

CELEBRATIONS

Chinese New Year

Exercise 1: Chinese New Year

How did you celebrate New Year's Eve this year? Where were you? Who were you with? What did you do?



Read the text below and answer the following questions with your partner:

- When is the next Chinese New Year?
- Why do people clean their homes?
- How do you say 'Happy New Year' in Chinese?
- What are children given?
- How long do the celebrations last?

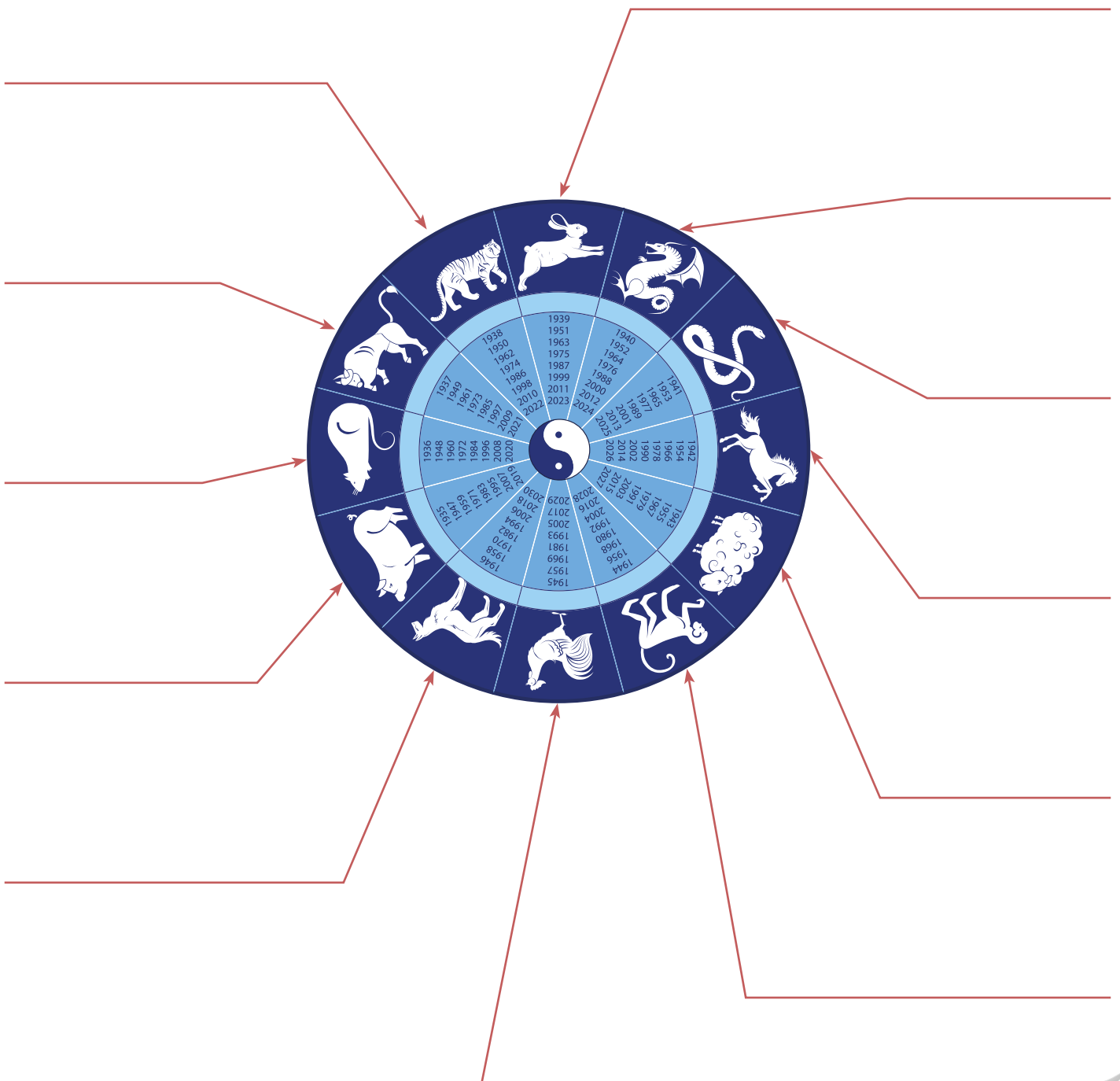
The Chinese New Year begins on the first day of the first month on the Chinese lunar calendar, but people start preparing for the celebrations several days earlier. Families clean their houses, hoping to get rid of bad fortune and welcome some good. On New Year's Eve there is usually a large meal with the whole family, who then play cards or other games. Every light is supposed to be kept on the whole night, and at midnight the sky is lit up by fireworks and firecrackers. The next morning children are given 'lucky money' wrapped in red paper, and families greet each other saying, '*Kung hei fat choy*,' which means 'a happy and prosperous New Year'. The New Year celebrations continue for 15 to 20 days, ending with the Lantern Festival on the first full moon of the New Year. Each year is dedicated to one of 12 animals, and it is believed that people inherit the characteristics of the animal in whose year they were born.

