

# The Year of the Snake



Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year is celebrated worldwide, including in China, Singapore and South Korea. It is a festival that lasts for 15 days. The start date varies depending on when the New Moon happens. Usually, this happens between the end of January to the end of February; the celebrations end when the first Full Moon appears.

## The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals

In the zodiac cycle, each year is represented by one of the 12 animals. The animals rotate in a set order which runs on a 12-year cycle linked to the lunar calendar. In 2025, the Year of the Snake will begin on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and will end on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

Zodiac Cycle Animal	Recent Years of Birth
rat	2008 and 2020
ox	2009 and 2021
tiger	2010 and 2022
rabbit	2011 and 2023
dragon	2012 and 2024
snake	2001 and 2013
horse	2002 and 2014
sheep	2003 and 2015
monkey	2004 and 2016
rooster	2005 and 2017
dog	2006 and 2018
pig	2007 and 2019

There is a common legend behind the zodiac cycle animals and how they came to be in their set order. The legend tells the story of all animals taking part in a race across a river with the first 12 animals to finish being awarded a spot in the zodiac cycle. Depending on the version, the person who initiated the race changes; one version has the Buddha establishing the race. The order the animals finish remains consistent but their reasons for when they did can also change. The rat is the winner and is awarded first place in the zodiac cycle. One version says the snake comes in sixth place by wriggling around the horse's hooves, causing it to jump in surprise. The horse falls behind to take seventh place.



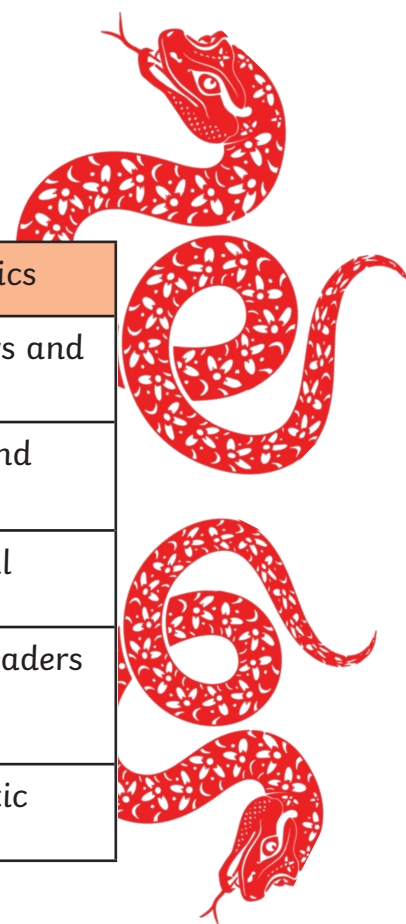


## What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?

In nature, the snake is thought by many to be an excellent predator. Snakes can locate their prey with precision by using their senses of sight and smell. They are great at camouflaging themselves due to the wide range of colours and patterns they come in. The zodiac cycle snake has similar traits to the real-life animal.

## The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake

In some cultures, it is believed that people share traits and characteristics with the animal of the year they were born in the zodiac cycle. Each animal is also linked to the five elements: wood, fire, earth, water and metal.



Type of Snake	Year of Birth	Traits and Characteristics
Wood Snake	1905, 1965 and 2025	creative, logical thinkers and precise
Fire Snake	1917 and 1977	clever, quick thinkers and very social
Earth Snake	1929 and 1989	funny, loyal and helpful
Gold Snake (also known as Metal Snake)	1941 and 2001	courageous, excellent leaders and strong willpower
Water Snake	1953 and 2013	smart, active and artistic

Overall, people who are born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and have a calm nature.



# Questions

1. Which is the most appropriate summary for the section called **The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals**? Tick one.

- The section summarises how the festival is celebrated.
- The section summarises how snakes are in the wild.
- The section summarises the different traits people may inherit.
- The section summarises how the zodiac cycle works and how the animals became part of it.

