

The Year of the Dog

By Charles Hope & Illustrated by Jess Racklyeft

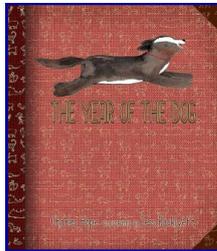
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Dog had never known what it was like to have a home. It was all she'd ever wanted. At the animal shelter where she lived, she happily watched as her friends, one by one, found families to love. After a while poor Dog began to wonder if her turn would ever come...

The Year of the Dog is a heart warming story about friendship, belonging, the power of family and never giving up hope, with a lovable protagonist that is sure to strike a chord with both children and adults alike. Throughout the story the positive attributes of Dog and the other animals are revealed, cleverly blending non-fiction information about the Chinese Zodiac with an entertaining fiction storyline.



Teacher Notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- The Chinese Zodiac
- Friendship
- Belonging
- Desire for family
- Never giving up hope
- Positive qualities/traits
- Lunar calendar vs solar calendar

Discussion Questions & Activities:

Before reading *The Year of the Dog*:

- Brainstorm what students understand about the Chinese Zodiac.
- What is their first response when they look at the cover of the book?
- Can they think of any animals that belong to the Chinese Zodiac?

After reading *The Year of the Dog* ask the students the following questions:

- What year is it according to the Chinese Zodiac (hopefully an easy one!)?
- How many animals are there in the Zodiac? What are they?
- Which animal is it in 2019, 2020 etc?
- When does the Chinese Zodiac change from one animal to the next?
- Why do the dates change from year to year?
- What is a lunar calendar?
- How is a lunar calendar different from the solar calendar (one of which we use, the Gregorian calendar, which is seen as the international standard)?
- Organise the class into small groups. Assign each group an animal from the Chinese Zodiac (<https://www.yourchineseastrology.com/zodiac/>). Ask each group to research their assigned animal to answer the following questions: what are the next 5 'birth' years for this animal? What are its lucky colours? Flowers? Numbers? Which Zodiac animal/s is it compatible with? What is its element? What are its personality traits?
- Ask the children to look for and print images relating to their Zodiac animal e.g. lucky colours/flowers, examples of Chinese artwork of their animal, famous people born in past years of their animal, etc.
- Ask each group to create a poster collage. Ask them to attach the images they found online and to write a short sentence detailing what that image means in relation to their Zodiac animal. All members of the group then take turns presenting their findings to the rest of the class.
- Ask the students to reflect on the words they would use to describe the Chinese Zodiac, and the words that have been used in the book. Ask them to draw up a list of words that can be used to describe the Chinese Zodiac.
- Potential homework for the whole class: ask the students to find out the birthdates of their family members (siblings, parents, aunts/uncles and grandparents). They can then check these dates at <http://www.chinesezodiac.com/calculator.php> to find out the Zodiac animals for their family.