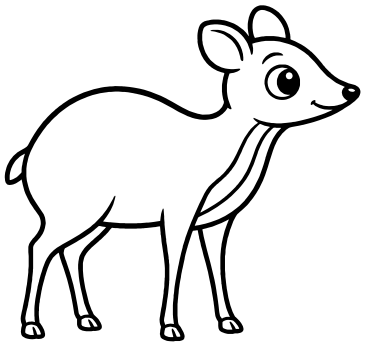
Name _____ Date _____

Tales from Different Cultures

Read the tale. The questions are on the next page.

Mouse Deer Crosses the River



This tale is told in Malaysia and Indonesia, where Sang Kancil, the mouse deer, is a favorite trickster. Mouse Deer was no bigger than a rabbit, but he was the quickest thinker in the forest. One hot afternoon he stood on the bank of a wide river and gazed across it. On the far side grew a tree heavy with ripe, sweet fruit. But the river was full of hungry crocodiles, and Mouse Deer could not cross without being eaten.

Mouse Deer thought for a moment. Then he called out in his loudest voice, “Crocodiles! I bring a message from the king!”



One by one, the crocodiles lifted their heads out of the muddy water. “The king is planning a great feast,” said Mouse Deer, “and he wants to know how many crocodiles live in this river. Line up from this bank to the other, so that I can count you.”

The crocodiles were proud to be invited to a royal feast. They pushed and jostled until they made a long, bumpy line across the river. Mouse Deer hopped onto the first crocodile's back. “One!” he called. He hopped onto the next. “Two!” Hop by hop, he counted all the way across.

When he landed on the far bank, he laughed. “Thank you for the bridge, my friends! There is no feast. I only wanted to cross the river.” The crocodiles snapped their jaws in anger, but Mouse Deer was already nibbling his fruit.

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Name _____ Date _____

Tales from Different Cultures

Mouse Deer Crosses the River: look back at the tale to answer.

1. What problem does Mouse Deer face at the beginning of the tale?

_____

_____

2. Why do the crocodiles agree to line up?

They are proud to be invited to the king's feast.

They want to help Mouse Deer.

They are afraid of Mouse Deer.

3. Describe Mouse Deer. Use two details from the tale.

_____

_____

_____

4. What is a theme of this tale?

Always tell the truth to the king.

Crocodiles are good counters.

A quick mind can beat great strength.

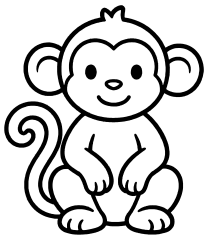
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Name _____ Date _____

Tales from Different Cultures

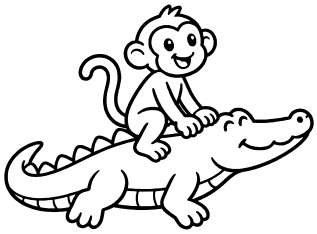
Read the tale. The questions are on the next page.

The Monkey and the Crocodile



This tale comes from India, where it was written down long ago in a book of animal stories called the Panchatantra. Beside a wide river stood a tree full of sweet rose-apples, and in the tree lived a monkey. Every day a crocodile rested in the shade beneath it. The monkey tossed him the ripest fruit, and the two became good friends.

One day the crocodile carried some rose-apples home to his wife. She tasted them and narrowed her eyes. “If the fruit is this sweet,” she said, “then the heart of the monkey who eats it every day must be even sweeter. Bring me his heart!”



The crocodile did not want to hurt his friend, but his wife would not stop asking, so at last he swam back to the monkey's tree. “Monkey,” he said, “my wife wants to thank you for the fruit. Ride on my back, and I will take you to our home.”

The monkey happily climbed onto the crocodile's back. In the middle of the deep river, the crocodile stopped. “I am sorry, my friend,” he said, “but my wife wants your heart.”

The monkey's heart pounded, but he kept his voice calm. “Why didn't you tell me before? Monkeys don't carry their hearts around. I left mine hanging in the tree. Take me back, and I will fetch it.”

The foolish crocodile swam back to the bank. The monkey sprang off his back and scrambled up into the highest branches of the rose-apple tree. “Go home,” he called down. “No one can take out his heart and leave it in a tree. And a friend who would trick me is no friend at all.”

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Name _____ Date _____

Tales from Different Cultures

The Monkey and the Crocodile: look back at the tale to answer.

1. Why did the crocodile's wife want the monkey's heart?

2. The text says the monkey's heart pounded, “but he kept his voice calm.” Why does this detail matter?

3. How did the monkey escape?

He jumped into the river and swam away.