2. Number the sentences from 1–4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- The zodiac cycle snake has similar traits to the real-life animal.
- The start date varies depending on when the New Moon happens.
- The rat is the winner and is awarded the first place in the zodiac cycle.
- Overall, people who are born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and have a calm nature.

3. Find and copy a word that means the same as 'changes regularly'.

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4. Fill in the missing words.

Depending on the version, the person who \_\_\_\_\_ the race changes; one version has the Buddha \_\_\_\_\_ the race.

5. Which animal in the zodiac cycle was the year 2007?

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6. Look at the section called **The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals**. Why has it been included?

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7. **It is a festival that lasts for 15 days.**

What does this phrase imply about the Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year?

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8. Which section of the text do you think is the most important? Explain your choice.

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# Answers

- Which is the most appropriate summary for the section called **The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals**? Tick one.
  - The section summarises how the festival is celebrated.
  - The section summarises how snakes are in the wild.
  - The section summarises the different traits people may inherit.
  - The section summarises how the zodiac cycle works and how the animals became part of it.**
- Number the sentences from 1–4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.
  - 3** The zodiac cycle snake has similar traits to the real-life animal.
  - 1** The start date varies depending on when the New Moon happens.
  - 2** The rat is the winner and is awarded the first place in the zodiac cycle.
  - 4** Overall, people who are born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and have a calm nature.
- Find and copy a word that means the same as ‘changes regularly’.  
**rotate**
- Fill in the missing words.  
Depending on the version, the person who **initiated** the race changes; one version has the Buddha **establishing** the race.
- Which animal in the zodiac cycle was the year 2007?  
**2007 was the Year of the Pig in the zodiac cycle.**
- Look at the section called **The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals**. Why has it been included?  
**Pupils’ own responses, such as: This section has been included to explain to the reader how the zodiac cycle works and more information into the beliefs of how the animals came to be a part of it.**

7. **It is a festival that lasts for 15 days.**

What does this phrase imply about the Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: This phrase implies that the celebrations are a huge event and highly important as they last for 15 days.**

8. Which section of the text do you think is the most important? Explain your choice.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the section called The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals is the most important because it gives information about how the zodiac cycle works and the beliefs around its origin. This information is particularly helpful for someone wanting to learn more about the Year of the Snake.**



# The Year of the Snake



Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year occurs annually and is celebrated by many people around the world. The festival lasts for 15 days. The start date can vary as it relies on the New Moon which happens between the end of January to the end of February; the celebrations end when the first Full Moon appears.

## The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals

In the zodiac cycle, each year is represented by one of the 12 animals. The cycle runs on a 12-year cycle linked to the lunar calendar and the animals rotate in a certain order. 2025 marks the Year of the Snake.

Zodiac Cycle Animal	Recent Years of Birth
rat	2008 and 2020
ox	2009 and 2021
tiger	2010 and 2022
rabbit	2011 and 2023
dragon	2012 and 2024
snake	2001 and 2013
horse	2002 and 2014
sheep	2003 and 2015
monkey	2004 and 2016
rooster	2005 and 2017
dog	2006 and 2018
pig	2007 and 2019

In other countries, some of the animals in their zodiac cycle differ from the Chinese zodiac cycle. For example, in Japan, the

boar replaces the pig and in Vietnam, the buffalo replaces the ox while the cat takes the place of the rabbit.

There is a common legend that tells of how the animals became part of the zodiac cycle in which all animals took part in a race across a river. The first 12 animals to cross the finish line were awarded a spot in the zodiac cycle. There are variations of who initiated the race with one common version saying it was the Buddha. The reasons why the animals crossed when they did also can vary. However, the order of the animals crossing remains consistent. The rat won and was awarded first place in the zodiac cycle. In one version, the snake crosses sixth by wriggling around the horse's hooves, causing it to jump in surprise. By doing this, the horse falls behind to take seventh place.

The Year of the Snake will begin on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and will end on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026; the next Year of the Snake will be in 2037.



