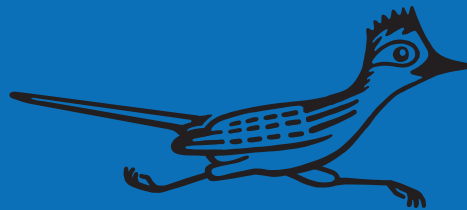


Exploring Trickster Tales

- Recommended children's books
- Writing activities
- Drawing, mask-making and other creative activities
- Ideas for sharing children's stories and writing
- Templates



Folktales

Folktales are fictional stories that have been passed down from generation to generation through oral storytelling.

Folktales are usually about ordinary people and everyday life, where the hero or heroine has a certain trait (such as courage, cleverness, fairness, or kindness) that shapes the action in the story.

All ancient civilizations had their own folktales, and the folktale tradition of oral storytelling is still strong throughout the world.

Common types of folktales include fairy tales, fables, and pourquoi tales, and trickster tales.

Fairy tales are "once upon a time" stories that often center around "good versus evil" and feature magical creatures and events.

Fables feature animals that act like humans. There is often trickery involved in solving a problem (think about the tortoise and the hare) and each fable ends with a moral or lesson.

Pourquoi tales explain why something is the way it is in nature. They are also considered to be **myths**, in that they helped ancient people to understand their world.

Trickster tales feature characters — often talking animals — who trick others to get what they want or to escape harm from someone more powerful.

Discover more about folktales at Start with a Book, by browsing our booklists, by browsing our booklists, kid-friendly websites, apps, and podcasts: [Folktales, Fairy Tales and Myths](#).

For our folktale activities, we'll focus on trickster tales.

One of the main qualities of a trickster is his cleverness. Different cultures use trickster tales to teach lessons about how to behave and treat other people.

In West Africa and the Caribbean, Anansi the Spider is featured in trickster tales. In China, the trickster is called Sun Wukong, or The Monkey King, and the Eastern European trickster is The Fox. One trickster who doesn't appear as an animal is Loki, the Norse god of mischief.



Illustration © Gerald McDermott



Folktales

Trickster Tales

There are many tricksters in Native American stories, too. Coyote and Raven are the most familiar tricksters because they're considered to be intelligent animals in real life.

Trickster tales are usually funny and feature an animal playing pranks on other animals, including their friends. But the friends often turn the table on the trickster in the end!

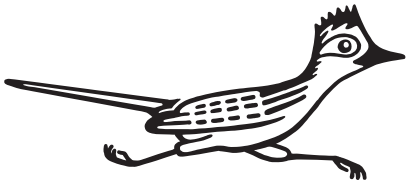
Get kids thinking

- Ask kids if they have ever played a trick on someone. What was the trick? How did the other person feel about the trick? Remind kids that tricks should be playful and funny, and not designed to make the other person feel bad.
- Tell kids that the trickster often shows many [contradictions](#) (opposites). For example, the trickster can be: clever *and* foolish, strong *and* weak, or kind *and* unkind.
- Together, watch this animated video of [Anansi Tries to Steal All the Wisdom in the World](#), a West African Anansi tale, read by Nick Cannon.
- Read some trickster tales together. See a selected list of books on the next page, or visit [Start with a Book: Folktales, Fairy Tales and Myths](#) for more recommended books.
- Talk about the characteristics of trickster tales — talking animals, a trick, and an ending that often reveals who the most clever animal really is.
- Ask the kids if they remember examples of contradictions in the trickster tales you read together. Was the trickster clever *and* foolish?

