

Ms. Coyote and Doe

A Navajo Tale

Cultural Note

According to Navajo tradition, this is a winter tale. Coyote stories should only be told in the winter time.

Vocabulary

banked

delicate

dinky

rapt

rumps

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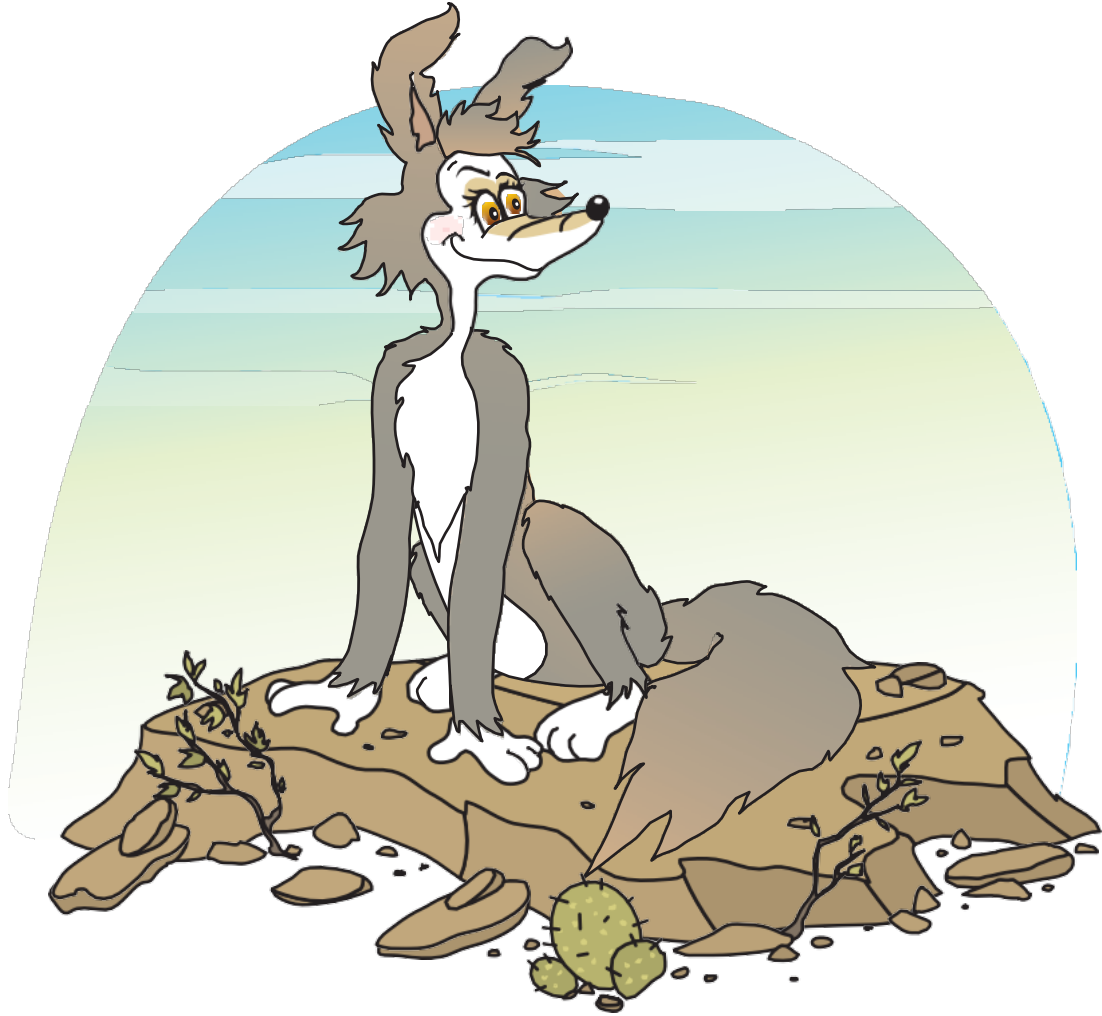
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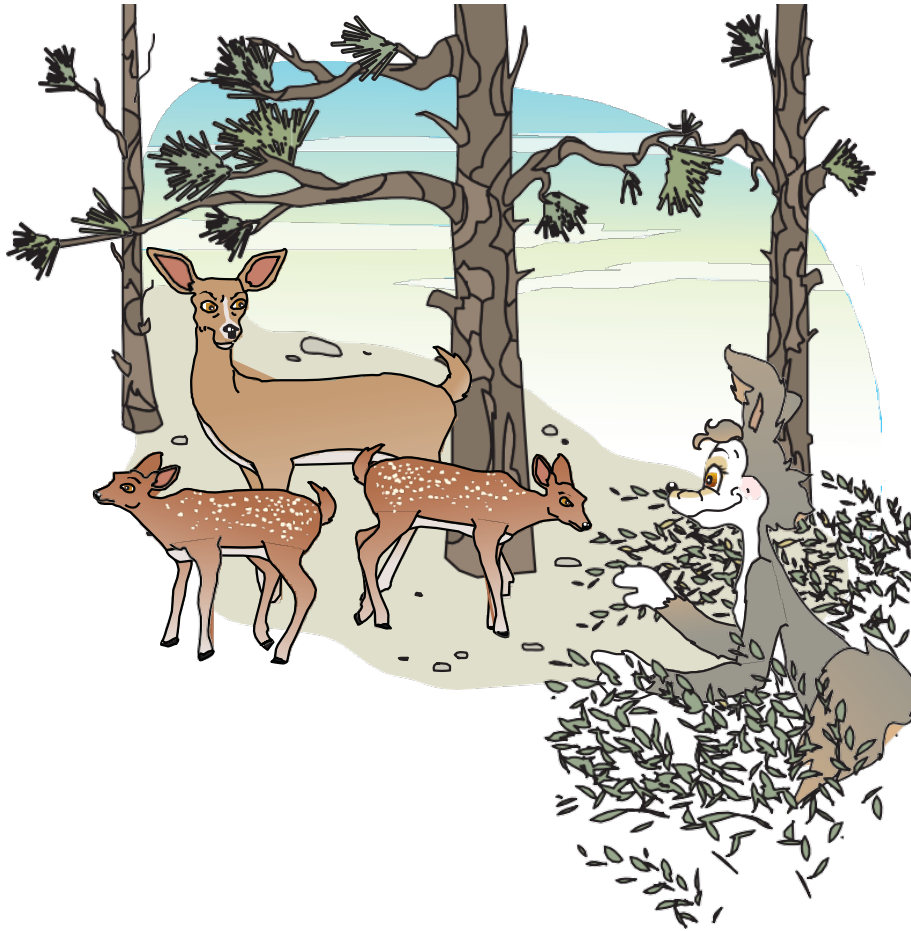
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Ms. Ma'ii, Coyote, was a pest to all the female animals. According to her, there wasn't anything that she couldn't do. In fact, she thought she could do anything better than anyone else. She was a regular copy-coyote. Until she met up with B&h, Doe, and her fawns, that is.