## What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?

The traits of snakes in real life are similar to those that are shown in the zodiac cycle snake. In nature, the snake is considered by experts to be an excellent predator who can outsmart their prey. Snakes can detect and locate their prey accurately with their sight and smell. They are also able to successfully camouflage themselves due to the wide range of colours and patterns they come in.

## The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake

In some cultures, it is believed that people possess particular traits and characteristics that they share with the animal of the year they were born in the zodiac cycle. Each animal is also linked to the five elements: wood, fire, earth, water and metal.

Type of Snake	Year of Birth	Traits and Characteristics
Wood Snake	1905, 1965 and 2025	creative, logical thinkers and precise
Fire Snake	1917 and 1977	clever, quick thinkers and very social
Earth Snake	1929 and 1989	funny, loyal and helpful
Gold Snake (also known as Metal Snake)	1941 and 2001	courageous, excellent leaders and strong willpower
Water Snake	1953 and 2013	smart, active and artistic



In the zodiac cycle, the snake is often associated with being wise and charming. Typically, people who are born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and be of a calm manner.



# Questions

1. What are the traits of a Gold Snake (also known as Metal Snake)? Tick one.

- creative, logical thinkers and precise
- courageous, excellent leaders and strong willpower
- smart, active and artistic
- funny, loyal and helpful

2. Draw **four** lines and match each animal to their recent years of birth.

monkey

2001 and 2013

rabbit

2009 and 2021

snake

2011 and 2023

ox

2004 and 2016

3. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'connected'.

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4. Fill in the missing words.

In one version, the snake \_\_\_\_\_ sixth by wriggling around the horse's hooves, \_\_\_\_\_ it to jump in surprise.

5. Which animal follows the ox in the zodiac cycle?

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6. Look at the section called **What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?**

Why has it been included?

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7. Typically, people who are born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and be of a calm manner. What does this sentence imply about someone who is born in the Year of the Snake?

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8. Look at the section called **What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?** Compare this section to the section called **The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake.** How is it different?

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9. Summarise the traits and characteristics that people born in the Year of the Snake may have in 30 words or fewer.

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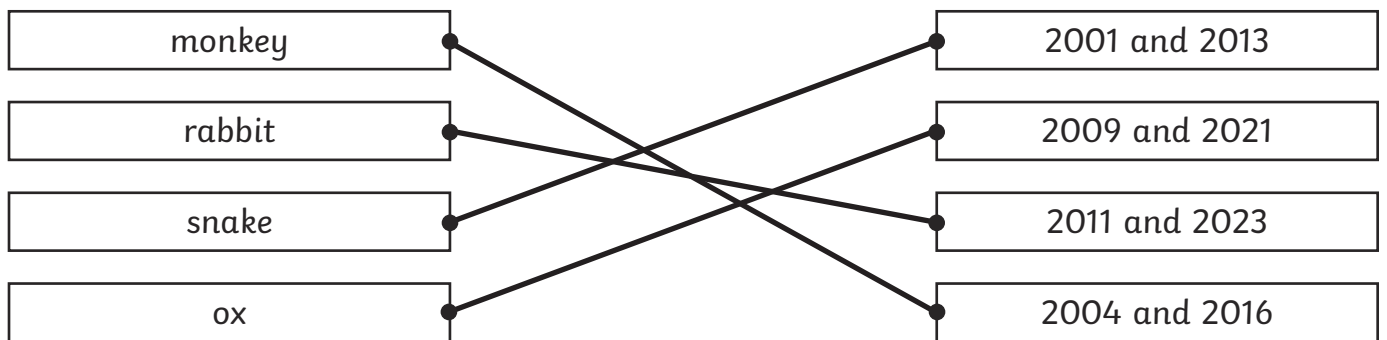
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# Answers

1. What are the traits of a Gold Snake (also known as Metal Snake)? Tick one.

- creative, logical thinkers and precise
- courageous, excellent leaders and strong willpower**
- smart, active and artistic
- funny, loyal and helpful

2. Draw **four** lines and match each animal to their recent years of birth.



3. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'connected'.