He gave the crocodile more fruit.

He said he left his heart in the tree and needed to go back for it.

4. What lesson does the monkey learn about friendship?

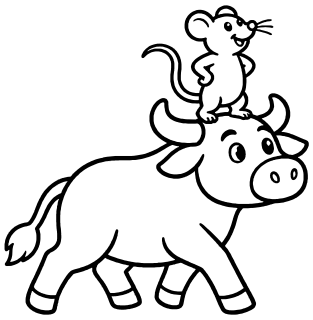
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Name _____ Date _____

Tales from Different Cultures

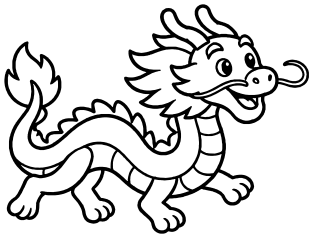
Read the tale. The questions are on the next page.

The Great Race



This tale is told across China. It explains the order of the twelve animals in the Chinese zodiac, which gives each year an animal's name. Long ago, the Jade Emperor, ruler of the heavens, announced a race. “The first twelve animals to cross the great river,” he said, “will each have a year named after them, in the order they finish.”

The tiny rat knew she could never swim across the rushing river on her own. So she went to the ox, the strongest swimmer of all. “Kind Ox,” she said, “may I ride on your back? I will sing to you so that you won't get bored.” The good-natured ox agreed.



On the day of the race, the ox plowed steadily through the current with the rat perched on his head, singing. Far behind them, the other animals struggled against the water.

As the ox neared the far bank, he could already see the Jade Emperor waiting. But just before his hooves touched the shore, the rat leaped from his head and landed at the Emperor's feet. “The rat is first!” the Emperor announced. The ox came second.

The tiger came third and the rabbit fourth. The mighty dragon, who could fly, came only fifth. “Why are you so late?” asked the Emperor. The dragon explained that on the way he had stopped to bring rain to a village whose crops were dying. The Emperor was impressed by his kindness. And that, the story says, is why the Year of the Rat begins the zodiac, followed by the Ox.

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Name _____ Date _____

Tales from Different Cultures

The Great Race: look back at the tale to answer.

1. What does this tale explain?

why rats cannot swim

the order of the animals in the Chinese zodiac

how rivers are made

2. How did the rat win the race even though she could not swim across?

_____

_____

_____

3. Was the rat clever or unfair? Give a reason from the text.

_____

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4. Why did the dragon finish only fifth? What does that show about him?

_____

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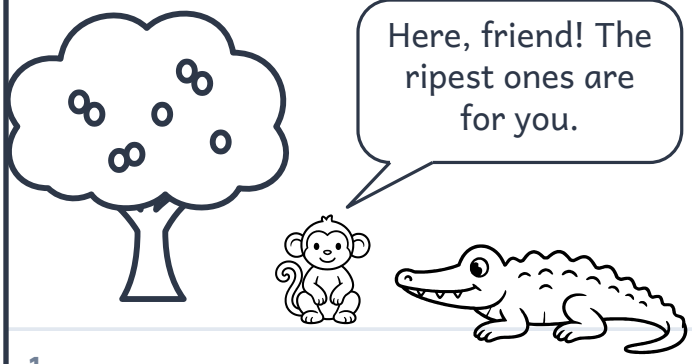
Name _____ Date _____

A Tale as a Comic

The same tale as a comic. The questions are on the next page.

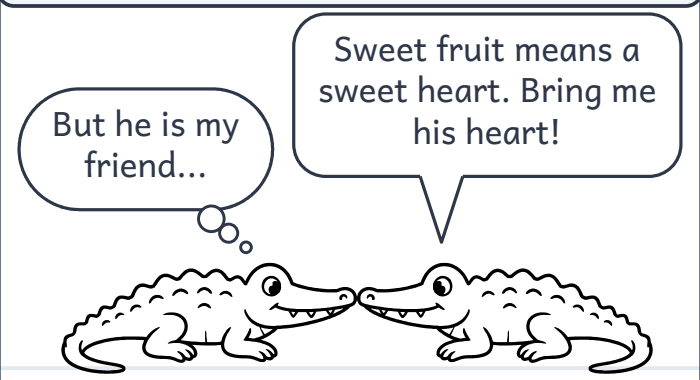
The Monkey and the Crocodile

Every day, the monkey shared his fruit.



