



Name _____

The Great Zodiac Race

Directions: Read the passage below about how the Chinese zodiac animals earned their order. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Story of the Great Zodiac Race

Long ago, the Jade Emperor decided to hold a race across a wide river to choose the order of the zodiac animals. The first twelve animals to reach the finish line would have a year named after them. All the animals were excited, but the river was fast and deep, and not everyone could swim.

The clever **Rat** asked the strong **Ox** if it could ride on its back across the river. The Ox agreed, moving steadily through the water while the Rat held on tightly. Just before reaching the shore, the Rat leaped off the Ox's head and landed first, winning the race. The kind **Ox** came in second, still proud of its strength.

Next came the **Tiger**, who struggled against the current but used all its power to reach third place. The graceful **Rabbit** cleverly hopped from stone to stone and grabbed onto a floating log to cross, finishing fourth. Suddenly, a shadow appeared-the mighty **Dragon** soared through the sky and landed fifth. When the Emperor asked why such a strong creature hadn't come first, the Dragon explained it had stopped to make rain for the thirsty villagers and to help the Rabbit by blowing its log safely to shore.

After the Dragon came the **Snake**, who had hidden on the Horse's hoof to get across the river unnoticed. When it suddenly appeared, the startled Horse jumped back, earning sixth place while the Snake slithered into fifth. The **Goat**, **Monkey**, and **Rooster** worked together by finding a raft, earning the next three spots. The loyal **Dog**, who loved swimming but got distracted playing in the water, came in eleventh. Finally, the cheerful **Pig**, who had stopped to eat and nap, crossed the line last, taking the twelfth spot in the zodiac.

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Comprehension Questions

1. Who organized the Great Race, and what was its purpose?

2. Why did the Rat ask the Ox for help?

3. What does the Dragon's decision to stop and help others reveal about its personality?

4. What happened between the Horse and the Snake during the race?

5. Which animals worked as a team, and what lesson does that teach?

6. What do the Dog's and Pig's actions tell us about their personalities?

7. Sequence the first five animals to finish the race in order.