**associated**

4. Fill in the missing words.

In one version, the snake **crosses** sixth by wriggling around the horse's hooves, **causing** it to jump in surprise.

5. Which animal follows the ox in the zodiac cycle?

**The tiger follows the ox in the zodiac cycle.**

6. Look at the section called **What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?**

Why has it been included?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think this section has been included to explain how snakes behave in nature and to show how some of their traits are reflected in the zodiac snake.**

7. **Typically, people who are born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and be of a calm manner.** What does this sentence imply about someone who is born in the Year of the Snake?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think this sentence implies that people born in the Year of the Snake may work hard and enjoy learning. Also, it implies that they would be quite calm in situations where other people might panic.**

8. Look at the section called **What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?** Compare this section to the section called **The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake.** How is it different?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: 'What Are Snakes Like in Real Life?' explains to the reader how snakes behave in nature whereas 'The Traits and Characteristics of the Snake' section informs them about the different personality traits people may have if they were born under the Snake.**

9. Summarise the traits and characteristics that people born in the Year of the Snake may have in 30 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: People born in the Year of the Snake may have different traits such as being creative, wise and active depending on the element that is linked to their year.**



# The Year of the Snake

Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year is an annual 15-day festival celebrated worldwide by many people. The festival's start date slightly varies as it is determined by the New Moon, which occurs between the end of January and the end of February; the celebration ends when the first Full Moon appears.

## The Origins of the Zodiac Cycle Animals

The zodiac cycle is a classification system that runs on a 12-year cycle linked to the lunar calendar. Each year is represented by one of 12 animals and rotates in a set order.

Zodiac Cycle Animal	Recent Years of Birth
rat	2008 and 2020
ox	2009 and 2021
tiger	2010 and 2022
rabbit	2011 and 2023
dragon	2012 and 2024
snake	2001 and 2013
horse	2002 and 2014
sheep	2003 and 2015
monkey	2004 and 2016
rooster	2005 and 2017
dog	2006 and 2018
pig	2007 and 2019

2025 marks the Year of the Snake. In other countries, some of the animals are different. For example, in Japan, the boar replaces the pig and in Vietnam, the buffalo replaces the ox while the cat takes the place of the rabbit.

The origin of the zodiac cycle is unclear and there are many different theories about where it came from. However, a well-known legend of a race between the 12 animals is frequently told where it describes how all animals were invited to participate in a race. The first 12 animals to cross the finish line were awarded with a place in the zodiac cycle. Two common versions of the story depict either the Jade Emperor or the Buddha as the person who initiated the race – both versions similarly portray the animals.

One of the main story elements is that the animals must cross a river and the order in which they arrive is consistent across variations (although their reasons for when they cross differ). The rat is the winner and is awarded first place in the zodiac cycle. The snake and the horse approach the finish line together with one version of the story describing the snake wriggling around the horse's hooves, causing it to jump back in surprise. Another variation has the snake hitching a ride on the dragon's tail.



The snake then takes sixth place and leaves the horse to take seventh place in the zodiac cycle.

The Year of the Snake will commence on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and end on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026; then, the Year of the Horse will commence.

The next Year of the Snake will be in 2037.

## The Legend of the White Snake

In Chinese folklore, the Legend of the White Snake (also referred to as Madame White Snake) is told in various ways with one version being of a female, white snake spirit who takes on a human form. After doing so, she falls in love and marries a human man. When her true identity is revealed, she has to travel to the underworld to rescue her husband. The tale is often referenced in Chinese art, films and television shows.

