” (*one arm sweeping wider each “long”; climbing hand, then strongman fists*)

WEDNESDAY · DAY 3

Big Red Doors

Today's words: **red** (*Beijing · wall come back*)

Grab: a big photo of the **red palace gate**, a **brass door ring** or knocker (a curtain ring on a board works), and a sheet of **red paper studs** — nine gold circles — in the Magic Box; a bowl of ice for **大寒**, and **冰糖葫芦** if you can get some; the **红** card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Do not open it. **Knock** on the lid instead, three big slow knocks — **BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.** — then look at the class as if somebody else did it.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Lift out the brass ring and knock with it, three times, on the floor. Then unfold the photograph very slowly, upside down first, until somebody tells you.

Teacher: “In **our** city there is a door so big that all of us could walk through it **side by side**... and it is **RED.**” (*hold the photo up and turn it slowly all the way round the circle*)

Everybody runs and touches something red, then comes straight back. **“Red!”**

4 MIN TEACH · RED

Everybody stands. Say it twice, and the second time they knock with you:

Red, red doors, (*push both hands forward, slowly, like heavy doors*)

As tall as the **sky!** (*reach right up on tiptoe*)

Knock, knock, knock — (*three big knocks in the air*)

Come in, come in! (*beckon with both hands*)

Then the studs. Look at the photo together: the emperor’s doors carry rows of gold studs, and the grandest gates have **nine** in a row. Count nine together, sticking nine paper studs onto a big red paper door as you go — one child, one stud.

Littles touch something red and say **“Red!”** Bigs owe you the sentence: **“The door is red.” “I can see a red door.”**

Teacher fails: hold up something obviously green and announce, with total confidence, **“Red.”** Nod slowly. Wait.

Chinese moment: the **红** card joins 京 · 墙 — **红色**, and in China red is the colour of luck and of happy things. Today is also **大寒**, the coldest day of the whole year. Teach one line of the 数九歌: **一九二九不出手** (*hands straight into your armpits*) **三九四九冰上走** (*skate two steps across the mat*). If you have **冰糖葫芦**, this is the day for it.

3 MIN GAME · ONLY RED

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Everybody stands on the mat. You call a colour; they only move if it is **red**.

Teacher: “Touch something... **RED!** ... touch something **blue**...” (*on blue, freeze and look round very suspiciously*)

Off they go, back to the mat, and again. Then let a Big call the colours while you play in the circle and get it wrong on purpose. Littles just run on the red; Bigs bring the word back with them: **“The chair is red.”**

Say the colour and **hold up nothing** — the word has to do the work. And keep it fast: five calls, then stop while they still want more.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing at the paper red door with its nine studs. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Beijing... wall... red... **LION! BEIJING IS MY HOME!**” (*point down · stretch wide · touch something red · lion paws · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Bringing In the New Year* (Grace Lin) — red on every single page, and it points straight at **春节**, which is now only two weeks away.

3 MIN · Today’s song moment — chorus → Wednesday’s verse → chorus. On “big red doors” everybody pushes the heavy doors open together.

“Red, red doors at the palace gate, / push them open — don’t be late!” (*slow heavy push on the beat, then run on the spot*)

THURSDAY · DAY 4

The Stone Lion

Today's words: **lion** (*Beijing · wall · red come back*)

Grab: a small **stone lion** in the Magic Box — or the heaviest grey stone you can carry, with a photo of the Lugou Bridge lions; a 兔儿爷 or a paper 风车 windmill, a real old Beijing toy, to pass round; a drum or the bell; the 狮 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is **heavy**. Pretend you can barely lift it; let two children try to pick it up and fail. Then the chant:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Tip it a little: something hard knocks against the side. Lift it out with **both** hands, slowly, and set it down in the middle of the circle with a thud.