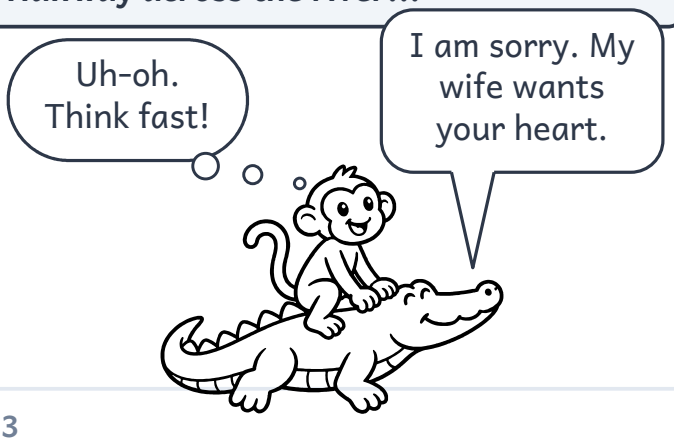
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At home, the crocodile's wife had an idea.

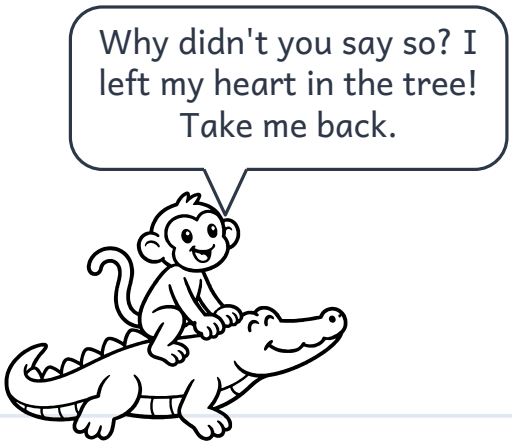


2

Halfway across the river...

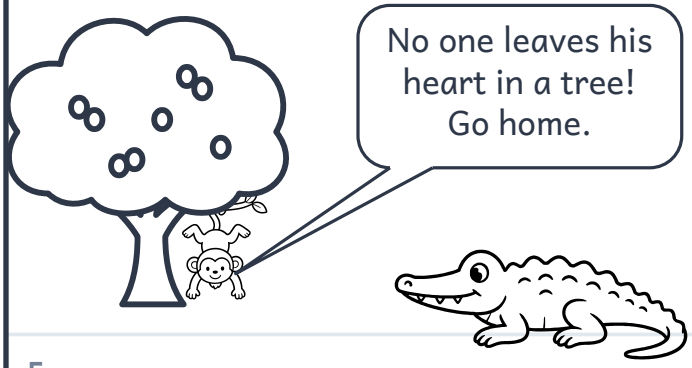


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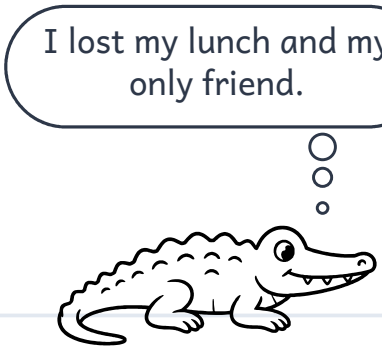


4

Back at the tree...



5



6

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Name _____ Date _____

The Comic and the Text

Compare the comic with the tale on page 3. Then answer the questions.

1. In panel 2, the crocodile thinks, “But he is my friend...” Which sentence in the text tells the same thing?

The crocodile did not want to hurt his friend.

The monkey happily climbed onto the crocodile's back.

The foolish crocodile swam back to the bank.

2. In the comic, how can you tell the difference between what a character says and what a character thinks?

_____

_____

3. Panel 3 shows the monkey thinking, “Uh-oh. Think fast!” What does the text say instead?

_____

4. Panel 6 is not in the text at all. What does it add to the story?

_____

_____

5. What can the text tell you that the comic leaves out? Name one detail.

_____

_____

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Name _____ Date _____

Comparing the Tales

Think about all three tales. Then answer the questions.

1. Match each tale to the place it comes from: Mouse Deer Crosses the River, The Monkey and the Crocodile, The Great Race.

2. How are the plots of "Mouse Deer Crosses the River" and "The Monkey and the Crocodile" alike?

3. In two of the tales, a bigger animal carries a small one through the water. Which two?

Mouse Deer Crosses the River, and The Great Race

The Monkey and the Crocodile, and The Great Race

The Great Race only

4. What theme do the three tales share? Give one example from each tale.

5. Why do you think people in different parts of the world told such similar tales?

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Name _____ Date _____

Compare Two Tales

Choose two tales from different cultures. Compare them.