## What Are Snakes Like in the Wild?

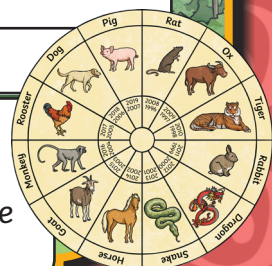
A few of the zodiac cycle snake's traits are similar to snakes in real life. Many experts consider snakes to be excellent predators who can outsmart their prey. They use their sight and smell to locate their prey and strike precisely. Snakes come in a wide variety of colours and patterns which enables them to camouflage successfully.

## The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake

In some cultures, it is believed that people inherit particular traits and characteristics from the animal of the year they were born in the zodiac cycle. Each animal is also linked to the five elements: wood, fire, earth, water and metal.

Type of Snake	Year of Birth	Traits and Characteristics
Wood Snake	1905, 1965 and 2025	creative, logical thinkers and precise
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Gold Snake (also known as Metal Snake)	1941 and 2001	courageous, excellent leaders and strong willpower
Water Snake	1953 and 2013	smart, active and artistic

In the zodiac cycle, the snake is often associated with being wise and charming. Typically, people born in the Year of the Snake are believed to be intelligent, strategic and calm as well as have a wide range of aspirations and goals they want to achieve.



# Questions

1. Which of the following summaries would be the most accurate for the whole text?

Tick one.

- A text about the history of China.
- A text about snakes in the wild.
- A text about the importance of nature.
- A text about celebrations in other countries.

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading to its main content.

The Origins of the Zodiac  
Cycle Animals

The Legend of the  
White Snake

What Are Snakes Like  
in the Wild?

The Traits and  
Characteristics of the  
Zodiac Cycle Snake

The content gives a summary of a  
popular Chinese tale.

The content gives information on  
what the animal is like in nature.

The content summarises key  
information about people's  
personalities if they were  
born that year.

The content highlights how the  
animal is decided each year and  
how the cycle works.

3. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'exactly'.

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4. Fill in the missing words.

In some cultures, it is believed that people \_\_\_\_\_ particular traits and  
\_\_\_\_\_ from the animal of the year they were born in the zodiac cycle.

5. What traits would someone born in the year of a Water Snake have?

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6. What words or phrases has the author chosen to give the impression that snakes are intelligent?

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7. Look at the table in the section called **The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake**. Which type of snake would you like to befriend? Explain your answer.

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8. What have you learnt about the Year of the Snake that you didn't know before? Explain your answer.

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9. If this text was to be rewritten in the future, how might it change?

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10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
2026 will be the Year of the Horse.		
The dragon won the race of the zodiac cycle animals.		
The zodiac cycle runs for 14 years.		
Snakes are believed to be excellent predators.		
Wood snakes are clumsy.		