Teacher: "This lion has sat beside a gate for **four hundred years...** and he has **never once moved.**" (*sit back on your heels and stare at it*)

Lion paws up, one big roar — and then **freeze**. "**Lion!**"

4 MIN TEACH · LION

Everybody stands. Say it twice; the freeze at the end gets longer the second time:

Stone lion, stone lion, (*lion paws, curled up in front of you*)
By the **gate**, (*push the heavy doors open*)
He can **ROAR...** (*the biggest roar of the week*)
but he has to **WAIT**. (*freeze, absolutely still, and count five out loud*)

Then look at him properly, all together: a curly stone mane, a **ball** under one paw, and on the other lion a little **cub**. They come in **pairs** — one on each side of a gate, all over this city. Two children become the pair, one either side of the classroom door, and hold the freeze while everybody else walks in between them.

Littles do the paws and the roar and say "**Lion!**" Bigs owe you the sentence: "**The lion sits by the gate.**" "**The lion is made of stone.**"

Teacher fails: roar enormously, then be the worst stone lion in the world — wriggling, scratching your nose, looking about. "Am I a good stone lion?" Wait.

Chinese moment: the 狮 card joins 京 · 墙 · 红 — 石狮子. And the old Beijing saying: 卢沟桥的狮子——数不清, the lions of Lugou Bridge, nobody can ever count them. Then pass the 兔儿爷 round, one pair of hands at a time, and let it go all the way round without a word.

3 MIN GAME · STONE LION FREEZE

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The quietest game of the week. Drum beating (or the bell ringing) means **lion**: prowl and roar. Drum stops means **stone**: freeze exactly as you are.

Teacher: (*drum stops*) "Stone... **stone...** I can see one lion **breathing...**" (*walk round them, pull faces, never touch anybody*)

Count the freeze out loud so it always ends fairly — three for the littles, ten for the bigs. Nobody is ever *out*; a lion who wobbles just freezes again. Last round, a Big holds the drum.

Hold up the ball or the cub as you count — a lion with a job to do ("your paw is on the ball") holds still twice as long as a lion just told to stop.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody in lion paws either side of the door. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Beijing... wall... red... LION! BEIJING IS MY HOME!" (*point down · stretch wide · touch something red · lion paws · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Before home time: lay the **hutong** down for tomorrow — two lines of tape on the floor, a narrow grey street winding past the map, the block wall, the red paper door and the lion. Tomorrow the bus drives down it.

Got 3 spare minutes? *Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year* (Kate Waters) — a real boy, a real lion costume, and a lion that **does** move.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Thursday's verse → chorus. Stop playing for the freeze; let the room go silent for two beats.

"Stone lion, stone lion, big and grey, / ROAR! — then he sits all day!" (*lion paws, low and heavy; one huge roar, then freeze and hold*)

FRIDAY · DAY 5

Beijing Is Home + Big Review

Today's words: **home** — and **Beijing** · **wall** · **red** · **lion**, the whole week

Grab: every prop from the week packed into the box, with the photo of **our own front gate** hidden right at the bottom; the map, the block wall, the red paper door and the lion left where they are; the **taped hutong** from yesterday; two rows of chairs and a paper steering wheel for the bus; the awards (print pack page 17); the 家 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out bulging and will not quite shut.

Teacher: "Today the box is FULL — it's got our whole **city** inside it!"

Pull each thing out and hold it up in complete silence. They will supply the word before you can.

The postcards → "**Beijing!**" The string and the blocks → "**Wall!**" The paper studs → "**Red!**" The stone lion → "**Lion!**"

Last of all, one flat thing left at the very bottom. Lift it out and turn it round: the photograph of **our own gate**, the one they walk through every morning. "**HOME!**"

4 MIN TEACH · HOME, THEN THE WHOLE WEEK

Everybody stands. We tell the whole week with our bodies, twice — slow, then fast:

A **wall**, (*arms as wide as they go*)

a red, red **gate**, (*push the heavy doors open*)

A **lion** by the door, (*lion paws, then freeze*)

A little grey street, (*two flat hands close together, like narrow walls*)

and a door that is **MINE** — (*three knocks in the air*)

Beijing is HOME! (*both hands down at the floor, then over your heart*)

Then the map one last time, with all the flags still standing in it: everybody in this room lives in the same dot. A **hutong** is a little grey street, and behind its red door there is a 四合院 — a square yard with a family round all four sides of it. That is somebody's home. Ours is right here.

