屋顶上的鱼，街上的三王

中国的儿童节在六月一日。可全世界的儿童节并不都在同一天，过法更是五花八门：有的满天空飘着鱼，有的男孩女孩轮流过节，还有的三位国王骑着骆驼上街撒糖。

日本有两个儿童节。三月三是桃花节，也叫女儿节，家里摆出人偶台，最上层是天皇和皇后，下面一层层排着宫女和乐师，女孩子请朋友来看人偶，吃菱形的彩色米糕。五月五是男孩节，家里有男孩的在院里竖起高竿，挂起鲤鱼旗，让鱼在风里游。最大的黑色鲤鱼代表爸爸，红色的代表妈妈，小一号的代表孩子。为什么是鲤鱼？老传说里鲤鱼会逆流而上，跳得过龙门，大人盼男孩像鲤鱼一样不怕急流，勇敢又坚持。这一天屋里还会摆武士人偶和小铠甲，祝孩子结实健康。

瑞典的儿童节很特别：男孩女孩分开过。十月七日是男孩日，男孩子这天可以戴王冠、吃糖果、收小礼物，商店也会给男孩办特别活动。十二月十九日是女孩日，女孩子当主角，头上戴插着小蜡烛的王冠——这来自圣露西亚的老传说，家里最大的女儿清早起来，穿白袍、戴王冠，给全家人端咖啡和藏红花面包。瑞典人说，节日分成两半才公平，男孩女孩各有一个完全属于自己的日子。

西班牙孩子最看重的日子是一月六日的三王节。一月五日夜里游行最热闹：三位国王骑着骆驼上街，向人群挥手，随从在后面一筐一筐往街两边撒糖果，孩子们抢着帽子、口袋接糖，街上挤得水泄不通。孩子把鞋子摆在窗台上，传说一年里表现乖，国王就会在鞋里放礼物。所以西班牙孩子过三王节的兴奋劲儿，不比圣诞节小。

你看，日本屋顶上飞着鱼，瑞典的男孩女孩轮流戴王冠，西班牙的三王在街上撒糖。日期不同，玩法不同，心意却一样：在那一天，全世界的孩子都是最要紧的人。

Fish Flying on Roofs, Three Kings on the Street

Children's Day in China is June 1st. But around the world, Children's Day does not fall on the same day, and the ways of celebrating differ even more: some are full of fish flying in the sky, some are holidays that boys and girls take turns celebrating, and some have three kings riding camels down the street scattering candy.

Japan actually has two Children's Days. March 3rd is the Doll's Festival, also called Girls' Day. Families set up tiered doll stands, with the emperor and empress on the topmost tier and court ladies and musicians below, and girls invite friends to admire the dolls and eat diamond-shaped rice cakes. May 5th is Boys' Day. Families with boys raise tall poles in their yards and string up carp streamers to flutter in the wind. The big black one stands for father, the red one for mother, and the smaller ones for the children. Why carp? An old legend says carp swim upstream and can even leap over the Dragon Gate, so grown-ups hope boys will be brave and persistent, like carp unafraid of rapids. Samurai dolls and little suits of armor are displayed in the house that day too, wishing the child strength and health.

Sweden's Children's Day is quite special: boys and girls celebrate on separate days. October 7th is Boy's Day, when boys get to wear crowns, eat candy, and receive small gifts, and some shops hold special events for boys. December 19th is Girl's Day, when girls become the protagonists and wear candle crowns - a tradition from the old legend of Saint Lucia, in which the eldest daughter of a household rose early, put on a white gown and a crown, and served coffee and saffron buns to her family. Swedes say splitting the holiday in two is fair: boys and girls each get a day that is entirely their own.

In Spain, the most important day for children is actually Three Kings' Day on January 6th. The night of January 5th brings the liveliest parade: three kings ride camels down the street waving to the crowd, and attendants behind them throw basketfuls of candy to the children on both sides. Kids rush out with hats and pockets to catch candy, and the streets are packed. Children place their shoes on the windowsill, and legend says the kings leave gifts in the shoes of those who have behaved well all year. So for Spanish children, the excitement of Three Kings' Day is no less than Christmas.

Look: fish fly above Japanese rooftops, boys and girls in Sweden take turns wearing crowns, and three kings scatter candy down Spanish streets. The dates differ, the customs differ, but the feeling is the same - on that day, every child in the world is the most important person.