



wild dog

Wild Dog Books
Teachers' Notes

The Year of the Dog

Synopsis

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 heartwarming 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.

Writing style

The Year of the Dog has been designed with the needs of early readers in mind. Simple and succinct language is used throughout the book, with no more than a few sentences on each page. The colourful images relate directly to the text, so young readers have multiple entry points to engage with the information. There are several pages of information about the Chinese Zodiac at the back of the book, including birth years and general characteristics for each animal, which will aid young readers in developing the tools of research and analysis.

Photographic/Design style

The Year of the Dog beautifully combines watercolour and digital illustrations, which are set against stark white backdrops to help capture the imagination of the reader. The combination of these soft yet distinctive images with sparse text and oodles of white space allows the reader to fully engage with the story and themes being discussed. The illustrations are strongly composed and clearly printed with bright strong colours to increase the appeal to visual readers, while also allowing readers to explore how images are used to convey messages.

Study notes

Themes:

- Descriptive words
- The Chinese Zodiac
- Friendship
- Belonging
- Desire for family
- Never giving up hope
- Positive qualities/traits
- Lunar calendar (vs Solar calendar)

Curriculum link: Literacy

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?

While reading *The Year of the Dog*:

- Ask the students to take turns reading a paragraph aloud to the rest of the class. Where appropriate, ask the students what they think certain words may mean.

After reading *The Year of the Dog*:

- 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.

Curriculum Theme: Critical and Creative Thinking

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)?

Curriculum link: ICT Capability

After reading *The Year of the Dog*:

- 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.

Curriculum Theme: Personal and Social Capability

After reading *The Year of the Dog*:

- Organise the class into two groups. In one group, ask the students to work as a team to construct a word finder puzzle. Ask each student to suggest an appropriate word taken from the book. (e.g. brave, loyal, shrewd etc.). Once completed, print copies for the other group to complete.
- In the second group, students should work as a team to create a trivia bingo game. Ask each student to suggest a fact about the animals of the Zodiac e.g. I am born in 1975, I come immediately before Rat, etc. Combine these bingo clues into a game for the whole class.
- 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.

Find out more

- <http://www.chinesezodiac.com/calculator.php>
- <https://www.yourchineseastrology.com/zodiac/>
- <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-zodiac/>
- <http://www.chinesezodiac.com/signs.php>

Marketing and promotion

The Year of the Dog is currently a one-off title, though has the potential to be developed into a year-on-year series focusing on a new Zodiac animal each year. Should the series be developed, 2019 will be the year of the Pig, 2020 will be the year of the Rat and 2021 will be the year of the Ox.