

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

## The Swift Runner

Long, long ago, members of the animal kingdom enjoyed sports and games. They often held contests with grand prizes for the winners.

One spring day, Brown Bear announced a new contest. The prize would be a beautiful set of shiny brown antlers.

For the contest, each animal would wear the antlers while running the race. The animal who was able to keep the antlers on for the entire race would get to keep the antlers forever.

Brown Bear was to be the judge for the race. He chose a rough path through the woods for the racecourse. There were many thorny bushes and obstacles along the way.



Harry Hare and Dandy Deer both wanted to win the antlers.

“They are the fastest runners,” said Ricky Raccoon.

“The rest of us could never hope to win,” said Sammy Squirrel and Oliver Otter.

The rabbit and the deer were the only contestants in the race. “You may go first,” Brown Bear said to Harry.

“I am willing to try for the prize,” the hare said. “But I would like to look at the racecourse first.”

Brown Bear agreed, and Harry Hare bounded away into the woods. He was gone so long that Freddy Fox was sent to look for him.

Hiding behind a tree, Freddy saw the hare hard at work tying low vines across the racecourse. Harry would be able to hop over the vines easily, but Dandy Deer would trip over them, losing the antlers as he fell!

Freddy Fox went back and told the other animals what Harry Hare was doing. “He is a cheater,” Brown Bear said. “Cheaters can never be winners.”



Harry soon returned. "I am ready to run the racecourse," he said, patting his head. "The antlers, please."

Brown Bear shook his head. "You cannot enter the race. We know you were trying to rig the race to make Dandy trip and fall."

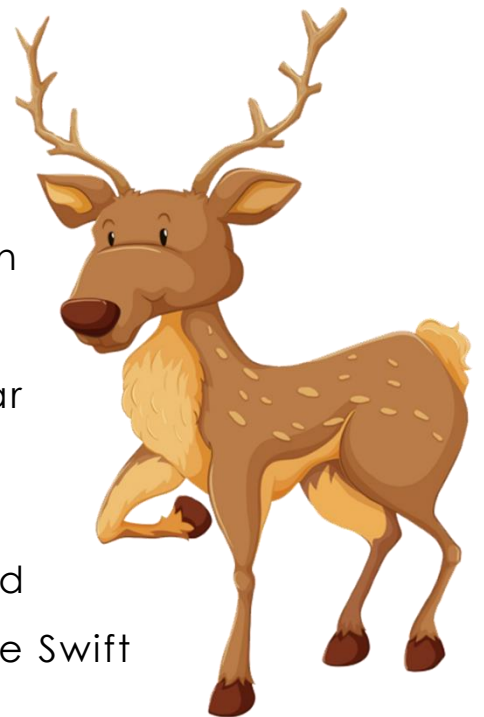
"Who, me?" Harry said.

"Yes, you!" Freddy Fox said. "I saw you tying the vines across the course. You are a cheater, and you do not deserve these fine antlers."

After the vines were removed, Brown Bear strapped the antlers onto Dandy Deer's head.

The deer ran swiftly along the woodland path. He held his head high, easily keeping the antlers from getting caught in the thorns. The other animals, even Harry Hare, cheered loudly as Judge Brown Bear proclaimed him the winner of the antlers.

"You shall wear these antlers on your head forever and you shall always be called The Swift Runner!"



**Questions:**

1. What could slow the runners down on the path?

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2. Why was Harry Hare not allowed to race?

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3. Why do you think the other animals did not want to race?

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4. What would have happened if the fox had not caught Harry cheating?

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**Answers:**

1. What could slow the runners down on the path?  
Thorny bushes and other obstacles could slow the runners down.
2. Why was Harry Hare not allowed to race?  
Harry cheated and tried to rig the course so Dandy Deer would trip and fall.
3. Why do you think the other animals did not want to race?  
The other animals did not want to race because they knew they were slower than the hare and the deer.
4. What would have happened if the fox had not caught Harry cheating?  
Answers may vary. Maybe rabbits would have antlers?