

Chinese New Year

In a time long ago and almost forgotten, the Jade Emperor of China decided that there should be a way that all of his people could measure the passing of time. He told the animals that he wanted them to take part in a competition: they were to compete in a race. The first twelve animals to finish would be rewarded by having a year named after them.

As the day of the race arrived, all of the animals that the Emperor had invited lined up beside the river bank. Two of the animals, friends rat and cat, were nervous as they had never particularly enjoyed swimming. As they were beside the ox, they asked him if he would help them across on his back.

The ox agreed and they quickly and nimbly jumped up on to his back. As the race began, the rat and the cat were thrilled that the ox set off in first place. Swimming strongly and steadily, he continued his lead all of the way. The three animals had almost

reached the bank at the other side when the rat rudely pushed the cat into the water and jumped over the head of the ox to land on the bank to finish first!

"Well done!" exclaimed the Jade Emperor to the rat. "The first year of the zodiac will be named 'rat' after you." After all of his hard work, the poor ox was cheated into second place and so the second year of the zodiac was named after him.

