

The Stone Witness

One day Coyote's bushy tail became snagged in cactus spines, and he could move neither forward nor backward. Coyote begged a passing jackrabbit to free him. "If I free you, what will stop you from eating me?" Jackrabbit asked. Coyote protested that he would never consider such a thing, but Jackrabbit was wary. Finally he said, "I'll assist you, but you must promise to return the favor someday." Coyote eagerly agreed, but Jackrabbit was still cautious. "You are well-known for deceit," he said. "We must have a witness to our agreement. I will fetch someone."

"Don't abandon me!" Coyote wailed. "You can trust me." Jackrabbit remained skeptical. Coyote looked around in desperation and spied a large reddish rock. "That red rock can be our witness," Coyote proposed. Jackrabbit considered this for a moment, and then he agreed. As Jackrabbit worked to untangle Coyote's tail, Coyote thought, "What a fool Jackrabbit is! A stone cannot witness anything." The moment the tail was free, Coyote pounced on Jackrabbit. "Now I've got a tasty supper!" he gloated. Jackrabbit struggled furiously but could not escape. When Jackrabbit reminded Coyote of his promise, Coyote howled with laughter.

An owl soaring overhead heard the commotion and stopped to find out what the trouble was. Jackrabbit told her about Coyote's tail, the cactus, and the promise that Coyote had made. "That's not true!" Coyote growled. "None of that happened, and he cannot prove that it did."

"I can prove I'm telling the truth," Jackrabbit responded. "We had a witness—a big gray stone that heard everything." "You're a liar!" Coyote yelled. "That stone was red, not gray!"

Owl smiled. "Since you admit that there was a stone witness, I must assume that the rest of Jackrabbit's story is true, too. By the law of the desert, you must honor your agreement and let Jackrabbit go."

Coyote knew he was trapped. He released Jackrabbit and walked away with an empty stomach.

MONDAY

Use the words from the story to fill in the blanks.

abandon

assume

desperation

gloated

pounced

skeptical

1. You should be _____ about things you read on the Internet.
2. Wearing Mom's necklace, my sister _____ that Mom loves her best.
3. Passengers had to _____ the ship when it began to sink.
4. Unless Dad cooks dinner for us, I _____ we're going to a restaurant.
5. In _____, I jumped into the water to escape from the angry bees.
6. The cat _____ on her toy as if it were a real mouse.

TUESDAY

Why doesn't Jackrabbit trust Coyote?

WEDNESDAY

Choose the correct answer.

1. What genre of fiction is this story?

Ⓐ historical fiction

Ⓑ science fiction

Ⓒ fable

Ⓓ realistic fiction

2. What is the setting of this story?

Ⓐ a forest

Ⓑ a desert

Ⓒ a garden

Ⓓ a zoo

3. What role does Owl play in this story?

Ⓐ a wise judge

Ⓑ a police officer

Ⓒ Coyote's friend

Ⓓ Jackrabbit's mother

THURSDAY

Write C if the phrase describes Coyote. Write J if it describes Jackrabbit.

_____ desperate and deceitful

_____ cautious and skeptical

_____ kind and clever

_____ helpful but wary

_____ cruel and foolish

FRIDAY

Do you think Jackrabbit really thought the stone would be a good witness?
Why or why not?
