



CLUB NEWS:

The Symbolism of the Rabbit in the Chinese Zodiac



The Water Rabbit year is approaching soon; the unique rabbit culture brings about happiness and festive mood in the coming 2023. Do you know what rabbits symbolise in the traditional Chinese culture?

Our impression of rabbits is their adorable appearance, docile personality, and strong fertility. Thus, the rabbit in the Chinese zodiac culture symbolises **“fertility, blessings, fruitfulness and multiplication”**.

Rabbits have short forelegs and long hindlegs, which are suitable for climbing high, jumping, and leaping, hence they embody the meaning of steady progression. People often use the Chinese saying, “Be quiet like a young lady and brisk like a rabbit on the loose” (静如处子，动如脱兔) to describe the agile movement of rabbits.

Ancients have endowed rabbits with an auspicious meaning. The rabbit culture has a long-standing history. In the folklore Chang'e and the Jade Rabbit, Chang'e dances with her sleeves on the Moon, while the Jade Rabbit brings happy news of spring to the people on Earth. The rabbit in the Chinese idiom “an astute rabbit has three burrows” (狡兔三窟) is depicted as **smart and full of wit**.

Apart from the Eastern culture, the rabbit in the Western culture has always been an animal with a positive connotation. The Easter Bunny is a symbol of Easter because the rabbit represents the **rejuvenation of spring** and the **birth of new life**. It is also the pet of the goddess of love, Aphrodite, and the candle-bearer and guide of the Germanic earth goddess, Hertha. The rabbit is now a well-loved messenger who gives Easter eggs to children.

Rabbits appear in many literature works. For example, the White Rabbit in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Peter Rabbit in Peter Rabbit. They are not only lively and adorable, but also **intelligent and full of empathy**.

Let us welcome the new Rabbit year with new hope and expectations!



About the Writer

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The Confucius Institute of Nanyang Technological University is a centre of excellence in teaching and learning the Chinese language (CL) in Singapore. It is one of the 500 over Confucius Institutes globally. Confucius Institute is the counterpart of the British Council and Goethe Institute.

We train CL teachers from non-government schools, develop preschool CL materials and publish MOE primary school CL curriculum workbooks. We are also a major content provider of online Chinese readers for early learners in Asia and North America.

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