It was on a lovely afternoon when Doe and her family were taking a stroll through the forest. Her fawns had many tiny spots on their backs and their rumps. They had big round brown eyes and large pointed ears. Their coats were a lovely golden tan, which made them beautiful indeed. They were strolling along enjoying themselves, when suddenly, out of nowhere, Ms. Coyote appeared.

She was immediately taken by the extraordinary beauty of the little fawns. She lowered her head, and her eyes bugged out. With her tail slowly wagging, she crouched low and circled the fawns, staring at them in rapt wonder. The fawns were frightened by her attention, and they huddled closer to their mother.

Doe was getting upset with Ms. Coyote. "What do you want?" she asked. "Why are you staring at my fawns?"





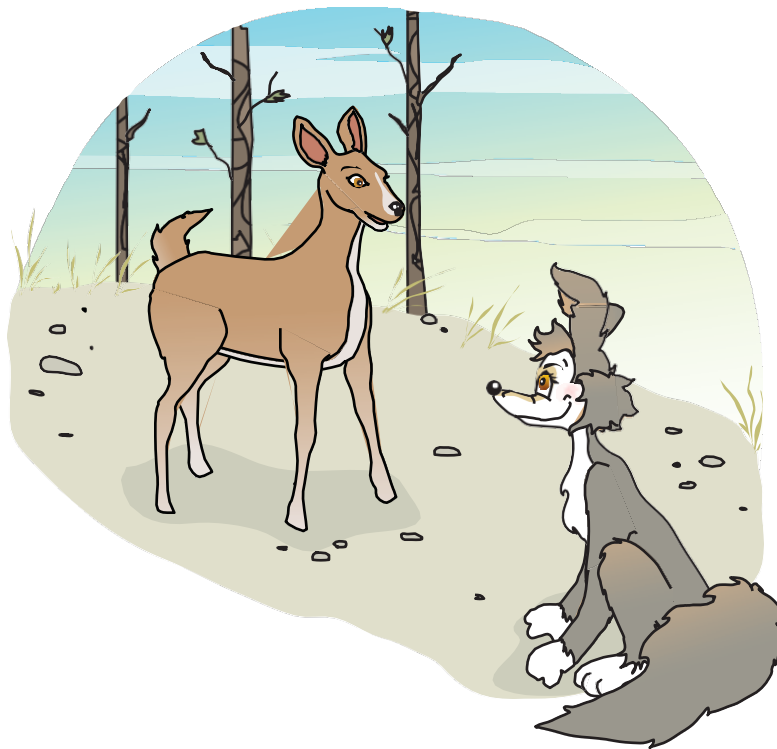
"Oh, don't mind me. I'm just curious," replied Ms. Coyote. "What do you do to your children to make them so pretty? My, oh my, they are lovely!"

Doe didn't answer. She knew all about Ms. Coyote, and she didn't trust her one little bit. She knew she had to be very cautious.

Ms. Coyote continued to circle the fawns and stare at them. She asked again, "Tell me, where do your fawns get those amazing spots? And those big brown eyes? And those large pointed ears? How do you make them so gorgeous? I have some children of my own. How can I make them as beautiful as yours?"

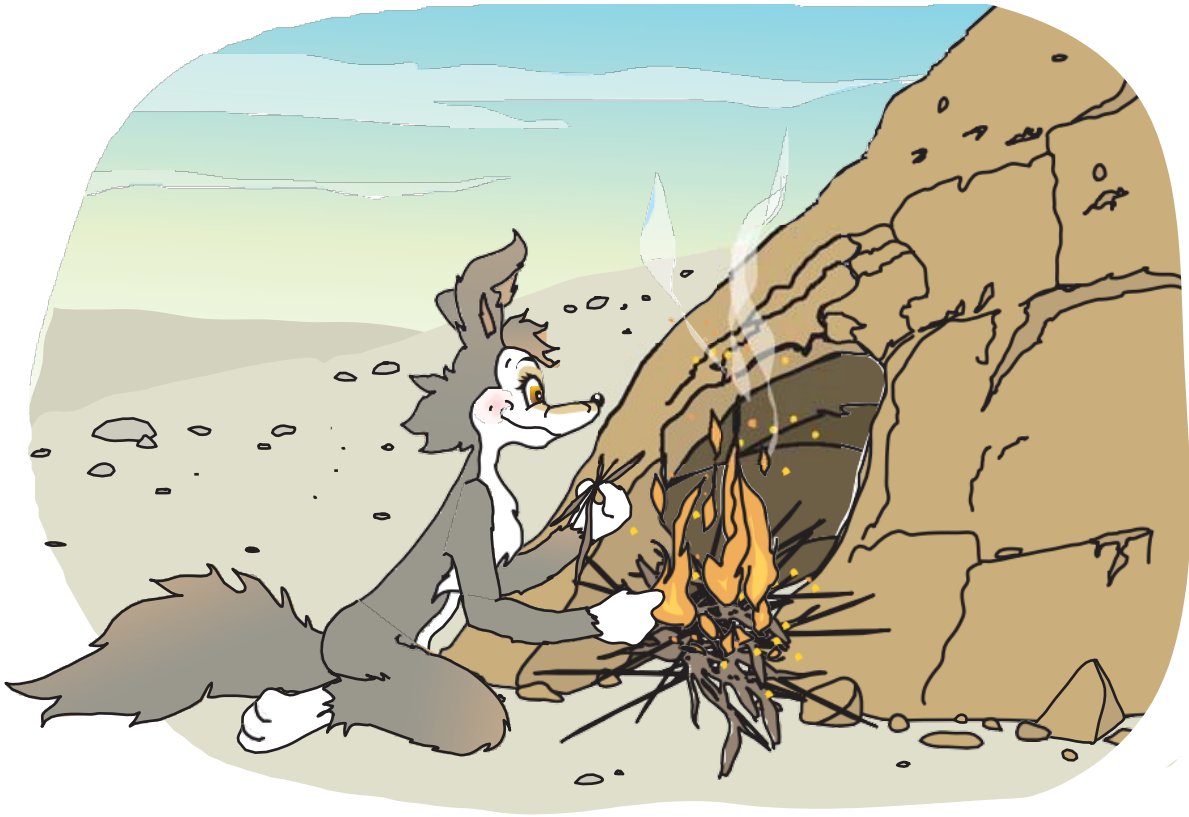
Doe could see that Ms. Coyote was jealous of her beautiful fawns, and Doe didn't like the way she was looking at them.

