
中国十二生肖的由来

The Origin of the 12 Chinese Zodiac Animals

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十二生肖是中国用来表示年份的12种动物。因为一种动物代表一年，所以一个中国人的生肖就是他出生那年的动物。

鼠、牛、虎、兔、龙、蛇、马、羊、猴、鸡、狗、猪——就是人们说的“十二生肖”。每种生肖都有不同的性格、特点，比如老鼠代表智慧，牛代表勤奋。关于十二生肖的由来，在历史中有不同的故事。由玉皇大帝通过跑步比赛选十二生肖的故事是最普遍的。

很久以前，玉皇大帝想要规定凡间的时间，选择12种动物表示年份。于是，他打算举行一次动物的跑步比赛，先到的12种动物就能成为十二生肖。当时，猫和老鼠是好朋友，他们不但一起报名参加了这个比赛，而且说好了比赛那天一起去。可是到了比赛那天，老鼠竟然起得比平时早，自己偷偷地去参加了比赛，没告诉猫。

老鼠到了比赛地点后发现牛已经在那了，就跳到了牛的身上。老鼠心想：“牛那么大，我在它的身上一定不会被发现，那我就可以轻松地到终点。”比赛开始时，牛就开始跑，没有意识到老鼠还在他的身上。快要到的时候，老鼠迅速地从牛身上跳下来先到终点，得了第一名。因此，牛只得到了第二名。后来，虎、兔、龙、蛇、马、羊、猴、鸡、狗、猪这些动物也到了。

由于猫迟到了，玉皇大帝已经选好了十二种动物，现在的十二生肖里就没有猫了。从此以后，猫一见老鼠就要吃它，老鼠一见猫就跑。不管它的由来是什么，十二生肖都是中国传统文化重要的一部分。

生词 Vocabulary

Proper Nouns

十二生肖	shí'èr shēngxiāo	the twelve Chinese zodiac signs
玉皇大帝	Yùhuáng Dàdì	Jade Emperor
凡间	Fánjiān	The Mortal World

Nouns

性格	xìnggé	character
特点	tèdiǎn	characteristic
智慧	zhìhuì	wisdom
由来	yóulái	origin
终点	zhōngdiǎn	terminal point; destination
平时	píngshí	in normal times
后来	hòulái	after

Verbs

表示	biǎoshì	indicate
通过	tōngguò	by means of; through
规定	guīdìng	rule(s); regulation(s)
报名	bàomíng	sign up
代表	dàibiǎo	represent

Adjectives

普遍	pǔbiàn	common
轻松	qīngsōng	effortless
迅速	xùnsù	fast
勤奋	qínfèn	diligent

Adverbs

竟然	jìngrán	unexpectedly
偷偷	tōutōu	secretly
从此	cóngcǐ	since then

Conjunctions

因此	yīncǐ	therefore
比如	bǐrú	for example
不管	bùguǎn	no matter (what, how, etc.)

Prepositions

关于	guānyú	about
由于	yóuyú	due to

语法点 Grammar Points

1. 不但... 而且 bùdàn... érqiě

conj. not only... but also

不但 (bùdàn) is a construction used to express “not only” in Chinese. When paired with 而且 (érqiě) as in the construction 不但...而且, it is used to mean “not only...but also.”

When 不但 (bùdàn)...而且 (érqiě) is used in a sentence where the subject of the second clause is the same as the subject of the first clause, then it follows this pattern:

Subject + 不但 (bùdàn)..., 而且 (érqiě) ...

小文不但很聪明，而且很努力。

Xiǎo Wén bùdàn hěn cōngmíng, érqiě hěn nǔlì.

Xiao Wen is not only very smart, but also very hardworking.

Here's another, more complicated example:

当时，猫和老鼠是好朋友，他们不但一起报名参加了这个比赛，而且好了比赛那天一起去。

Dāngshí, māo hé lǎoshǔ shì hǎo péngyǒu, tāmen bùdàn yīqǐ bàomíng cānjiāle zhège bǐsài, érqǐě shuō hǎole bǐsài nèitiān yīqǐ qù.

In those days, the cat and the rat were good friends. They not only made a plan to attend the race together, but also decided to travel to the starting line together on the day of the race.

If the subject in the first clause is different from the subject of the second clause, then you should follow this pattern:

不但 (bùdàn) + Subject 1, 而且 (érqǐě) + Subject 2 + 也 (yě)

不但我爸爸会做中国菜，而且我妈妈也会做。

Bùdàn wǒ bàba huì zuò Zhōngguó cài, érqǐě wǒ māmā yě huì zuò.

Not only can my dad cook Chinese food, but my mom can, too.

You will also sometimes see this two subject structure used without 而且 (érqǐě). When 而且 (érqǐě) is omitted, the meaning stays the same.

