

## Lunar New Year

Long ago in China, there lived twelve animals.

There was a rat, an ox, a tiger, a rabbit, a dragon, a snake, a horse, a ram, a monkey, a rooster, a dog and a pig.

When the old year was coming to an end, all the animals began to quarrel noisily. Each one wanted the New Year to be named after it.

The animals made such a noise that even the king heard the quarrel from far away. The king had a clever daughter. She asked the animals why they were quarrelling.

"I want to have the New Year named after me", said the tiger.

"Me too", said the rat.

"Me too", said the ox.

"Me too", said the rabbit.

"Me too", said the dragon.

"Me too", said the snake.

"Me too", said the horse.

"Me too", said the ram.

"Me too", said the monkey.

"Me too", said the rooster.

"Me too", said the dog.

"Me too", said the pig.

The princess said, "We shall have a swimming race across this river. The winner will be named after the New Year."

The animals agreed. They lined up on the bank of the river. "One, two three, go!" shouted the princess. All the animals jumped into the river and began to swim to the opposite bank. Very soon the ox was in the lead. But he didn't see the crafty rat who climbed up his tail and onto his back.

When the ox was near the bank, the rat ran along the ox's head and jumped onto the grass. "I am the winner!" said the rat. "Well done", said the king. "The New Year will be named the Year of the Rat."

The princess felt sorry for the other animals as, one by one, they finished the race. "The next eleven years can be named after the other animals", she said. And so the order is, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.