

Bear and Turtle Have a Race

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- 1 Winter came early that year. The ponds were covered with ice, and it was cold and miserable.
- 2 Bear walked through the woods. In those days, he had not yet learned that it was wiser to sleep through the White Season. He stopped and began to do his favorite thing in the world—brag about himself.
- 3 “I am Okwari, the mighty. I am the strongest animal in the forest,” he said. The woodland creatures did not like to agree with Bear, but he was right. He really was the strongest.
- 4 “I am Okwari, the handsome. I am the best-looking creature in the woods,” bragged Bear. With his sleek black coat and soft brown snout, everyone had to agree that he was quite good-looking.
- 5 “I am Okwari, the speedy. I am the fastest animal in the forest,” he continued.
- 6 A little voice piped up. “Er, excuse me, Okwari, but I think I am faster.”
- 7 “Who said that?” asked Bear.
- 8 “I do not mean to be disrespectful, but I think I could beat you,” said the voice.
- 9 “Where are you? Who dares challenge me?” Finally, Bear spotted a rock by his foot. When he picked it up, he saw that it was Turtle.
- 10 “What makes you think you could beat me? You are small and the slowest of all animals. If we raced, I would leave you far behind.” Perhaps Bear forgot that Turtle’s greatest speed was in his wits.
- 11 “All right, I will race you,” said Bear. “But how will it work? You are a creature of the water, and I walk on land.”
- 12 “Let me swim in the river while you run alongside on land,” said Turtle.
- 13 “But it is cold. There is ice on the river,” said Bear.
- 14 “I could make holes in the ice. Then I will swim under the water and peek up

through the holes so you will know where I am,” suggested Turtle.

15 “I agree,” said Bear. “I will meet you at the river tomorrow when the sun is a hand’s width in the sky.”

16 The next day, the animals lined the riverbank to watch.

17 “I wonder who will win?” asked Opossum.

18 “If only it could be Turtle,” said Rabbit.

19 “But how could tiny Turtle beat the strongest, fastest animal in the forest?” sighed Robin.

20 Turtle arrived just as the sun rose, with his cheeks painted red for the occasion.

21 “Is everyone ready?” asked Fox. Bear walked quickly to the starting place. “On your mark, get set, GO!” shouted Fox. Turtle’s head disappeared into the first hole. Bear walked at an easy pace.

22 *I do not have to worry*, he thought. *I will easily beat Turtle*. Ahead in the river, Bear saw Turtle’s little green head with red-painted cheeks poke through a hole in the ice.

23 “I am here, Bear. Catch me if you can!” called Turtle.

24 *How did he get ahead of me?* thought Bear. He began to power walk.

25 Farther ahead on the river, Bear spotted Turtle’s little green head with red-painted cheeks pop through another hole in the ice.

26 “I am here, Bear. Catch me if you can!” called Turtle.

27 *I cannot believe it. Turtle is beating me*, thought Bear. He began to jog. Still farther ahead, Bear caught sight of Turtle’s green head with red-painted cheeks once again, poking out of a hole in the ice.

28 “I am here, Bear. Catch me if you can!” called Turtle.

29 *This cannot be happening*, Bear thought. He ran as fast as he could. But it was no use. Bear was so embarrassed about losing that he dragged himself back to his den. He slept through the rest of the White Season. To this day, bears sleep through most of the winter, trying to forget how Turtle defeated Bear that day.

30 After all the animals had gone home, Turtle turned to face the river.

31 “My dear aunts, uncles, and cousins,” he began. At his words, many small green heads with red-painted cheeks popped up in holes along the riverbank. Each looked identical to Turtle. “You helped me beat Bear!”



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Test Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. What does the word *miserable* mean in the sentences below?

Winter came early that year. The ponds were covered with ice, and it was cold and **miserable**.

- a. glossy
- b. fuzzy
- c. fancy
- d. gloomy

2. How did Bear change from the beginning of the story to the end?

- a. Bear was miserable in the beginning of the story, and he was joyful at the end of the story.
- b. Bear was sleepy in the beginning of the story, and he was energetic at the end of the story.
- c. Bear was wise at the beginning of the story, and he was not wise at the end of the story.
- d. Bear was confident at the beginning of the story, and he was ashamed at the end of the story.

3. Why did the animals hope that Turtle would win?

- a. The animals did not want to hear Bear brag anymore.
- b. The animals wanted Turtle to become more confident.
- c. The animals did not want to hear Turtle brag anymore.
- d. The animals were afraid that Turtle would be upset if he lost.

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Test Questions (*continued*)

4. How did Turtle outwit Bear?

- a. Turtle was a faster swimmer than Bear.
- b. Turtle asked his family to help him in the race.
- c. Turtle was a slower swimmer than Bear.
- d. Turtle took a shortcut to the finish line.

5. What lesson did Bear learn in the story?

- a. You should never trust your friends.
- b. It is better to work alone than to work together.
- c. It is more important to be clever than to be fast.
- d. You should always cheat in a race.