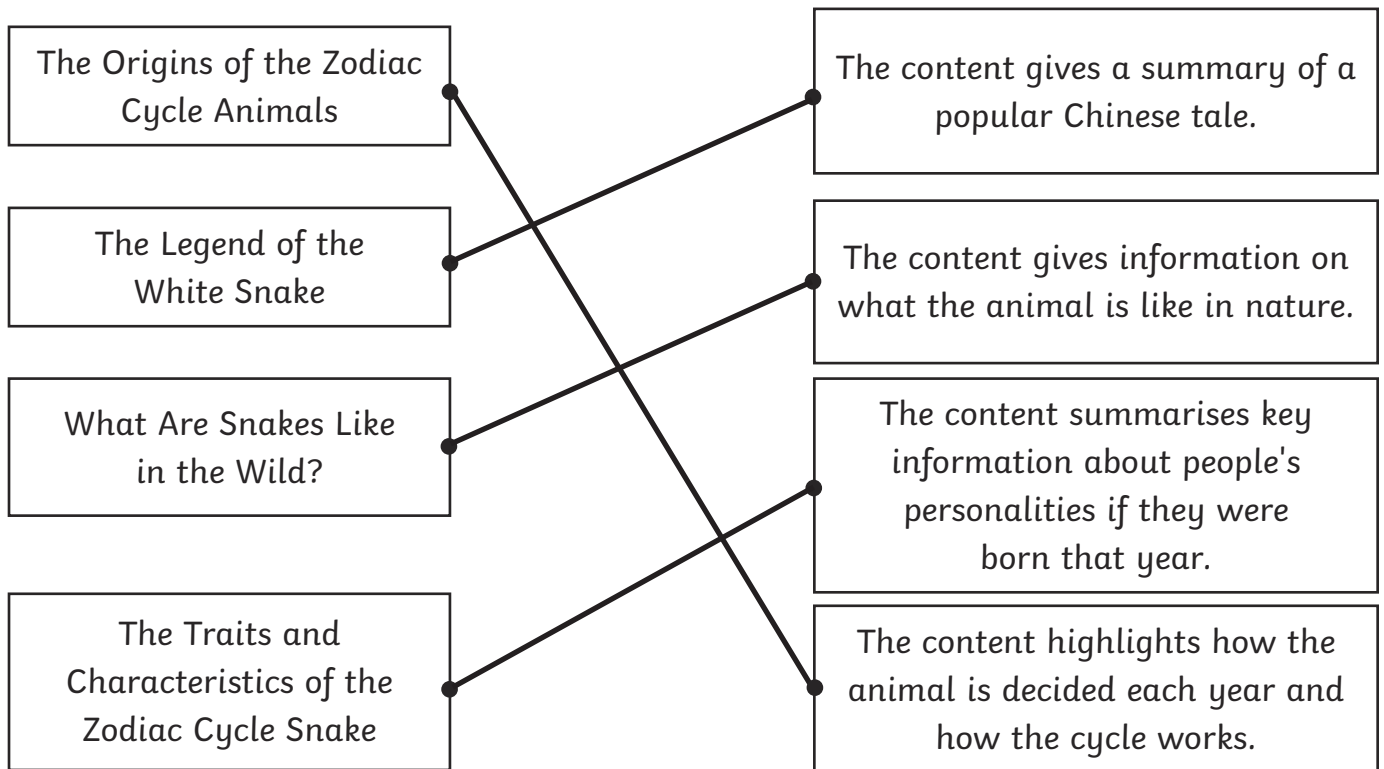
# Answers

1. Which of the following summaries would be the most accurate for the whole text?

Tick one.

- A text about the history of China.
- A text about snakes in the wild.
- A text about the importance of nature.
- A text about celebrations in other countries.**

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading to its main content.



3. Find and copy one word that means the same as 'exactly'.

**precisely**

4. Fill in the missing words.

In some cultures, it is believed that people **inherit** particular traits and **characteristics** from the animal of the year they were born in the zodiac cycle.

5. What traits would someone born in the year of a Water Snake have?

**The traits that Water Snakes' have are smart, active and artistic.**

6. What words or phrases has the author chosen to give the impression that snakes are intelligent?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The author's use of the words 'outsmart' and 'precisely' alongside the phrase 'excellent predators' give the impression of snakes being intelligent. All of these emphasise snakes being highly skilled at hunting.**

7. Look at the table in the section called **The Traits and Characteristics of the Zodiac Cycle Snake**. Which type of snake would you like to befriend? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would like to befriend an Earth Snake because they are 'funny, loyal and helpful' so I think they would be fun to be around. They would also be there for me and help me when I have a problem.**

8. What have you learnt about the Year of the Snake that you didn't know before? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I didn't know that in the zodiac cycle story, the snake possibly made the horse jump so that it would get ahead to take sixth place. It is interesting to know that there are different versions of how the snake came sixth.**

9. If this text was to be rewritten in the future, how might it change?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think more years would be added to the table to show when it has been the year of the different zodiac cycle animals.**

10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
2026 will be the Year of the Horse.	✓	
The dragon won the race of the zodiac cycle animals.		✓
The zodiac cycle runs for 14 years.		✓
Snakes are believed to be excellent predators.	✓	
Wood snakes are clumsy.		✓

**Award 2 marks for all five correct.**

**Award 1 mark for four correct.**