Tug of War
Traditional African Tale ~ Retold by Anne Gardner

Tortoise crawled slowly along a trail. Hippo had just chased him out of the river, and he was angry. Just then, Elephant came along and nearly stepped on him.

“Watch where you are stepping, you big brute,” called Tortoise.

Elephant harshly replied, “You step off my trail, Tortoise, or your day will go from bad to worse.”

“You don’t scare me,” Tortoise replied. “I am much stronger than you know. I am easily as strong as you.” Elephant laughed at Tortoise’s reply.

“I challenge you to a contest of tug of war!” Tortoise called. Elephant chuckled as he accepted. Tortoise called, “Hold on to one end of this vine. I’ll walk to the river with the other end. When I call, ‘Pull with all your might,’ the contest shall begin.”

Elephant held the vine in his trunk as Tortoise plodded back to the river, where he found Hippo. Tortoise challenged Hippo to the very same contest. Hippo held tight to the other end of the vine as Tortoise walked up the trail.

Tortoise hid in the bushes and called, “Pull with all your might!” Hippo and Elephant each pulled and tugged, but neither of them could gain any ground. After a long battle, Tortoise suggested, “Let’s call it a tie before the vine breaks.” Both Elephant and Hippo were happy to have a chance to catch their breath.

Tortoise ambled on and neither Elephant nor Hippo ever bothered him again.
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1. What happened after Tortoise challenged Elephant to a contest of tug of war?
   A. Hippo chased Tortoise out of the river.
   B. Tortoise challenged Hippo to the very same contest.
   C. Elephant almost stepped on Tortoise.
   D. All of the above.

2. What happened before Tortoise suggested they call the contest a tie?
   A. Elephant held one end of the vine.
   B. Hippo and Elephant tugged and pulled on the vine.
   C. Tortoise plodded to the river.
   D. All of the above.

3. The author most likely wrote this story to ____________.
   A. teach the reader about animals
   B. teach the reader all about tug of war
   C. entertain the reader
   D. none of the above

4. This passage is _________________.
   A. an informational passage
   B. a nonfiction passage
   C. a tale from Africa
   D. all of the above
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In your opinion, which animal in this story was smartest? Justify your answer.

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If you decided to create your own version of this folktale, what would you change? Why?

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Do you think the author wants the reader to think it is more important to be strong or to be smart? How do you know?

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