

This month, Alex corresponds with two boys, Dhas and Porpeang, fourth grade classmates from Bangkok, Thailand.

Dear Dhas and Porpeang,

Hi. My name is Alex. I'm a 13-year-old from Colorado in the mountains of the western part of the United States.

I'm very interested to hear about Loy Krathong, your autumn festival with floating lanterns. What are you celebrating at this festival? How did it originate? What other traditions does it include?

My country celebrates a harvest holiday in November called Thanksgiving. It was established to celebrate our country's history and the hardships faced by early settlers to America, but it is also to show appreciation for friends and family. Most people prepare a feast with turkey and other seasonal foods for this holiday.

I would like to know about each of you. What is your favorite school subject? Do you have siblings?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Alex



Dear Alex,

Hi, my name is Porpeang. I'm 10 years old. I'm from Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. Bangkok is in the central part of Thailand.

I will tell you about Loy Krathong. This festival has the main item called a krathong. The krathong is made of banana leaves, local flowers, fish snacks, and candles. The floating lanterns you've seen look like little balloons. They are beautiful, but they make lots of smoke. Most people in Bangkok don't use them now.

I have no siblings. My favorite school subject is art. I love drawing and coloring.

Sincerely,

Porpeang



Dear Alex,

Hi, my name is Dhas. I'm a 10-year-old from Bangkok. Bangkok is the most populated city in Thailand.

Loy Krathong is a Thai festival celebrated annually throughout Thailand and also in nearby countries with significant Thai cultures. The name could be translated as "to float a ritual vessel or lamp," and comes from the tradition of making krathong, decorated baskets, which are floated in the river. Many Thais use krathong to thank the goddess of water or rivers.

My favorite subject is history. I have one older sister. She is 13 years old.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Dhas



Dear Porpeang,

My favorite subject is also art. What is your favorite thing to draw? What is school in Thailand like?

I have two siblings, but they are adults now so they don't stay with us much. I would love to hear more about krathong. Do you have any pictures from it that I could see?

Can't wait to hear back!

Alex



Dhas prepares a krathong with his father and sister.



Alex with her older sister, Gabriella.

Dear Alex,

I'm so glad to hear from you again. I love to draw cute cats or dogs because they are easy to draw.

I'm in Ratchawinit school, one of the Royal schools and it is very large. The school starts at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 2:10 p.m. The teachers are very kind and funny. We don't have much homework, which I like very much. There are two breaks at my school: October-November and March- April.

At my school, we made krathong last year. Teachers and students were encouraged to wear traditional Thai clothes to help celebrate this festive occasion. Students made their own krathong and decorated them with flowers, incense sticks, and candles. It was a successful Loy Krathong festival for everyone at my school. I can't wait to join the festival again this year.

It was nice to hear from you again.

Porpeang



Dear Dhas,

What is your favorite thing to learn about in history? In my class we are currently learning about American history, but I don't think schools in Thailand teach much of that. I also have a sister, but she's much older.

Sincerely,

Alex



Dear Alex,

I like to learn about Thai history in my class. I am studying at one of the government schools in Bangkok. There are many types of schools in Thailand.

My sister and I study at different schools. My parents sent her to study at one government girl's school in Thailand. She had to work very hard to pass the entrance exam. We are so proud of her.

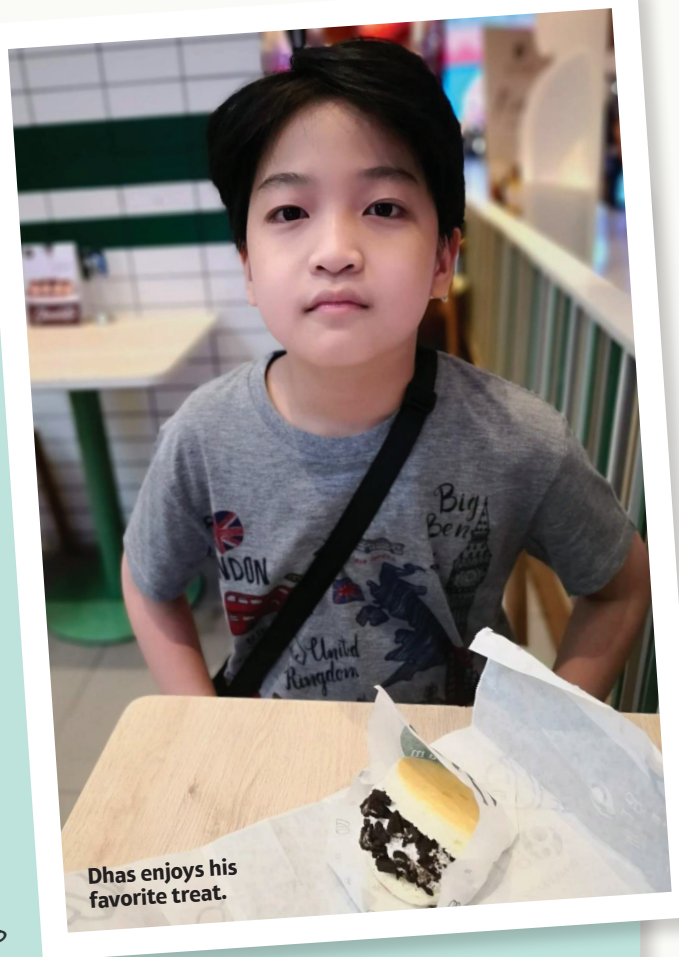
About Loy Krathong, my family and I have joined this festival every year at the river nearest our house. At my school, last year on November 8 we celebrated this event by making krathongs and singing Loy Krathong songs.

The school warmly invited our parents to join us and participate in this special event. My homeroom and social studies teacher told the story about Loy Krathong to my class. This festival is one of the most beautiful festivals in Thailand. We celebrate it on the full moon day in November. The word *loy* means to float, and a *krathong* is a banana leaf cup. As we push our *krathongs* into the river, we ask for forgiveness in polluting the waterways and also for good luck in the coming months.

I sent you some of my pictures with my family and also some photos of the Loy Krathong festival my school held last year. Some teachers and some students wore Thai traditional costumes for the event.

It was very nice to talk with you.

Dhas



Dhas enjoys his favorite treat.



Dhas is ready for school.

