

The Race Between Coyote and Turtle

A Southwestern Native American Legend Retold



One day, Coyote went to visit Turtle.

"I'm tired," Turtle told Coyote. "I just ran a race with my people."

"Who won," Coyote asked him.

"I did," said Turtle proudly.

"I've won every race against my people," said Coyote.

The Race Between Coyote and Turtle

“Me too,” said Turtle. “Do you want to race each other?”

“I’d love to,” said Coyote.

They set the race for two days later.

Coyote was a fast runner. He knew he would win. He told the other coyotes to come to the race. He told them to bet money that he would win.

Turtle knew that Coyote was a trickster. Coyote didn’t play fairly. He decided to trick the trickster. Turtle called his people together. He explained his plan.



“We will all dress alike,” said Turtle. “We’ll each wear a white feather in our hair. We will paint our shells the same way. Coyote won’t look at me while we are running.

One of you will begin the race next to Coyote. Coyote will soon run far ahead. When he does, drop down in the grass. The next turtle will hide in the grass far ahead of Coyote. When the first turtle drops down, the next one pops up. Over a long distance, we will beat him using this trick. I will be the last turtle hiding. I will beat him to the finish line.”

The turtles came early to the race. They took their places in the tall grass along the trail.

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Coyote came for the race. His people came with him. They made bets with the turtles that Coyote would win. Soon the race began. Coyote ran past the turtle. He flew down the trail. He left the turtle far behind. But then, all of a sudden, Turtle was far ahead of Coyote. Coyote would pass Turtle. Moments later, he would look up and see Turtle far ahead of him on the trail.

Turtle popped up from his hiding place when it was his turn. He crossed the finish line first. The turtles let out a great cheer. The coyotes were very angry. Coyote did not win. They lost the money they bet on him. They blamed Coyote. Coyote ran off into the grass to hide. He lay low for a long time. He wondered how the slow Turtle had won the race.



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One day, Coyote went to visit his friend Turtle on his way home from a failed hunt. Turtle invited him in and offered the hungry Coyote some food.

"I'm exhausted," Turtle told Coyote as he lay down to relax. "I just ran a race with my people."

"Who won," Coyote asked him, thinking it funny that turtles ran races.

"I did. I've won every race against my people," gloated Turtle.

The Race Between Coyote and Turtle

"So have I," said Coyote with equal pride.

"Do you want to race against each other some time," asked Turtle.

"I'd love to," said Coyote.

The friends agreed to meet for the race two days later.

Coyote, being a swift runner, was sure he'd beat Turtle without much effort. Coyote told his people to come to the race and place bets that he would win.



Turtle knew that Coyote was a trickster and didn't trust him to play fairly. So Turtle decided to trick the trickster. He called his people together to explain his plan: on the day of the race, all the turtles would dress just

like Turtle, who planned to wear a white feather in his hair and paint his shell a certain way.

"Coyote runs with his head down," explained Turtle. "He won't look closely at his competitor while he is running. One turtle starts the race next to him. Coyote will soon run far ahead of him and when he does, the first turtle will drop down in the grass. The next turtle will be hiding next to the path far ahead of Coyote. When the first turtle drops down, the next one pops up and continues the race. He won't notice that we're different turtles and we will beat him using this trick. I will be the last turtle hiding and beat him to the finish line."

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The turtles came early to the race and stationed themselves in the tall grass along the trail. Coyote soon arrived with his people who placed their bets on Coyote to win the race. As soon as the race began, Coyote sped past the turtle and down the trail. The turtle was far behind. All of sudden, Coyote looked up and saw that the turtle was far ahead of him on the trail. Coyote ran extra hard to pass the turtle. Then he would look up and see the turtle far ahead of him a few moments later. The turtles let out a great cheer when Turtle crossed the finish line first. The coyotes were very angry at Coyote for losing. They lost all the money they bet on him to win. Coyote ran off into the grass to hide. He lay low for a long time wondering how the slow-moving Turtle had won the race.



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One day, on the way home from a failed hunt, a very hungry Coyote stopped in to visit his friend Turtle. Turtle invited him in and courteously offered the tired Coyote some refreshment.

"I'm exhausted, too," Turtle said, reclining against some cushions with a weary sigh. "I just ran a race with my people."

"Who won," Coyote inquired, thinking it funny that turtles ran races and trying not to laugh.

"I did—I've won every race against my people," gloated Turtle.

"So have I," said Coyote with equal pride.

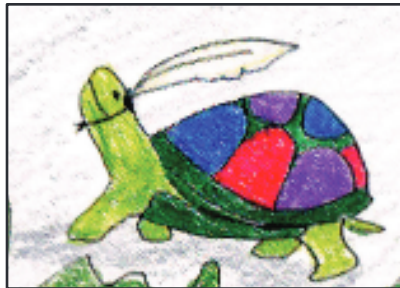
"Maybe we should compete against each other some time," challenged Turtle.

The Race Between Coyote and Turtle

"I'd love to," said Coyote.

The friends agreed to meet for the race two days later.

Coyote, being a swift runner, was sure he'd beat Turtle without much effort. Wanting to help his people win some money, Coyote invited them to come to the race and place bets against the turtles that he would win.



Turtle knew that Coyote was a trickster and didn't trust him to play fairly. So Turtle decided to trick the trickster. He called his people together to explain his plan. Turtle wouldn't run the whole race himself—he would only pop in at the end to cross the finish line. Other turtles would help him run the race, which meant that they'd have to dress just like Turtle, who planned to wear a white feather in his hair and paint his shell a certain way.

"Coyote runs with his head down," explained Turtle to the other turtles. "He won't look closely at his competitor while he is running. One of you will start the race next to him. Coyote will soon run far ahead of him and, when he does, that first turtle will drop down in the grass to hide. Up ahead, well in front of Coyote, a second turtle will be hiding in the grass waiting for a turn. When the first turtle drops down, the next one pops up and continues the race. And we will continue this way until Coyote gets close to the finish line—then I'll pop up and be the first one to cross. Coyote won't notice that we're different turtles and we will beat him using this trick."

The turtles came early to the race and stationed themselves in the tall grass along the trail. Coyote soon arrived with his people who placed their bets on Coyote to win the race.

The Race Between Coyote and Turtle

As soon as the race began, Coyote sped down the trail leaving the turtle far behind him. All of sudden, Coyote looked up and was surprised to see that the turtle was now far ahead of him on the race trail. Coyote ran extra hard to pass the turtle, which he did with some effort. The race continued on like this—Coyote would pass the turtle, but when he looked up a few moments later, he'd see that the turtle was far ahead of him.

Soon it was Turtle's turn to run and the rest of the turtles let out a great cheer when Turtle crossed the finish line ahead of Coyote. The other coyotes were very angry at Coyote for losing the race because they lost all the money they bet on him to win.

Afraid of what they would do to him, Coyote ran off into the grass to hide. He lay low for a long time wondering how the slow-moving Turtle had won the race.