	Tale 1	Tale 2
	_____ title	_____ title
Culture or place		
Characters		
Problem		
How it is solved		
Theme		
Alike or different?		

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Tales from Different Cultures

Mouse Deer Crosses the River: look back at the tale to answer.

1. What problem does Mouse Deer face at the beginning of the tale?

He wants the fruit across the river, but the river is full of hungry crocodiles.

2. Why do the crocodiles agree to line up?

They are proud to be invited to the king's feast.

They want to help Mouse Deer.

They are afraid of Mouse Deer.

3. Describe Mouse Deer. Use two details from the tale.

He is small but clever. He thinks of a trick and stays calm in front of the crocodiles.

4. What is a theme of this tale?

Always tell the truth to the king.

Crocodiles are good counters.

A quick mind can beat great strength.

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Tales from Different Cultures

The Monkey and the Crocodile: look back at the tale to answer.

1. Why did the crocodile's wife want the monkey's heart?

She thought that since the fruit he ate was so sweet, his heart must be even sweeter.

2. The text says the monkey's heart pounded, “but he kept his voice calm.” Why does this detail matter?

He was scared, but staying calm let him trick the crocodile into taking him back.

3. How did the monkey escape?

He jumped into the river and swam away.

He gave the crocodile more fruit.

He said he left his heart in the tree and needed to go back for it.

4. What lesson does the monkey learn about friendship?

A friend who would trick you is not a real friend.

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Tales from Different Cultures

The Great Race: look back at the tale to answer.

1. What does this tale explain?

why rats cannot swim

the order of the animals in the Chinese zodiac

how rivers are made

2. How did the rat win the race even though she could not swim across?

She rode on the ox's head, and just before the shore she jumped off and landed first.

3. Was the rat clever or unfair? Give a reason from the text.

Clever: she found a way to cross that the rules allowed. (Or unfair: the ox did all the work, and she jumped ahead of him.)

4. Why did the dragon finish only fifth? What does that show about him?

He stopped to bring rain to a village with dying crops. It shows he is kind.

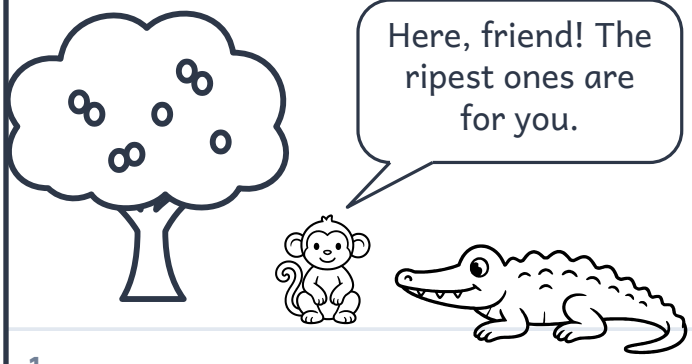
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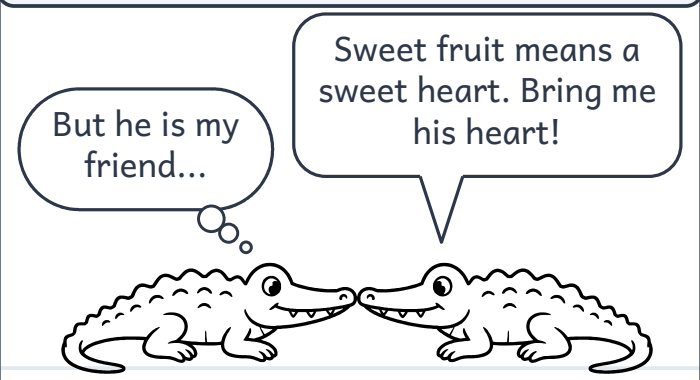
The Monkey and the Crocodile

