

Thursday, February 8

## **Happy new Year of the Dragon; Brazil's new camouflage frog; beware deep fake audio; and a real-life invisibility cloak.**

### ***THE LOWDOWN***

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Look out kids of Australia – because this coming weekend you're likely to see lots of dragons in the streets. Dragons in the cities - dragons in small country towns. And no - that's not because Hiccup and Toothless and Astrid and Stormfly are about to fly out of Berk all the way to Australia - but because this Saturday is the first day of the Lunar New Year.

Once called the Chinese New Year - the Lunar New Year is a massive celebration all over the world - coming as it does about a month or so after the Western New Year - the one we celebrate on December 31 with fireworks over Sydney Harbour.

And because it follows the Chinese zodiac, it means each year belongs to a different animal sign. Last year it was the Rabbit. This year, it's the Dragon.

Lunar New Year celebrations in Australia are some the biggest outside of Asia - attracting almost 1.5 million revellers in Sydney alone. So expect to see dancing lions and dragons and hear heaps of firecrackers going off - a tradition to scare off evil spirits.

Around the world, some 2 billion people will take part in Year of the Dragon celebrations.

So - according to the Chinese zodiac, what characteristics do people born in the Year of The Dragon have? They're said to be confident, fun and a natural born leader. And which year do you need to have been born in? That would be 2012, 2000, 1988 - and going back in multiples of twelve, so 1977, 1964 and 1952 ...

Being born in the Year of the Dragon is considered so desirable in countries like China and Taiwan that the birth rate in those countries spikes every time it rolls around.

And finally: what are the taboos during the Year of the Dragon? Things we should avoid doing? Apparently we should avoid placing the bed in the northwest corner of the bedroom - odd. And avoid wearing jewellery shaped like a dog. I think I can manage that.

And what should you do for luck in the Year of the Dragon? Wear yellow and blue clothes, apparently. HAndy if you're a Parramatta Eels or West Coast Eagles or Golden State Warriors or Sunshine Coast Lightning fan

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I was born in the Year of the Pig .... Stop laughing. It's not funny ... It's also known as the Year of the Boar ... and no, it's not B-O-R-E, it's B-O-A-R ... Rude.

## **SPIN THE GLOBE**

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Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops ... and today we've landed in Brazil .. where a new species of super clever frog has been discovered.

What makes this frog so special? Oh - only the fact that it changes colour completely from day to night. It's yellow during the day and then changes to become brown at night - apparently for camouflage reasons. That's just genius. I've stuck a link to photos of it in today's episode notes.

And speaking of frogs ... Cyclone Kirrily has dumped so much rain into outback Australia that a rare species of frog has been popping up everywhere. This particular species lies underneath the desert sands - sometimes for years -waiting for a big wet - and when it comes, it comes to life and crawls its way to the surface to eat and breed. Just amazing. And if you like me love frogs - you should know that this week the results came in from the Frog ID project - an Australia wide effort to get people like you and me to record frog sounds in their backyard and send them to experts. More than 45,000 Aussies sent in recordings of frogs in their backyards - from Tassie to WA, Melbourne to Townsville. And more than one million frog calls were recorded - including one that sounds like a chicken crossed with a lawnmower ... and because that sounds like it couldn't be true - I've stuck a link in today's episode notes so you can hear for yourself.

## **WEIRD SCIENCE**

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And so we swing from frogs that camouflage themselves in nature - to a hi-tech, real life invisibility cloak for humans.

If you've read the Harry Potter books or seen the movies, you'd know the Cloak of Invisibility is like the coolest thing a kid could have. Well, now Chinese scientists have developed a material that - once you put it on - means you are invisible to radar. To get all sciencey for a moment: this new material has an ability to reflect electromagnetic waves .. meaning the wearer could move across any landscape without being detected by radar technology. What the what?? That's amazing! Called a metamaterial - and named after the ancient, mythical creature the Chimera - which is itself a mixture of the chameleon, the glass frog and the bearded dragon - this wild new scientific discovery could be used in lots of different situations ... like staying up and watching TV next to your parents late into the night without them even noticing or sneaking into your sister's room. Just random examples, mind you.

## **NEWSHOUNDS**

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Every Thursday - Squiz E the Newshound sticks his snout into Squiz Kids HQ to report back on fishy things he's sniffed out on the internet - and today his nose is twitching madly following reports in the United States, India and the UK of something called audio deep fakes. What's an audio deep fake? It's when AI - or artificial intelligence - is used to mimic or copy someone's voice - say, for example, a Prime Minister or President or politician. And then a recording of that fake voice is used in phone calls or online memes to make it seem like that politician is saying stuff they never actually said. How tricky! But why would people do that? Because all sorts of clever AI tech tricks are increasingly being used to influence the way an election goes. And as we grow up to become voters - deciding who runs our country and our world - it's really important that we are aware that some people are trying to trick us - and that we develop strategies to combat them. Like Squiz-E the Newshound's favourite strategy: which is to STOP. THINK and CHECK before believing everything we see, read or hear. Think about why we might be seeing or hearing something. Check the source of that information. Thanks Squiz-E - you've gone and done it again ... And a reminder for any teachers or parents out there: Newshounds - Squiz Kids' very own, absolutely free media literacy program for primary school kids - is the perfect way to ensure your kids are able to spot misinformation when they come across it online. If you haven't signed up to do it yet - head to our website [squizkids.com.au](https://squizkids.com.au) and get involved ...

## **THE S'QUIZ**

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This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening ...

1. In which country have scientists discovered a new species of camouflaging frog?
2. What year is it this year in the Chinese zodiac?
3. The FrogID project uncovered a frog in Australia whose call sounds like a chicken crossed with what?

## **SHOUT OUTS**

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It's February 8 .... Tassie kids finally return to school for the start of Term 1 .. .welcome back Tassie. Nice of you to join us ...

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids celebrating a birthday today ... Fred from Denmark (in Western Australia), Dahlia from West Pennant Hills, Harrison from Forest Lake, Neeva from Ivanhoe and Harriet from Perth.

Happy belated birthday to... Sophia, Chloe, Isabelle, Summer and Rory all from Yass - and also to Diana from Greenwich .. and a special note to Diana's mum Tracey ... let's pretend that it was us that forgot to give Diana a shout out yesterday, and not you forgetting to send in the request .. we'll take the hit for the team - but we'll just keep it between us, yeah? Oh wait ...

Classroom shoutouts today go to... the year 5 Robins and Hummingbirds at The Repton School in Abu Dhabi, class 5 Red with Miss Summerville at Sacred Heart School in Booval, class 6E with Mrs Trowell at St Patrick's College in Shorncliffe, rooms 2 and 3 with Miss McDonald, Miss C, Mrs Rubin and Mrs O'Brien at Avonvale Education Support Centre, Miss Wood's class at Parkside Primary School and class 2B with Miss Bainbridge at Murrumbeena Primary School.

### **The S'Quiz Answers:**

1. Brazil
2. Year of The Dragon
3. Lawnmower