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Exercise 2: The Chinese Astrological Wheel

Look at the picture of the Chinese Astrological Wheel. There is an astrological character linked to each of the 12 animals used to symbolize each year. How many of the animals can you name? And what is the name of the symbol at the centre of the wheel?



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Exercise 3: The legend of the 12 animals

Read the first part of a legend about the 12 animals in the Chinese calendar.

One day the Jade Emperor, the ruler of heaven, asked to see the 12 most interesting animals on Earth. The emperor's envoy met a rat and told him to find the other 11 animals. These were the cat, monkey, rooster, tiger, dragon, snake, ram, rabbit, dog, horse and ox. The rat found all the animals and told them to meet the Emperor the next morning. The cat was worried that he would oversleep and asked the rat to wake him.

Can you put the rest of the story in order?

- And so the pig became the 12th animal.
- When the poor cat woke up he ran up to heaven but was told he was too late.
- The cat was so angry that he chased the first rat he saw.
- That is why, to this day, cats always chase rats.
- The next day, when the Emperor saw that there were only 11 animals, he was very angry.
- The rat thought the Emperor would prefer the cat, so he let him sleep.
- He sent a servant to bring back the first animal he saw, which turned out to be a pig.

Exercise 4: What animal?

dog	ox	tiger	rooster
rabbit	monkey	pig	rat
horse	snake	dragon	sheep

Match the animals from the Chinese Zodiac below to the list of character adjectives.

- _____ : charming, determined, intelligent, good with money. Motto: 'I rule.'
- _____ : trustworthy, hard-working, stubborn. Motto: 'I persevere.'
- _____ : brave, competitive, optimistic. Motto: 'I win.'
- _____ : lucky, shy, generous, a good friend. Motto: 'I retreat.'
- _____ : strong, energetic, a born leader. Motto: 'I reign.'
- _____ : wise, attractive, polite, confident. Motto: 'I feel.'
- _____ : sociable, intelligent, impatient, passionate. Motto: 'I control.'
- _____ : artistic, sympathetic, sensitive, a worrier. Motto: 'I depend.'

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9. _____: curious, successful, independent, sociable. Motto: 'I entertain.'
10. _____: friendly, hard-working, self-centred, popular. Motto: 'I know better.'
11. _____: loyal, fair, selfish, alert. Motto: 'I worry.'
12. _____: noble, affectionate, friendly, easily angered. Motto: 'I preserve.'

With your partner, put the character adjectives from the previous exercise into the correct column in the table below:

Positive	Negative	Could be either

Look back at the animals on the Astrological Wheel. Look for the year in which you were born and find your animal. Do the adjectives correctly describe your character? Are there any that you disagree with? Are there any that you would add?

Do you have a motto or are there any famous mottos in your country?