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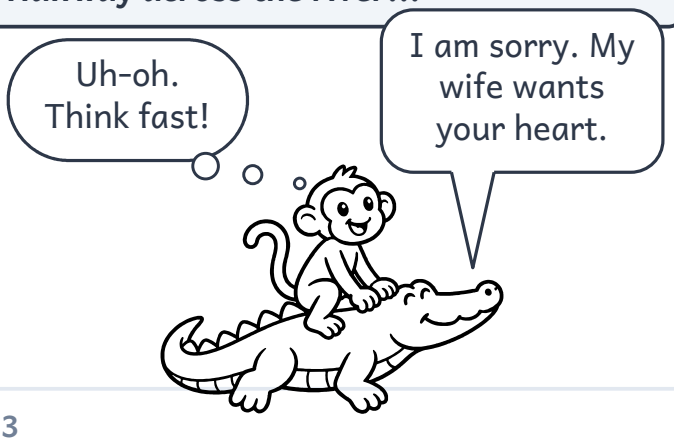
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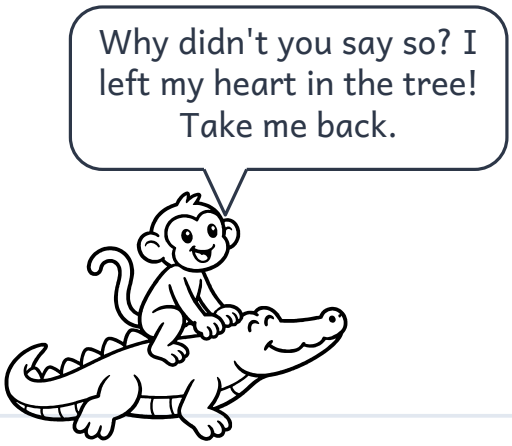


2

Halfway across the river...

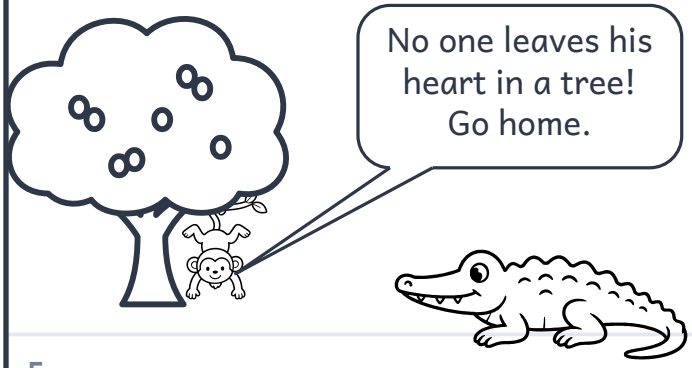


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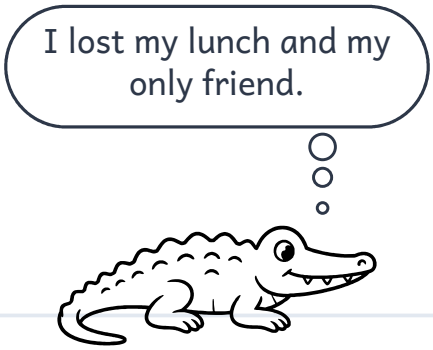


4

Back at the tree...



5



6

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The Comic and the Text

Compare the comic with the tale on page 3. Then answer the questions.

1. In panel 2, the crocodile thinks, "But he is my friend..." Which sentence in the text tells the same thing?

The crocodile did not want to hurt his friend.

The monkey happily climbed onto the crocodile's back.

The foolish crocodile swam back to the bank.

2. In the comic, how can you tell the difference between what a character says and what a character thinks?

Words someone says are in speech bubbles with a pointed tail. Thoughts are in round thought bubbles with little circles.

3. Panel 3 shows the monkey thinking, "Uh-oh. Think fast!" What does the text say instead?

The monkey's heart pounded, but he kept his voice calm.

4. Panel 6 is not in the text at all. What does it add to the story?

It shows how the crocodile feels at the end: sorry, because he lost his friend.

5. What can the text tell you that the comic leaves out? Name one detail.

The text says the tale comes from India and the Panchatantra, and that the fruit was rose-apples.

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Comparing the Tales

Think about all three tales. Then answer the questions.

1. Match each tale to the place it comes from: Mouse Deer Crosses the River, The Monkey and the Crocodile, The Great Race.

Mouse Deer: Malaysia and Indonesia. The Monkey and the Crocodile: India. The Great Race: China.

2. How are the plots of “Mouse Deer Crosses the River” and “The Monkey and the Crocodile” alike?

In both, a small animal is in danger from crocodiles and escapes with a quick trick. Both crossings happen on or over the crocodiles' backs.

3. In two of the tales, a bigger animal carries a small one through the water. Which two?

Mouse Deer Crosses the River, and The Great Race

The Monkey and the Crocodile, and The Great Race

The Great Race only

4. What theme do the three tales share? Give one example from each tale.

Brains can beat size and strength. Mouse Deer tricks the crocodiles into a bridge, the monkey tricks the crocodile into taking him back, and the rat rides the ox to win.

5. Why do you think people in different parts of the world told such similar tales?

People everywhere like stories where the small, clever one wins, and they teach the same lesson.

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