Doe was anxious for Ms. Coyote to leave them alone, and she thought this would be a good time to teach her a lesson. Doe said, "This is what you should do. Put your children in a small cave and build a little fire at the entrance. The heat from the fire will toast them to a lovely golden brown and make their eyes big and round and bright. Hot sparks of ash will drift into the cave and land on the rumps and backs of your pups. When they cool, it will leave lovely white spots."



Ms. Coyote was so anxious to get to her den that she hardly even gave Doe and her fawns a second glance. She snickered to herself and said, "There's nothing I can't do, and I can do it even better than Doe. By the time I'm finished, my pups will be twice as beautiful as her fawns."





"I'm not messing around with a dinky little cave," she said to herself. She gathered her pups and led them to a huge cavern. In the mouth of the cave, she built a roaring fire. She used thin, dry wood so the fire would burn hotter and faster than the small slow fire Doe had described. "Anything she can do, I can do better," she said to herself. She banked the fire and watched impatiently as it grew bigger and hotter.



Deep in the cavern, the pups were yipping and howling.

“Ohhhh!. Owwwww! Ouuuchchch!”

“Don’t worry, my children. It’s working! All this pain will make you even more lovely than the fawns!”

Finally the fire burned down and it was cool enough for Ms. Coyote to take her pups from the darkened cave. One by one, she pulled them out. Instead of a golden brown coat with delicate white spots, her pups were covered with uneven patches of dark yellow, brown and ashy grey. Instead of big round brown eyes, her pups had beady yellow eyes that peered through tiny slits. Their small ears had burned black tips, and they pointed crookedly off to the side. They were a homely sight, indeed, all because Ms. Coyote thought she could outdo everyone else.





To this day, Coyote and Doe are enemies. Coyote and her ugly pups still hunt Doe and her lovely fawns.

Glossary

'anáá' - eye

Bìh - deer

ma'ii - coyote

ooch'íí'd - jealous

tsé'áán - cave

Reading Suggestions

- Identify Coyote's good behaviors and bad behaviors. Talk about the similarities and differences. Use comprehension strategies such as questioning and summarizing to better understand the story.
- Talk about some possible consequences of jealousy. How can you avoid jealousy in your own life?
- Go back through the story and find the vocabulary words. Find new words that you could substitute for them and still keep the same meaning.

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