2. 竟然 jìngrán

adv. unexpectedly; actually; to one's surprise

竟然 (jìngrán) is used in Chinese to express that something has happened unexpectedly.. 竟然 is similar in use and meaning to 居然 (jūrán), but 居然 (jūrán) expresses a feeling of surprise that's more intense.

Sometimes, 竟 (jìng) appears on its own without the 然 (rán), in which case the meaning stays the same.

Check out the following examples to get a better idea of how to use 竟然 (jìngrán):

可是到了比赛那天，老鼠竟然起得比平时早。

Kěshì dào le bǐsài nàtiān, lǎoshǔ jìngrán qǐ dé bǐ píngshí zǎo.

When the appointed day arrived, however, the rat unexpectedly woke up earlier than normal.

到了公司以后，我才发现，竟然没带手机。

Dào le gōngsī yǐhòu, wǒ cái fāxiàn, jìngrán méi dài shǒujī.

After arriving at work, I was surprised to see I hadn't brought my phone.

在故事的结尾，男主角竟然死了。

Zài gùshì de jiéwěi, nán zhǔjué jìngrán sǐ le.

At the end of the story, the male protagonist unexpectedly died.

In each of the examples above, 竟然 (jìngrán) appears directly before the verb and is used to indicate that something unexpected has taken place.

3. 不管 bùguǎn

conj. regardless of; no matter (who, what, etc.)

In Chinese, 不管 (bùguǎn) is used to express “regardless of” or “no matter (who, what, ect.)” 不管 (bùguǎn) is similar in both use and meaning to the more formal 无论 (wúlùn).

不管 (bùguǎn) is frequently used with question words such as 什么 (shénme), 谁 (shéi) or 怎么样 (zěnmeyàng).

When 不管 (bùguǎn) appears in the first clause of a given sentence, it’s common to see 都 (dōu) in the second clause.

For example:

不管怎么样，我们都要坚持。

Bùguǎn zěnmeyàng, wǒmen dōu yào jiānchí.

No matter what, we all must persist.

Here's another, more complex, example:

不管它的由来是什么，十二生肖都是中国传统文化重要的一部分。

Bùguǎn tā de yóulái shì shénme, shí'èr shēngxiào dōu shì Zhōngguó chuántǒng wénhuà zhòngyào de yībùfèn.

No matter where they originally came from, the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac are an indispensable part of Chinese culture.

Another way that 不管 (bùguǎn) is commonly used in sentences that present two different options or possibilities.

One way that the two possibilities or options can be presented in Chinese is as verbs separated by 不 (bù), as in the following example:

不管明天下不下雨，我都会去看我朋友。

Bùguǎn míngtiān xià bù xià yǔ, wǒ dōu huì qù kàn wǒ péngyǒu.

No matter if it rains tomorrow or not, I will go to visit my friend.

At other times, two nouns separated by 还是 (háishì) will be given as options in the first clause, as in the following example:

不管是中国制造还是美国制造，价格都很贵。

Bùguǎn shì Zhōngguó zhìzào háishì Měiguó zhìzào, jiàgé dōu hěn guì.

No matter if it's made in China or America, it's very expensive.

不管 (bùguǎn) can also be used with adjectives to express the equivalent of the phrase “no matter how + adjective.”

Apply the following structure when using 不管 (bùguǎn) with adjectives:

不管 (bùguǎn) + 多 (duō) + adjective, subject + 都 (dōu)

For example:

不管多远，我们都要去。

Bùguǎn duō yuǎn, wǒmen dōu yào qù.

No matter how far away it is, we have to go.

测试 Quiz

1. 老鼠为什么得第一名?
 - a. 因为它起得最早
 - b. 因为它跑得最快
 - c. 因为它很聪明
 - d. 因为它骗了猫

2. 根据文中的故事，十二生肖为什么没有猫?
 - a. 因为猫没有报名参加比赛
 - b. 因为玉帝不喜欢猫
 - c. 因为猫喜欢吃老鼠
 - d. 因为猫迟到了

3. 以下哪个句子是正确的?
 - a. 十二生肖表示十二个月
 - b. 十二生肖是表示年份的十二种动物
 - c. 在十二生肖的顺序中，牛在老鼠的前面
 - d. 只有一个关于十二生肖的来源的故事

4. 哪一个动物是最后一个生肖?
 - a. 猫
 - b. 牛
 - c. 老鼠
 - d. 猪

5. 那一句话是正确?
 - a. 老鼠一般起得很早
 - b. 猫一般起得很晚
 - c. 比赛那一天，老鼠起得比较早
 - d. 玉皇大帝喜欢早上起得早的动物

Answer key on final page of PDF.

Zhōngguó shí'èr shēngxiào de yóulái

Shí'èr shēngxiào shì Zhōngguó yòng lái biǎoshì niánfèn de 12 zhǒng dòngwù. Yīnwèi yīzhǒng dòngwù dài biǎo yīnián, suǒyǐ yīgè Zhōngguó rén de shēngxiào jiùshì tā chūshēng nà nián de dòngwù.

