

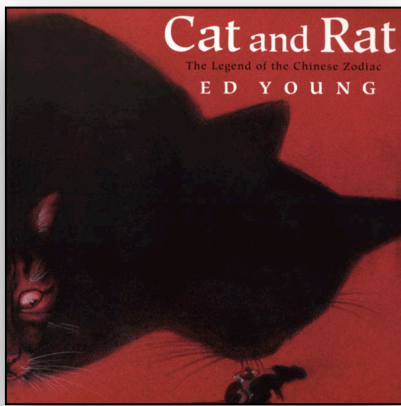


Cruchley's Collection

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her ideas are practical, with a range of opportunities for classroom use.



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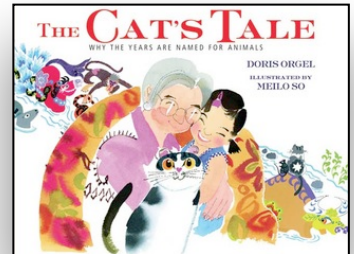


CAT AND RAT

THE LEGEND OF THE CHINESE ZODIAC

ED YOUNG, MACMILLAN BOOKS, ©2019 ISBN 9780606295846

Cat and Rat and *The Cat's Tale* are both about the origin of the Chinese zodiac which was established in a race the Jade Emperor set up. I like the Ed Young version the best, because he is such a great illustrator and his story has more dialogue in it. On the other hand, *The Cat's Tale* is in the first person which provides an opportunity to teach point of view.

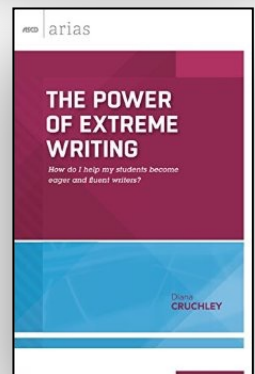


TEACHING IDEAS

Extreme Writing

There should always be three prompts for an Extreme Writing inspiration. Otherwise students waste time making a decision. (See my book **The Power of Extreme Writing**) for a complete description of the process – or extreme-writing.com.

1. Stories of Chinese celebrations I have seen or participated in: dragon boat, dragon dance, etc.
2. My opinion of horoscopes
3. Stories about races in which I have participated – any kind mental, or physical



The Chinese Zodiac Activity

Distribute a copy of the Chinese Zodiac and have students find themselves on it. Distribute the characteristics of each sign - you might omit the “you are compatible with” section as this could create divisions in your class. Discuss how this is pure superstition, as are the western signs of the zodiac. Be sure it is clear that this is fun - but can be a source of fraud for suggestible, vulnerable people.

Chinese New Year

The Chinese use a solar/lunar calendar. It is solar for everyday life, but lunar for the dates of festivals such as Chinese New Year which falls on the first new moon between January 21 and February 21. Celebrations last for 15 days, and include family meals, fireworks, dragon dances, parades, etc. Three of the five auspicious colours are usually used - red, gold, and black.

Lunar Calendars

The standard world calendar is the Gregorian calendar which Canada uses as well and it is based on the amount of time it takes Earth to make one full revolution of the sun. It is a “sol” or sun based calendar. The western world originally used the Julian calendar, established by Julius Caesar, but it had a lot of errors, and was also vulnerable to the whim of the emperor. The Gregorian calendar (which we use) was established by a committee set by Pope Gregory in 1582.

Lunisolar calendars are used in at least 12 different countries in the world - especially Islamic countries.



Memorizing the Sequence of Animals

Because it is a story, after two or three readings, students should be able to recite the order of the Chinese zodiac: Rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, pig. And cat didn't make it onto the sequence because the rat cheated, thus creating the eternal enmity between them.

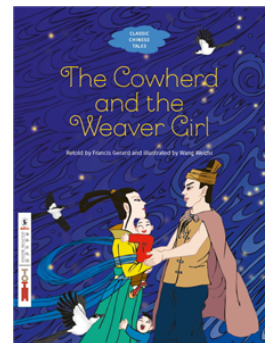
Cats Can't Swim?

In the story, cats can't swim. Actually cats can swim, but their fur gets saturated and they find it difficult and uncomfortable, so they avoid it.

The Jade Emperor

The Jade Emperor establishes the race that leads to the zodiac. He is the legendary Emperor god for the Chinese. He fashioned humans out of clay and left them to dry in the sun. When the rain deformed a few of them, disease came into the world.

The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl is a story of his daughter, Zhinu, who falls in love with a cowherd. Her father disapproves and when she visits him, creates a river (The Milky Way) to separate them forever. Eventually he relents and lets them cross the river on a bridge once a year..



A Book Trailer for *Cat and Rat*

There is a good book trailer for this story at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLKjtqw97E>

Point of View

The Cat's Tale is written in the first person. This is a chance to teach the three basic points of view: First person, Third person limited, and Third person omniscient. The First Person has the main character tell the story from their point of view using "I". Third Person Limited only knows the thoughts of one character (usually the main character). All characters are still referred to as he or she or they, but the plot follows the main character closely and does not know what is happening elsewhere. We do know the main character's thoughts. Third Person Omniscient knows the thoughts of all characters, and also their actions. He, she, they are used throughout.

Grandmother's Names

In **The Cat's Tale**, the grandmother is called Nai Nai. Ask your class what name they give to their grandmother (grandmothers may each have a different name). Nana, grandma Susan, Gammy, Gram, mee-maa, Noni, Ona...and lots more.

Fair

Here's an important question in life: What is fair? Is this race fair? Is the Jade Emperor rigging it? What about the actual competing animals - should the Jade Emperor intervene? Is this a good way of deciding priority? etc.

Pourquoi Stories: How Things Came To Be

The literary name for the stories of how things originated is the French word for Why? which is Pourquoi. This is an example, among several, of stories of how things originated. Students could write their own pourquoi story of how ordinary things in their environment came to be: stop lights, bananas, a park, etc.

The Mermaid's Muse (for which there are ideas in dianacruchley.com) is **The Mermaid's Muse** by David Bouchard.

Stereotypes of Animals

There are specific stereotypes that are basically agreed to from one culture to the other. A matching activity with qualities on one side and the name of the animal on the other will help reveal to students how widely we agree on these stereotypes. Owls are.....; pigs are.....; oxen are.....; mules are.....; etc.