

Astrology: Teachers' notes and tips – elementary

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Write *horoscope* on the board and elicit its meaning (a description of what is going to happen to somebody in the future, based on when the person was born). Do the same for *astrology* (the study of how the stars and the planets influence people's lives). Explain that this is the theme of today's reading.
- b Ask students where horoscopes can be found (in newspapers and magazines, on the Internet, from fortune-tellers...).
- c Give each student a copy of Worksheet 1 and get them to tell each other which statement from question 1 is true for them. It doesn't matter if they talk about Western or Chinese horoscopes – whichever is relevant to them.
- d Monitor while students chat and listen for any interesting comments.

Tip: listen for interesting stories

If someone has been to a fortune-teller, ask them to tell the class what happened – was the information correct?

- e Divide the class in half. Then put the students into small groups of about four students. Half the groups are A groups, and the others are B groups.
- f Ask the students in the A groups to look at the left column of the table on their worksheets and the students in the B groups to look at the right column. In their groups ask them to think about what kind of information is missing and see if they can guess any of the answers.

Tip: do an example or two first

Each animal/sign is about _____ long. What information is missing here? Length of body or length of time? Dogs/Cancerians are _____. Elicit that adjectives are needed here to describe personality.

Tip: encourage predicting

Students will be able to understand the text better if they've anticipated the content.

2 First reading tasks

- a Students each receive a copy of the reading. They have to read the text and complete the information for their half of the table only: A students have the Chinese astrology reading on Worksheet 2a and fill in the left-hand column, B students have the Western astrology reading on Worksheet 2b and fill in the right-hand column.
- b Students have a go on their own first and then compare their answers.

Tip: use groups for support

When students work together and share answers, it really benefits the weaker ones.

- c Stop when all the students have their part of the table filled in. Don't give feedback but use the answers at the end to help while monitoring.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Now rearrange the students into AB pairs; ideally they should be sitting facing each other so that they cannot see either the worksheet or the facing student's reading text.
- b Students now take it in turns to tell each other about their different astrology. The answers are written in the other column.

Tip: student dictations are multi-skill tasks

To do this information gap students are reading, speaking, listening and writing.

- c When this is done, they together decide if the statements in question 3 are true or false. They need to refer back to the text and scan it to find the relevant information. Make sure that students are only looking at their own text and not looking at their partner's text.
- d When they have finished, they can compare their answers with another pair.
- e Allow students to read the other text too, not necessarily now, but perhaps for homework.

Tip: encourage different reading skills

This is an ideal way to practise scanning. The students have no need to read the whole text again, they simply need to scan to find the relevant information.

4 Post-reading tasks – Speaking

- a When most of the students have finished tell them that the description of the Fire Dog and the Cancerian is about the same person – a very famous person. Together they decide who the person is.
- b When students have had time to discuss who the person might be, ask for suggestions. Get students to explain why they think it's this person. There are a number of clues in both texts.
- c Feedback: George W Bush is a Fire Dog and a Cancerian. Do students agree with the information? Why / why not?

Tip: link the reading to a speaking task

Reacting to information in a text is a real-life activity. Give some help with sentences: *I think George Bush is _____ and / but in the text it says _____.*

5 Post-reading tasks – Completing a table

- a Students are going to complete a table with information about their Western star sign and their Chinese animal. This can be done together in your school's computer lab or, if students have easy access to the Internet outside of school, for homework.
- b Explain to students that the sites are for native speakers. So again they have to use their scanning skills to focus only on the information they need and not get distracted by irrelevant information they don't understand. For each *horoscope* they need to find two or three positive adjectives and two or three negative adjectives about their personality.
- c The adjectives they don't understand need to be looked up in a dictionary.
- d In the following lesson students tell each other about their personality adjectives and say whether or not they agree with them.
- e Useful adjectives can be pooled together and recorded.

Tip: look at the sites yourself first

Check out what students need to do so that you are prepared to help them. If you can have the sites up on an Interactive Whiteboard to show what needs to be done, this would be the best option. Otherwise, be ready to help students individually.

Key
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A Chinese astrology	B Western astrology
The zodiac is a cycle of 12 years.	The zodiac is a cycle of 12 months .
There are 12 animals.	There are 12 star signs.
Each animal is about 1 year long.	Each sign is about 1 month long.
There are 5 elements.	There are 4 elements.
The zodiac starts at the end of January or the beginning of February	The zodiac starts 20 th March or 21 st March,
it depends on the moon.	it depends on the sun.
Your personality depends on your animal and element.	Your personality depends on your star sign.
Dogs are: honest / intelligent / fair / generous / helpful / faithful	Cancerians are: kind / romantic / faithful
but they can also be: unfriendly / (very) aggressive	but they can also be: difficult to understand or be with
They get on well with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horses and • Tigers 	They get on well with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scorpions and • Capricorns

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- a* true, but Chinese astrology *only* has animal signs
b true, Aries the ram and the Sheep
c false, there are three: Fire, Earth and Water
d true
e false, there are some traits which are the same but there are differences too
f false, they're either babies or 60 (2006 was the last Fire Dog year)
g false, they're born from 21st June to 22nd July

NB This is a slightly simplified version of Chinese astrology – there's more to it than this. If you have some students in the class who know more about it, then do encourage them to add more information.