Shǔ, niú, hǔ, tù, lóng, shé, mǎ, yáng, hóu, jī, gǒu, zhū — jiù shì rénmen shuō de “shí'èr shēngxiào.” Měizhǒng shēngxiào dū yǒu bùtóng de xìnggé, tèdiǎn. Bǐrú lǎoshǔ dài biǎo zhìhuì, niú dài biǎo qínfèn. Guānyú shí'èr shēngxiào de yóulái, zài lìshǐ zhōng yǒu bùtóng de gùshì. Yóu Yùhuáng Dàdì tōngguò pǎobù bǐsài xuǎn shí'èr shēngxiào de gùshì shì zuì pǔbiàn de.

Hěnjiǔ yǐqián, Yùhuáng Dàdì xiǎngyào guīdìng fánjiān de shíjiān, xuǎnzé 12 zhǒng dòngwù biǎoshì niánfèn. Yúshì, tā dǎsuàn jǔxíng yīcì dòngwù de pǎobù bǐsài, xiān dào de 12 zhǒng dòngwù jiù néng chéngwéi shí'èr shēngxiào. Dāngshí, mǎo hé lǎoshǔ shì hǎo péngyǒu, tāmen bùdàn yīqǐ bàomíng cānjiāle zhège bǐsài, érqǐe shuō hǎole bǐsài nèitiān yīqǐ qù. Kěshì dào le bǐsài nàitiān, lǎoshǔ jìngrán qǐ dé bǐ píngshí zǎo, zìjǐ tōutōu de qù cānjiā le bǐsài, méi gào sù mǎo.

Lǎoshǔ dào le bǐsài dìdiǎn hòu fāxiàn niú yǐjīng zài nàle, jiù tiàodào le niú de shēnshàng. Lǎoshǔ xīn xiǎng: “Niú nàme dà, wǒ zài tā de shēnshàng yīdìng bùhuì bèi fāxiàn, nà wǒ jiù kěyǐ qīngsōng de dào zhōngdiǎn.” Bǐsài kāishǐ shí, niú jiù kāishǐ pǎo, méiyǒu yìshí dào lǎoshǔ hái zài tā de shēnshàng. Kuài yào dào de shíhòu, lǎoshǔ xùnsù de cóng niú shēnshàng tiào xià lái xiān

dào zhōngdiǎn, dé le dìyī míng. Yīncǐ, niú zhǐ dédào le dì'èr míng. Hòulái,
hǔ, tù, lóng, shé, mǎ, yáng, hóu, jī, gǒu, zhū zhèxiē dòngwù yě dào le.

Yóuyú māo chídào le, Yùhuáng Dàdì yǐjīng xuǎnhǎo le shí èr zhǒng
dòngwù, xiànzài de shí'èr shēng xiāo lǐ jù méiyǒu māo le. Cóngcǐ yǐhòu,
māo yī jiàn lǎoshǔ jù yào chī tā , lǎoshǔ yī jiàn māo jù pǎo. Bùguǎn tā de
yóulái shì shénme, shí'èr shēngxiào dōu shì Zhōngguó chuántǒng wénhuà
zhòngyào de yībùfèn.

The Origin of the 12 Chinese Zodiac Animals

The 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac are the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. Each zodiac animal has its own personality and is associated with certain characteristics. For example, the rat represents wisdom, while the ox represents diligence.

There are several different stories that are traditionally used to explain the origin of the animals of the Chinese zodiac. According to the most common origin story, the 12 zodiac animals were originally participants in a race organized by the Jade Emperor.

Long ago, the Jade Emperor wanted to create some rules to govern time in the mortal world. He decided to choose 12 different animals, each of which would represent one calendar year. Then, he made a plan to hold a race among various different animals. The first 12 animals to finish the race would become the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. In those days, the cat and the rat were good friends. They not only made a plan to attend the race together, but also decided to travel to the starting line together on the day of the race. When the appointed day arrived, however, the rat unexpectedly woke up earlier than normal. Secretly, he set off on his own to attend the race without telling the cat.

When the rat arrived at the starting line, he found that the ox was already there. He jumped onto the ox's back, thinking to himself, "The ox is so big, I definitely won't be seen if I hide on his body, so I should be able to get to the finish line easily." When the race began, the ox started running without realizing that the rat was still sitting on his back. As the ox neared the finish line, the rat swiftly jumped from the ox's back and arrived first, winning the race. Consequently, the ox finished second. Next, the tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog and pig also arrived at the finish line.

By the time the cat arrived, the Jade Emperor had already chosen 12 animals and so today, the cat is not included among the 12 animals of the

Chinese zodiac. Ever since the day of the race, whenever the cat sees the rat, it wants to eat him and whenever the rat sees the cat, he runs away. No matter where they originally came from, the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac are an indispensable part of Chinese culture.

Quiz Answer Key:

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. d 5. c



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