

Long, long ago, people were always forgetting the date. There were many times when people would forget their birthdays, too, so they often forget how old they were!

Grandpa, how old are you?

Hmm, let me think... I can't remember!

So the Jade Emperor thought of an idea...

He thought: it's hard to remember a year with numbers, but animal names are much easier! So why not find 12 animals to represent 12 different years?

Jade Emperor asked the Earth God to announce news that he was to select 12 animals!

***12 Zodiac
River-Crossing Race***

Welcome all animals! The first 12 animals to cross the river will become the 12 Zodiacs!

After hearing the news, all the animals were brimming with excitement for the race. No one could stop talking about it!

Page 10 - 11

At the time, Cat and Rat were really good friends. They put their heads together to plan a strategy. Mouse said, "But we can't swim! How will we be able to cross the river?"

Cat replied, "That's not a problem if we can team up with Ox. We can direct Ox and he can carry us across."

When they found Ox, she agreed immediately!

Page 11 - 12

The day of the Great Race arrived and even before the cock crowed, Ox, Rat and Cat were already at the riverbank!

Ox bent down to let Cat and Rat hop aboard her back. Then off they went! But almost as soon as Cat jumped on, he started to snore. Cat loves to sleep too much!

Page 12 - 13

Meanwhile, Rat had his eyes on the prize - and wanted it all to himself! So just before they arrived at the other side, Rat suddenly pushed Cat into the water but Ox had no idea! Rat clambered next to Ox's ear to distract him, shouting "Almost there! You can do it Ox!"

Page 14 - 15

Ox had climbed out onto the riverbank and was racing towards the finish line... But the cunning Rat sprang off Ox's ear and flew to the end. The first place was his!

Even though Ox had worked so hard, she only came second. She was absolutely furious! From then on, Ox's eyes have always been fixed in an angry stare.

Page 16 - 17

After a while, Tiger came running up to the finish, completely drenched in sweat. He was so confident that he roared, "Ha-ha! The first place is mine!"

"No!" Jade Emperor corrected him. "You are third."

Then suddenly, there were gusts of whirling wind and Dragon swooped down from the sky. But just before she crossed the finish, Rabbit came leaping forward to claim fourth place. Even though she couldn't swim, Rabbit was an amazing jumper - bounding from animal to animal until she crossed the river.

Page 18 - 19

"Dragon," Jade Emperor asked, "it's so easy for you to fly across the river so why are you only fifth place?"

It turned out that Dragon had to conduct the Rain Ceremony in the South Seas... That's why she was late to the race.

Page 20 - 21

But how did Snake lose his legs? During the race, Snake ran too hard so his legs broke off! That's why Snake must now slither on his belly. On the other hand, Horse was once a very brave animal. But ever since he was frightened by the small snake, he has always been easily spooked.

On the road, the competition was tight! Gallop, gallop! Horse was leaving everyone in the dust! But just as he was about to cross the finish line... yikes! Out popped Snake, making Horse jump up in fright as Snake took sixth place.

Page 22 - 23

Soon after, back in the river, three animals came paddling across the finish line on a log. Goat, Monkey, and Rooster worked together to get eighth, ninth and tenth place.

Goat sat in the front to direct them but he looked into the distance for too long and his eyesight became poor. Monkey, however, was sat in the middle of the log. But he was sat for too long, so his butt became all red and swollen. As for the Rooster, he used to have four legs. But as they were paddling onto the riverbank, they accidentally crushed two of his legs! That's why he only has two legs now.

Here comes Dog! He's very playful, spending lots of time frolicking in the water while everyone was racing to the finish line.

Congratulations! You're eleventh place.

Page 20 - 21

There's only one place left amongst the 12 Zodiacs! Everyone craned their necks to see who would come next...

And along came Pig! Dripping with sweat and out of breath, "All that running has made me hungry!" He panted, "Please give me something to eat!"

Page 22 - 23

And that's a wrap! Now we have our 12 Zodiac Animals!

Page 24 - 25

A little too late, Cat came out the river completely drenched. "What place am I?" He asked.

"Thirteenth," Jade Emperor replied.

Cat was absolutely livid! All his whiskers stood on end as he shouted, "Why, you awful Rat! I'll get you for this!"

He pounced towards Rat! Rat squeaked in terror and hid under Jade Emperor's seat. But he didn't get away scot-free. Cat took one big swipe and knocked out Rat's teeth in the scuffle!

Page 26 - 27

Although Rat came first in the race, he has lived in fear ever since. Even today, he will flee even at the sight of Cat's shadow! Rat now spends most of his life hiding away in small, dark holes - too afraid to come out in the day!