Littles do the five gestures and shout the five words. Bigs owe you a whole sentence each: "**I live in Beijing.**" "**My home is in Beijing.**" "**The Great Wall is very long.**"

Teacher fails: on "a door that is mine", walk up and knock on the **cupboard**, then try to move in. Wait to be redirected.

Chinese moment: the 家 card joins 京 · 墙 · 红 · 狮 — the whole week laid out on the map, and 家 is the one that matters: 我的家在北京. Say it once, all together, slowly. Then 你好 ready for the bus — every neighbour gets one.

3 MIN GAME · BEIJING BUS TOUR

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Two rows of chairs, a paper steering wheel, and the taped hutong running past every prop in the room. Everybody on board.

Teacher: (*steering*) "Next stop..." (*pull up at the map and wait*) "...what is it?"

At every stop the whole bus shouts the name — "**Beijing!**" "**Wall!**" "**Red door!**" "**Lion!**" — and then greets the neighbours standing there: "**你好!**" Bigs add the sentence before the bus can move: "**The Great Wall is very long.**"

The last stop is our own classroom door, with the photo of our gate taped to it. Everybody gets off. "**HOME!**"

Drive it slowly and make the stops **long**. The waiting between stops is where the quiet children get the courage to shout, and by the fourth stop they will be shouting the name before you have parked.

1 MIN CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a "You are a STAR!" award to take home. Then, standing round the map with all the flags in it, all five gestures:

Everyone: "Beijing... wall... red... LION! BEIJING IS MY HOME!" (*point down · stretch wide · touch something red · lion paws · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Home* (Carson Ellis) — every page is somebody else's home, and the last question is the one this week has been building to: what is yours like?

3 MIN · Today's song moment — Friday's verse, then the WHOLE song top to bottom, standing round the map with the block wall behind you.

"Wall and lions and hutongs too, / Beijing is home — for me and you!" (*arms wide · paws · hands close together; hands to heart, then out to the circle*)

SONGBOOK

★ “I Live in Beijing”

C (0003) F (2010) G7 (0212) Am (2000) · Strum: Down · Down · Down-Up (“Bei — jing — I live here”)

Steady and marching, like walking a long wall, with a real stop after “ROAR!” in Thursday’s verse so the freeze has somewhere to happen. Am appears once, in the third line of the chorus, under the stone lions — one finger, second fret, top string. C is one finger, F is two, G7 is three, Am is one; learn them in that order and leave Am until last — the song works if you just hold C there for a week.

CHORUS — EVERY SINGLE DAY

C Beijing, Beijing — I F live C here!
F Big red C doors and a wall so G7 long! C
C Stone lions sit by the Am old, old bridge, C
F Beijing, C Beijing — G7 sing my C song!

MONDAY · BEIJING

C Where do I live? I live right here
G7 Beijing, Beijing — C my home, my dear!

TUESDAY · WALL

C The Great Wall is long, long, long,
G7 Up the hill — C big and strong!

WEDNESDAY · RED

C Red, red doors at the palace gate,
G7 Push them open — C don’t be late!

THURSDAY · LION

C Stone lion, stone lion, big and grey,
G7 ROAR! — then he C sits all day!

FRIDAY · HOME

C Wall and lions and hutongs too,
G7 Beijing is home — C for me and you!

Each day: chorus → today’s verse → chorus, always standing round the map. Friday: sing the whole thing top to bottom with the block wall behind you — that run-through is the review of the week. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down, give one child the drum and do the finger-play instead; the actions carry the meaning either way.