

Astrology: Teachers' notes and tips – upper intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Give each pair of students a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to answer the three questions about animals.
- b Before feedback students should compare their answers with another pair.
- c Elicit answers: a rooster is the American word for a male hen (the British say *cock*), sheep tails hang down, they graze (eat grass) and have wool coats whereas goats tails go up, they browse (eat shrubs) and have hair coats; a wild boar is a wild pig.
- d Can students guess the theme for the reading? Do they know what animal is for 2007? Can they name the other animals in the Chinese zodiac?

Tip: have an alternative task for Asian students

See if they can name the 12 star signs for the Western zodiac, or put the Chinese animals in their correct order.

- e Students then read through the 12 personality descriptions on the worksheet and decide which one describes them the best (they are not in the correct order).
- f Get them to help each other with unknown vocabulary. When they're stuck they can look the words up in a dictionary.

Tip: use monolingual dictionaries

At this level students shouldn't use bilingual dictionaries; they don't need a translation, they need the definition.

- g Once every student has chosen a description make sure that they have made a note of the number.
- h Meanwhile have a few copies of the Chinese Lunar Zodiac Calendar (at the end of these notes) put up on the walls of the classroom.
- i Students take it in turns to rush up and scan the table to find out which animal they are – they don't need to tell anyone their year of birth if they don't want to! Remind students that they should be extra careful if they are born in January or February as the Chinese New Year can start in either month.

Tip: encourage different reading skills

This is a scanning exercise and should only take a few seconds per student.

- j Now dictate the following: 1 is Ox, 2 Rat, 3 Horse, 4 Sheep or Goat, 5 Dog, 6 Pig or Wild Boar, 7 Snake, 8 Rooster, 9 Dragon, 10 Monkey, 11 Tiger and 12 Rabbit.
- k Get them to tell each other if they identified their animal correctly, and if not, do they agree with the correct answer?

2 First reading tasks

- a Students each receive a copy of the reading. They have to read the text fairly quickly and a) translate the phrase at the end, and / or b) decide if the writer believes in astrology and horoscopes a lot, a little or not at all.
- b Feedback: this is Happy New Year! in Cantonese. In Mandarin it's Xin Nien Kuai Le! (Gung Hay Fat Choy! means Wishing You Prosperity!) The writer is interested but doesn't really believe in it at all.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Ask students to read the text again and to look out for all the words and phrases which show that the writer doesn't take the information about astrology seriously.
- b Students compare their answers, there are at least 10 more references.

Tip: do an example first

Ask students to look at the first paragraph and elicit: *I don't believe in any of it really*. Students then continue working on their own.

- c Feedback suggestions: *sceptical, the lack of scientific evidence in its favour, intrigued by, according to one legend, it appears that, apparently, it seems that, meant to, considered, take with a pinch of salt, perhaps...*
- d When they have finished they can compare their answers with another pair.

Tip: consider not using teacher-centred feedback

Perhaps have a copy of the reading on an OHT so students can come up and underline the phrases, or if you have an IWB use that instead.

Tip: highlight the writer's attitude

Students at this level should learn to recognise if a writer is being funny, sarcastic, serious etc, or as in this case, sceptical but light-hearted.

4 Third reading tasks

- a Ask students to read the text again and underline parts that they
 - agree with
 - disagree with
 - don't understand

5 Post-reading tasks - speaking

- a In pairs students compare their underlined parts and explain their opinions.

Tip: encourage students to react to the text

Give an example of this first: *I agree that horoscopes are usually over optimistic, do you?* This is what we do in real-life and so is an authentic task, students can of course disagree with each other.

6 Post-reading tasks – writing and reading

- a The Chinese have decided to add another animal!! Students chose an animal and write an imaginary personality profile for someone born in the year of the cow, dinosaur, penguin.... Encourage students to use the new vocabulary they've learnt during this lesson.
- b For follow-up students can read each others descriptions and choose one they like the best.

Tip: recycle vocabulary

There's a lot of vocabulary in this reading, using the words for the writing will help but have some other activities that recycle useful vocabulary as well.

Chinese Lunar Zodiac Calendar

New Year began on:	Lunar Animal was:	New Year began on:	Lunar Animal was:
1934 - Feb. 14	Dog	1965 - Feb. 02	Snake
1935 - Feb. 04	Pig / Wild Boar	1966 - Jan. 21	Horse
1936 - Jan. 24	Rat	1967 - Feb. 09	Goat / Sheep
1937 - Feb. 11	Ox	1968 - Jan. 30	monkey
1938 - Jan. 31	Tiger	1969 - Feb. 17	Rooster
1939 - Feb. 19	Rabbit	1970 - Feb. 06	Dog
1940 - Feb. 08	Dragon	1971 - Jan. 27	Pig / Wild Boar
1941 - Jan. 27	Snake	1972 - Feb. 15	Rat
1942 - Feb. 15	Horse	1973 - Feb. 03	Ox
1943 - Feb. 05	Goat / Sheep	1974 - Jan. 23	Tiger
1944 - Jan. 25	Monkey	1975 - Feb. 11	Rabbit
1945 - Feb. 13	Rooster	1976 - Jan. 31	Dragon
1946 - Feb. 02	Dog	1977 - Feb. 18	Snake
1947 - Jan. 22	Pig / Wild Boar	1978 - Feb. 07	Horse
1948 - Feb. 10	Rat	1979 - Jan. 28	Goat / Sheep
1949 - Jan. 29	Ox	1980 - Feb. 16	Monkey
1950 - Feb. 17	Tiger	1981 - Feb. 05	Rooster
1951 - Feb. 06	Rabbit	1982 - Jan. 25	Dog
1952 - Jan. 27	Dragon	1983 - Feb. 13	Pig / Wild Boar
1953 - Feb. 14	Snake	1984 - Feb. 02	Rat
1954 - Feb. 03	Horse	1985 - Feb. 20	Ox
1955 - Jan. 24	Goat / Sheep	1986 - Feb. 09	Tiger
1956 - Feb. 12	Monkey	1987 - Jan. 29	Rabbit
1957 - Jan. 31	Rooster	1988 - Feb. 17	Dragon
1958 - Feb. 18	Dog	1989 - Feb. 06	Snake
1959 - Feb. 08	Pig / Wild Boar	1990 - Jan. 27	Horse
1960 - Jan. 28	Rat	1991 - Feb. 15	Goat / Sheep
1961 - Feb. 15	Ox	1992 - Feb. 04	Monkey
1962 - Feb. 05	Tiger	1993 - Jan. 23	Rooster
1963 - Jan. 25	Rabbit	1994 - Feb. 10	Dog
1964 - Feb. 13	Dragon	1995 - Jan. 31	Pig / Wild Boar