

# The Race Between Coyote and Turtle

## A Southwestern Native American Legend Retold



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.

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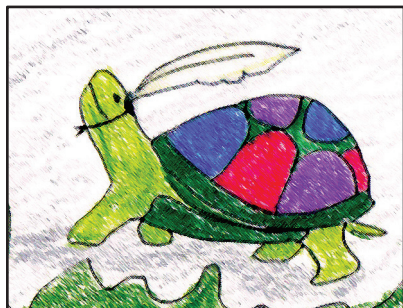
“So have I,” said Coyote with equal pride.

“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.

