



Year of the Pig

Every stamp tells a story. These stories can be about people, places, events and more. They can even be about legends, such as the one behind the Year of the Pig stamp, which was issued on January 5, 2007. This stamp is the 11th in Canada Post's popular 12-year series on the Lunar New Year.



The legend of the 12 animals of the Chinese Lunar New Year goes something like this...

"According to Chinese legend, the twelve animals quarreled one day as to who was to head the cycle of years. The gods were asked to decide and they held a contest: whoever was to reach the opposite bank of the river would be first, and the rest of the animals would receive their years according to their finish.

All twelve animals gathered at the riverbank and jumped in. Unknown to the ox, the rat had jumped upon his back. As the ox was about to jump ashore, the rat jumped off the ox's back, and won the race. The pig, who was very lazy, ended up last. That is why the rat is the first year of the animal cycle, the ox second, and the pig last."¹

The animals that make up the Lunar New Year are the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster and dog. Do you know which animal you are?

Activity: Choose and research a stamp—and share its story with the class.

In this activity, students use their research, writing and public speaking skills to share the "story behind the stamp" with their classmates.

1. Begin by having students save and collect used stamps from home. Or, if they already collect stamps, they might want to choose a favourite stamp from their collection.
2. Ask children to choose one stamp from their collection and bring it to school. You might want to review students' selections to make sure that there aren't duplicates.
3. Have students research the subject on their stamp and write a simple paragraph (50-100 words) about it.
4. Each day, call upon one student to exhibit their stamp—and read their stamp story to the class.
5. Optional: Create a postal exhibit in your classroom by posting the stamps and their descriptions.



¹From the Chinese Culture Center's zodiac page at www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/zodiac/zodiac.html

Additional items of interest: Chinese Zodiac

Students may be curious about which Lunar New Year sign they or their family members are. Here's a list of the animals and the personality traits they possess, according to Chinese astrology.

Year of birth	Sign	Characteristics
1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996	Rat	Popular, charming, bright, observant, diligent, outgoing, compassionate, thrifty, critical, gullible
1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997	Ox	Conscientious, hardworking, a leader, methodical, determined, dependable, sincere, stubborn, a loner
1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998	Tiger	Dynamic, courageous, charismatic, strong-willed, warm, enthusiastic, a risk-taker, restless, obstinate
1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999	Rabbit	Honest, careful, wise, witty, discreet, diplomatic, sensitive, conscientious, peace-loving, dislikes change
1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000	Dragon	Lucky, ambitious, strong, energetic, self-confident, intelligent, determined, impatient, critical
1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001	Snake	Wise, highly intelligent, deep thinker, a skilful organizer, calm, confident, jealous, evasive, secretive
1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002	Horse	Charming, elegant, popular, lively, honest, straightforward, eloquent, changeable, impatient, narrow-minded
1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003	Ram	Creative, artistic, imaginative, easy-going, persuasive, athletic, sensitive, pessimistic, lacks individuality
1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004	Monkey	Imaginative, inquisitive, quick-witted, helpful, bright, friendly, resourceful, cunning, indiscreet
1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005	Rooster	Honest, flamboyant, forthright, witty, vivacious, meticulous, intelligent, self-centred, tactless
1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006	Dog	Loyal, trustworthy, devoted, direct, intuitive, amiable, temperamental, quick-witted, stubborn
1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007	Pig	Honest, kind, truthful, forgiving, popular, peacemaker, reliable, unselfish, naive, withdrawn