

The Origin of the Chinese Zodiac

Read about the legend of the Chinese Zodiac, and answer the questions below.

There are many different stories about the origin of the Chinese Zodiac. One common story is that the Jade Emperor of China wanted to name years after animals. The Emperor decided that a swimming race would determine which animals would come first. The rat was sneaky and didn't tell the cat that he was leaving for the race. The rat asked the ox to carry him across the water since he was smaller than the other animals. When they got close to the line, the rat jumped off the ox to win. After the ox crossed, the tired tiger came next. The rabbit came close behind by jumping from stone to stone. The nice Chinese dragon flew through afterward. Then, the snake slithered in front of the horse to be sixth in line. The goat, monkey, and rooster came in behind the horse on a raft. In eleventh place was the dog, who took his time bathing. Finally, the hungry pig came in twelfth place. The cat slept through the whole race because the rat didn't wake him up.

This is why there are twelve animals in the Chinese Zodiac. Each animal represents a different year.



Why didn't the rat wake up the cat? The rat wanted to win and didn't want the cat to have a chance.

Why did the rat ask the ox to take him across the water? The rat wanted to win, and he would move more quickly on the ox's back than by swimming since he was the smallest.

List the animals in order of who won. Rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, pig