New Year Horoscopes: Teachers' notes and tips

1   Pre-writing Task: Lead-in to Subject

a   Write *horoscope* on the board and get students to explain this. Ask students in pairs to ask each other:

- Do they read their horoscopes? Why / why not?
- Do they believe in what horoscopes say? Why / why not?
- What subjects do horoscopes usually cover?

b   Feedback: elicit that most horoscopes talk about love, money and health. They can also offer advice about what to do, e.g. *Work harder this month.*

Tip: Use Realia

It would be great f you can bring in a magazine / newspaper that has horoscopes - no need for the students to read them but it just helps to clarify what horoscopes are for those who are less familiar with them.

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2   Pre-writing Tasks: Vocabulary

a   Give each student the task sheet and ask them to find the 12 animals. Give them a time limit of two minutes.They then write the animal by a number like the rabbit example.

b   If after two minutes students haven't finished, get them to check their answers with another student.

c   Feedback: the students may not have found, or understood 'rooster' and 'ox'*.* Make sure you can explain these; and the 'dragon' isn't real of course.

Tip: Always Consider the Pace of a Lesson

Don't let activities drag on; keep to the two-minute rule especially as faster students will have finished.

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d   Ask students to look at the adjectives in the box (task 2) and check that they understand them. If they don't, they can ask another student but check the definition is correct.

e   Explain, or elicit if you can, that these are adjectives to describe people's personality. They describe someone's character (what they're like) not their appearance (what they look like).

f   Choose an animal, not one of the 12 in task 1, and explain that it can have a 'personality' we associate with it: e.g. dog - faithful, owl - wise. It would be great if you knew an example of an animal from the students' country. Do the students agree - in some cultures owls are considered unlucky.

g   Working in pairs, students then choose an adjective to go with an animal. Do an example first: which adjective would go with *rabbit*? Calm? Funny? Sociable? (They're always in big groups!) Get students to make their own

suggestions too: peaceful? (But not fluffy - this describes appearance.) They then write the adjective by the animal. (Asian students may have guessed already what you're doing but that's fine, they can add the adjectives already associated with these animals.) Students then compare their ideas - are they similar?

Tip: Encourage Positive Comments
Bearing in mind what comes later try not to let students be too negative and to remind them that they are thinking about personality. *Dirty* is inappropriate for pig, but *lazy* is OK.

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h   Ask students what the connection is between the 12 animals. If they don't know, tell them that each year in the Chinese calendar is one of these animals. Do they know what year 2005 is? (*Year of the rooster*) Do they know what 2006 / 2007 is? (*Year of the dog / pig*). Do they know what year in the Chinese calendar their birthday falls in? Probably not!

i   At the end of these notes is a chart showing all the years from 1924 to 1995. Photocopy it a few times and put it up on the classroom walls. Get students to rush up and find out which animal they are. Once they know they sit down.

j   Ask students which animals they are and write a tally of these on the board e.g. dogs 5, roosters 2 etc. It would be surprising if you have every animal represented in your class, so make a note of an animal that is missing.

Tip: Be Culturally Sensitive
Some students may feel offended or embarrassed by their animal. It's better to ask *Who was born in the year of the monkey / pig* rather than *How many of you are monkeys / pigs?*

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k   Return to the worksheet and get students to look at task 3. Explain that this is a horoscope for 2005 - the year of the rooster. The horoscope is for someone who was born in the year of the … (missing animal) e.g. tiger. Do the first sentence with the class and elicit the missing adjectives e.g. You are a *wild* and *dangerous* person. This is an *exciting* year for you.

l   Students continue in pairs filling in the missing adjectives. They can choose these from the ones already looked at or come up with other ones too. Remind them they can use negative adjectives: *unpopular* etc. Students decide if this is a good year (You are *lucky* in love!) or a bad year (You are *unlucky* in love!).

m   When students have finished ask a few of them to read out what they have written to the class. Is it a good year, or a bad year?

Tip: monitor well
Remind students to write **an** where needed, and perhaps write on the board any new adjectives that come up for reference. This is an opportunity for recycling too so remind students of adjectives they already know - using them will help students to remember them.

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3   Writing

a Divide out the animals on the board so that each student is writing about another animal, not their own.

b Handout the blank horoscope page for students to understand the task but they should not write on this until they've done a rough draft first.

c **First draft:** Students, looking at the example they've just written on the task sheet, write the horoscope for next year. If this is 2006, they draw a dog in the blank square and write *The year of the dog for a* …(whichever animal you gave them). Below that they write a short description about the person and what kind of year this will be. They then write more sentences for the four different subjects (Love and Romance, etc). Get them to write these sentences in rough first before writing directly on the page. Highlight the use of the imperative for advice: *Eat less, Be careful,* etc.

Tip: Keep It Simple
Make sure students aren't writing anything too complicated. Refer to the examples provided in the task sheet. Weaker students can copy this; stronger ones can make their own sentences. Notice the use of the present simple *This **is** a good year for you.*

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d **Improving:** Students then swap their sentences with another pair to look at and edit.

e **Final draft:** Students make any necessary changes with spelling, vocabulary or grammar and then they write neatly onto the page.

4 Post-writing Tasks: Reading

a Once everyone has finished, pin up all the horoscopes around the room. Students first find the one for them and read it - are they happy with it or not?

b If there is enough time, students can then read all the horoscopes - which person has the luckiest year ahead?

The Chinese Calendar

Please note students born between January 1st and January 28th should look at the year *before* as the Chinese New Year starts on January 29th 2006. More information can be found at:

http://www.onestopenglish.com/Magazine/Culture/festivals/WebQuestsmonths/chinesenewyear.htm

rat	ox	tiger	rabbit	dragon	snake	horse	sheep	monkey	rooster	dog	pig
1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947
1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971
1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995