Writing activities

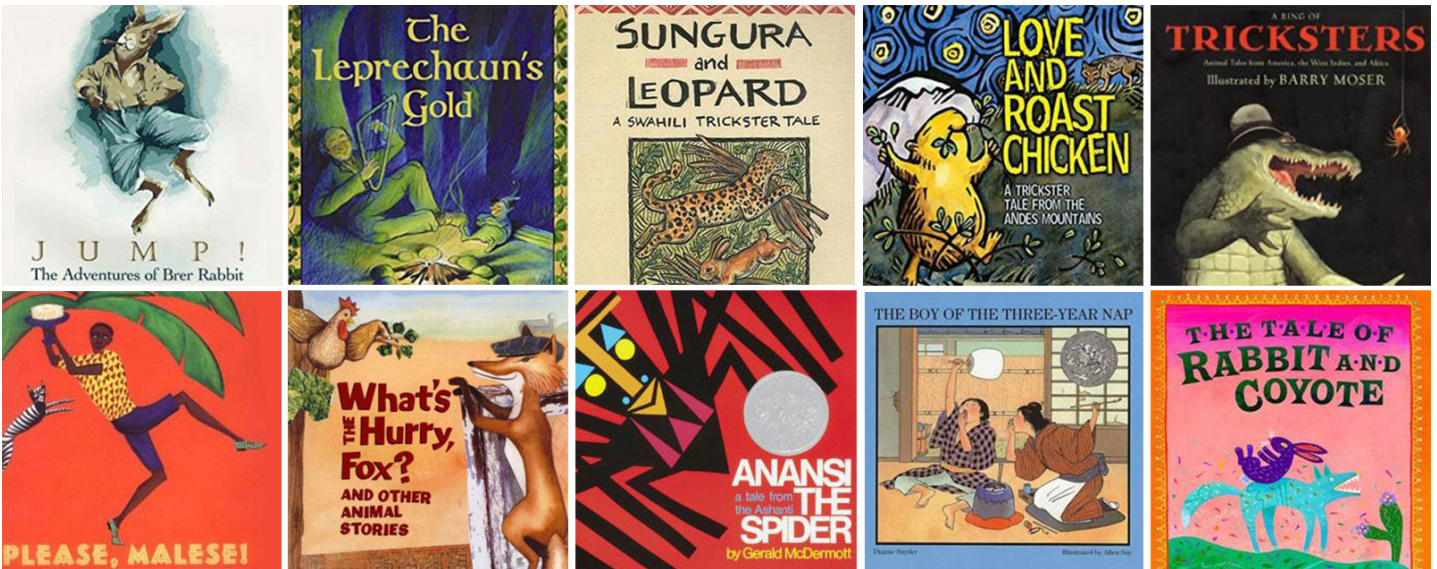
Here are two simple writing and creative activities to try after reading trickster tales together:

- [Favorite Trickster Poems](#) (see page 5)
- [Trickster Action Figure Cards](#) (see page 7)



Trickster Tales

Selected Children's Books



- **Anansi The Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti** by Gerald McDermott (Ghana)
- **Borreguita and the Coyote** by Verna Aardema, illustrations by Petra Mathers (Mexico)
- **Boy of the Three Year Nap** by Dianne Snyder, illustrations by Allen Say (Japan)
- **Coyote: A Trickster Tale from the American Southwest** by Gerald McDermott (American Southwest)
- **How Rabbit Tricked Otter** by Gayle Ross, illustrated by Murv Jacob (Cherokee)
- **Jabuti the Tortoise: A Trickster Tale from the Amazon** by Gerald McDermott (Amazon)
- **Jump! The Adventures of Brer Rabbit** by Joel Chandler Harris, illustrated by Barry Moser (American South)
- **Just in Case: A Trickster Tale and Spanish Alphabet Book** by Yuyi Morales (Mexico)
- **The Leprechaun's Gold** by Pamela Duncan Edwards, illustrated by Henry Cole (Ireland)
- **Love and Roast Chicken: A Trickster Tale from the Andes Mountains** by Barbara Knutson (Peru)
- **A Ring of Tricksters: Animal Tales from America, the West Indies, and Africa** by Virginia Hamilton
- **Monkey: A Trickster Tale from India** by Gerald McDermott (India)
- **Please Malese!** by Amy MacDonald, illustrated by Emily Lisker (Haiti)
- **Sister Tricksters: Rollicking Tales of Clever Females** by Robert San Souci (American South)
- **Sungura and Leopard: A Swahili Trickster Tale** by Barbara Knutson (East Africa)
- **The Tale of Tricky Fox** by Jim Aylsworth, illustrated by Barbara McClintock
- **The Tale of Rabbit and Coyote** by Tony Johnston, illustrated by Tomie dePaola (Mexico)
- **What's the Hurry Fox? And Other Animal Tales** by Zora Neale Hurston, illustrated by Bryan Collier
- **Zomo the Rabbit: A Trickster Tale from West Africa** by Gerald McDermott (West Africa)



Folktales

Selected Children's Books



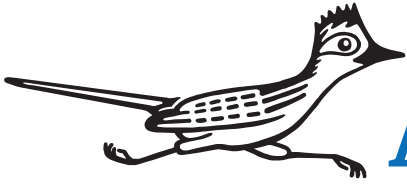
When the library is closed

Is your public library closed? See if your public library offers [OverDrive](#) where you can borrow and read free ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines on your phone or tablet. All you need is your library card to get access (and check out their [Libby app](#) for Android or iOS phones or tablets).

There are also a number of online services that offer high-quality audiobooks and ebooks: [Audible for Kids](#), [Tales2Go](#), and [Epic!](#).

