

## 1 Watch the video and answer the questions

1. What are the five elements of the Chinese zodiac?

- A) Earth, Fire, Water, Wood, Metal
- b) Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Metal
- c) Wind, Water, Earth, Glass, Cloud
- d) Fire, Wind, Rain, Mud, Wood

2. Which of these animals is not represented in the Chinese zodiac?

- a) dog
- b) monkey
- c) dragon
- d) cat

3. How many different combinations of animals, elements and yin/yang are there total in the Chinese zodiac?

- a) 333
- b) 60
- c) 50

- d) 12
- e) 19

4. How did the emperor decide the order of the zodiac signs?

- a) By a vote from all of citizens in the land
- b) By size
- c) By the order they finished the race
- d) By the ones he liked the most

5. Which animal is first in the cycle?

- a)monkey
- b)cat
- c)dog
- d)rat

## 2 Reading comprehension

### The myth behind the Chinese zodiac

What's your sign?

In Western astrology, it's a **constellation** (созвездие) determined by when your birthday falls in the calendar.

But according to the Chinese zodiac, or shēngxiào, it's your shǔxiàng, meaning the animal **assigned** (закреплено) to your birth year. And of the many myths explaining these animal signs and their **arrangement** (расположение) the most **enduring** (долговечный) one is that of the Great Race. As the story goes, Yù Dì, or Jade Emperor, Ruler of the Heavens, wanted to **devise** (задумать) a way to measure time, so he organized a race. The first twelve animals to make it across the river would earn a **spot** (место) on the zodiac calendar in the order they arrived. The rat rose with the sun to get an early start, but on the way to the river, he met the horse, the tiger, and the ox. Because the rat was small and couldn't swim very well, he asked the bigger animals for help.

While the tiger and horse **refused** (отказались), the kind-hearted ox agreed to carry the rat across. Yet, just as they were about to reach the other side, the rat jumped off the ox's head and **secured** (обеспечила) first place. The ox came in second, with the powerful tiger right behind him. The rabbit, too small to battle the **current** (течение), **nimbly** (ловко) hopped across stones and logs to come in fourth.

Next came the dragon, who could have flown directly across, but stopped to help some creatures she had **encountered** (встретила) on the way. After her came the

horse, galloping across the river. But just as she got across, the snake **slithered** (проскользнула) by.

The **startled** (испуганная) horse reared back, letting the snake sneak into sixth place. The Jade Emperor looked out at the river and spotted the sheep, the monkey, and the rooster all atop a raft, working together to push it through the weeds. When they made it across, the trio agreed to give eighth place to the sheep, who had been the most comforting and harmonious of them, followed by the monkey and the rooster.

Next came the dog, **scrambling** (карабкающийся) onto the shore. He was a great swimmer, but **frolicked** (развился) in the water for so long that he only managed to come in eleventh.

The final spot was claimed by the pig, who had gotten hungry and stopped to eat and nap before finally **waddling** (неспеша добираться) across the finish line. And so, each year is associated with one of the animals in this order, with the cycle starting over every 60 years.

Why 60 and not twelve?

Well, the traditional Chinese calendar is made up of two **overlapping** (параллельные) systems.

The animals of the zodiac are associated with what's called the Twelve Earthly Branches, or shí'èrzhī. Another system, the Ten Heavenly Stems, or tiāngān, is linked with the five classical elements of **metal**, xīn, **wood**, mù, **water**, shuǐ, **fire**, huǒ, and **earth**, tǔ.

Each element is assigned yīn or yáng, creating a ten-year cycle.

When the twelve animals of the Earthly Branches are matched with the five elements plus the yīn or the yáng of the Heavenly Stems, it creates 60 years of different combinations, known as a **sixagenary cycle**, or gānzhī.

So someone born in 1980 would have the sign of yáng metal monkey, while someone born in 2007 would be yīn fire pig.

In fact, you can also have an **inner** (внутренний) animal based on your birth month, a **true** animal based on your birth date, and a **secret** animal based on your birth hour.

It was the great race that **supposedly** (возможно) determined which animals were **enshrined** (закреплены) in the Chinese zodiac, but as the system spread through Asia, other cultures made changes to reflect their communities.

So if you consult the Vietnamese zodiac, you may discover that you're a cat, not a rabbit, and if you're in Thailand, a mythical snake called a Naga replaces the dragon.

### 3. Answer the questions

1) According to the myth, why did the Emperor organise the race?

- 2) Among the bigger animals, which one agreed to help the rat?
- 3) Why did the snake get the sixth place?
- 4) Which trio of the animals was the most harmonious?
- 5) Which of the animals came the last? Why?
- 6) Why 60 and not twelve?
- 7) How many animals can you determine based on your date of birth?
- 8) Apart from the main animal as your sign, what kind of other animals can create your full zodiac?
- 9) Where did the system spread and what sorts of changes could be found in other cultures in animals' names?
- 10) Analyse the myth and give positive and negative portrait of animals, which nowadays are regarded as human personality traits.

### **Chinese Zodiac Signs' Personality**

Chinese zodiac animals have astrological and cultural meanings. Chinese people associate each animal sign with certain characteristics. It's believed that people born in a given year have the personality of that year's animal. Do you agree?

**Rat:** quick-witted, charming, persuasive, naive

**Ox:** patient, stubborn, strong, conservative.

**Tiger:** emotional, courageous, vain

**Rabbit:** quiet, elegant, sincere, creative

**Dragon:** energetic, intolerant, intelligent, enthusiastic

**Snake:** enigmatic, wise, cruel

**Horse:** impatient, active, energetic, bad-tempered

**Sheep:** calm, gentle, sympathetic, shy

**Monkey:** eccentric, fun, curious, distrustful

**Rooster:** bossy, observant, hardworking, courageous.

**Dog:** lovely, honest, sociable, faithful

**Pig:** scrooge, tolerant, lovely