

## Astrology: Reading

There's something about the New Year that always makes me read my horoscope to see what lies ahead. I don't believe in any of it really but there's comfort in being told that the next 12 months will bring health, wealth and happiness (well, it's usually over optimistic, isn't it?).



There are many other people who are also sceptical about astrology and its belief that knowledge of the position of the stars and planets can help us understand our personality or predict human affairs. However, despite the lack of scientific evidence in its favour, astrology (not to be confused with astronomy which is the scientific study of astronomical objects) has been around for thousands of years, and is believed by millions of people in both the West and the East.

The Occident has its star signs every month and the Orient has its animals every year. I have to confess that this year I'm now more intrigued by the predictions for the future because 2007 is significant for me - yes, I'm a *Pig* (actually I prefer the alternative *Wild Boar!*). When I first found out I was a *Pig* person I was a little disappointed, and my friends (mighty *Dragons*, friendly *Dogs* and ferocious *Tigers*) sniggered. Pigs have a bad reputation - people think they're dirty animals that smell horrible and many cultures don't even eat them.

In the Chinese zodiac there are 12 animals and according to one legend, when Buddha left the earth only 12 animals came to say goodbye to him. As a reward Buddha named a year after each of the animals in the order that they came to him, and the pig (you've guessed it) came last - no doubt snuffling in the undergrowth for food rather than bounding forward like the sneaky rat that came first. So I thought I was unlucky being a *Pig* but this isn't so. It appears that *Pigs* are kindly people who are helpful and giving. They tend to make good friends as they are loyal, thoughtful and trusting. *Pigs* are happy, optimistic people and have lots of fun - that sounds OK to me! However, *Pigs* are often naive and apparently it's easy to con a *Pig*. They can also be very impulsive and react without thinking, and they're not that great with money either. *Pigs*, it seems, get along with *Sheep* and *Rabbits* but, interestingly, not other *Pigs*, who they should stay clear of (I'd better cancel my dinner date with Ewan McGregor then!).

The *Pig* year itself is one of benevolence and is meant to make people feel good. It's also considered a good year for business. However, although life in this year will be lived to the full, care is recommended with any matters concerning money - no wonder I'm not rich!

There are different kinds of *Pigs* though. Like all the animals of the Chinese zodiac they can be one of the five elements: *Wood*, *Fire*, *Earth*, *Metal* and *Water*. I'm an *Earth Pig* which is interesting because, according to Western astrology, I'm *Taurus* the bull and *Taurus* is an *Earth* sign too. There are many similarities between the two: *Taureans* also make good friends, are patient and loyal, and hard working. They both dislike quarrels but can be hot tempered at times, and they both have a love for the good things in life including good food and wine. Fortunately, *Taureans* have a

horror of falling into debt and will do anything to stop this happening so that's useful! However, unlike *Pigs*, *Taureans* can be jealous, inflexible, greedy and stubborn! Both are industrious, practical, motivated by common sense and level-headed, so no wonder I take all this with a pinch of salt!

Incidentally the word *astrology*, and *astronomy* too, comes from the Greek word *astron*, which means *star*. There are some other interesting origins of words that are linked to the stars or planets too. The word *disaster*, for example, comes from the Latin *dis-aster* meaning *bad star*. We sometimes call a crazy or strange person a *lunatic* (or the shortened form *loony*), this is from the word *lunar* meaning moon - it was believed that the moon could make some people crazy, especially a full moon. A *jovial* person is jolly because they are influenced by *Jove*, the Latin word for the planet Jupiter. Finally, the word *influenza*, or *flu*, comes from the Latin *influentia*. It was believed the illness was caused by unfavourable star influences. And of course we call famous singers or film actors *stars* in recognition of the lucky stars that have brought them fame and fortune.

So perhaps I have a good year ahead. I won't make a lot of money but it seems I'll be happy with my life and my friends so that's fine by me. Sun nin fy lok!