

Name _____



Zodiac River Race

Directions: Read the short myth below about how the Chinese zodiac began. Then, answer the comprehension and symbolism questions that follow.

Long ago, the Jade Emperor decided to hold a great race to choose the twelve animals of the zodiac. He invited every creature to cross a wide river, promising that the order they reached the other side would determine their place in the zodiac calendar.

The clever **Rat**, who could not swim well, asked the strong **Ox** for a ride across the river. The Ox agreed kindly, focusing on reaching the far shore. But just before they arrived, the Rat leapt ahead and touched land first, becoming the first zodiac animal. The **Tiger** came third, panting from the fierce current, while the **Rabbit** cleverly hopped across stones to earn fourth place. Soon the **Dragon** flew down from the sky, explaining he stopped to help villagers bring rain before finishing fifth.

At last, all twelve animals crossed the river - each with a story that reflected their nature. The zodiac became a way to remember not just the animals, but the values they represented: courage, cleverness, kindness, and persistence.

1. What was the purpose of the Jade Emperor's race?
2. How did the Rat win first place even though it couldn't swim?
3. Why did the Dragon finish later than expected, even though it could fly?
4. What qualities do the Ox and Dragon show through their actions?
5. How does this myth explain the order of the Chinese zodiac?
6. What lesson or moral can people learn from the story of "The Great Race"?
7. Which animal's behavior do you relate to most, and why?

Extension Challenge: Choose one animal from the zodiac and write a short paragraph explaining what human traits you think it best represents in modern life.