Here are some ways to explore myths and legends online:

- [Folktales and Stories from Around the World](#): texts of well-known and not-so-well-known stories (American Folklore)
- [Folktales from Around the World](#): historical and geographic adventure (Google Earth Voyager Story)
- [Folktales and Fairy Tales for All](#): audiobooks (Audible)
- [Animated Stories for Kids](#) (August House / Story Cove)
- [Folktales](#) audio storytelling of traditional tales (The Story Home)
- [Animal Stories](#) audio storytelling of traditional tales with text (Storynory)



Trickster Tales

Acrostic Poem

Writing activity

For this activity, kids will write an acrostic poem based on a favorite trickster.

Individual: each child chooses their favorite trickster and works independently on their poem.

Groups: the group chooses one or more tricksters and they complete the poems together.

Supplies

- Pencils, pens, and art supplies: colored pencils, markers, crayons
 - Drawing paper or construction paper: 8-1/2 x 11 (individual activity, 2 sheets per child)
 - Poster paper, or flip chart pad, or dry-erase board (group activity)
-

Let's get started

Kids will write an acrostic poem of words or phrases that describes their favorite trickster. Some of the kids may be familiar with acrostic poems, also called vertical poems. They are easy and fun, and give kids a chance to really stretch their vocabulary muscles!

You can demonstrate how to do it, using Coyote as your example. You will write COYOTE vertically, and fill in a word, words, or phrase that begins with the first letter (see below).

Remind the kids to think about opposites as they brainstorm words and phrases. Kids can also include a drawing with their trickster poem if they like.

C conniving, crafty, clever

O

Y

O

T

E



Trickster Tales Acrostic Poem

Mask making

Storytellers and actors from all over the world have used masks for thousands of years to help tell their stories. Invite kids to make masks of the characters from their favorite trickster. You can use ordinary household items or recyclable materials, or make one with papier maché. Find directions at the links below:

- [Milk jugs](#)
- [Cardboard](#)
- [Egg cartons](#)
- [Paper plates](#)
- [Paper bags](#)
- [Papier maché](#)



Sharing our work

Once the trickster poems are finished, gather everyone together in a circle to read their poems out loud. Kids can also choose to memorize their poems and present them without notes — in keeping with the oral storytelling tradition. If you did the mask-making activity, encourage the kids to wear their masks as they share their poems.

Adults can ask the kids to explain some of their word choices and define big words for younger children in the group.

Try this!

Perform It: If you've got a group that loves music (especially rap) you can extend this activity by having the kids write and perform an original rap song based on their trickster character and using some of the words and phrases they've come up with.

For more reading, writing, and learning resources, visit www.StartWithABook.org





Action Figure Cards

Writing activity

For this activity, kids will create action figure cards based on a favorite trickster.

Individual: each child chooses their favorite trickster(s) and works independently on their card(s).

Supplies

- Pencils, pens, and art supplies: colored pencils, markers, crayons
- Printouts of the two action figure card templates in this packet (one copy of each page per child)
- Scissors

If you do not have access to a printer:

- Index cards, 4" x 6" or 5" x 8" (8 per child)
 - Star stickers (20 stickers per child)
-

Let's get started

If you have access to a printer, print out the card templates (after page 8 in this packet). Print enough copies so each child has one set of the front side and one set of the back side. Cut the sheets into individual cards along the dotted lines and glue the front to the back. Each child should have 4 trickster cards. If you don't have access to a printer, distribute index cards and star stickers.

After reading a collection of trickster tales, ask kids to write down four of their favorite tricksters and to start thinking about how they would describe each trickster. Things to think about:

- Name of the trickster
- What your trickster looks like
- Country or location where this trickster is likely to be found



Trickster Tales

Action Figure Cards

- Top skills
- Best trick ever played
- Biggest nemesis (enemy)
- "Power rating" for cleverness, speed, imagination, humor ...

Next, kids will create their sets of illustrated action figure cards. On the front, each trickster card will have the name of the trickster at the top and an original full-color drawing on the bottom. On the back, kids will write out short answers to the prompts, including a "power rating" that indicates how smart, funny, imaginative, and fast that character is — 5 stars is the highest rating. Color in the stars with yellow, red, or another bright color.

If the kids are using index cards, you'll need to prompt them with each element of their action cards. Use the star stickers for the power rating.

Tell the kids to use their imaginations in drawing their tricksters so that they really express their unique and interesting personalities!

Sharing our work

Once the trickster action cards are finished, let kids present their cards to the group, and talk about the characters. Invite the kids to trade cards if they like, or you can make color copies of the cards for everyone to share.

Try this!

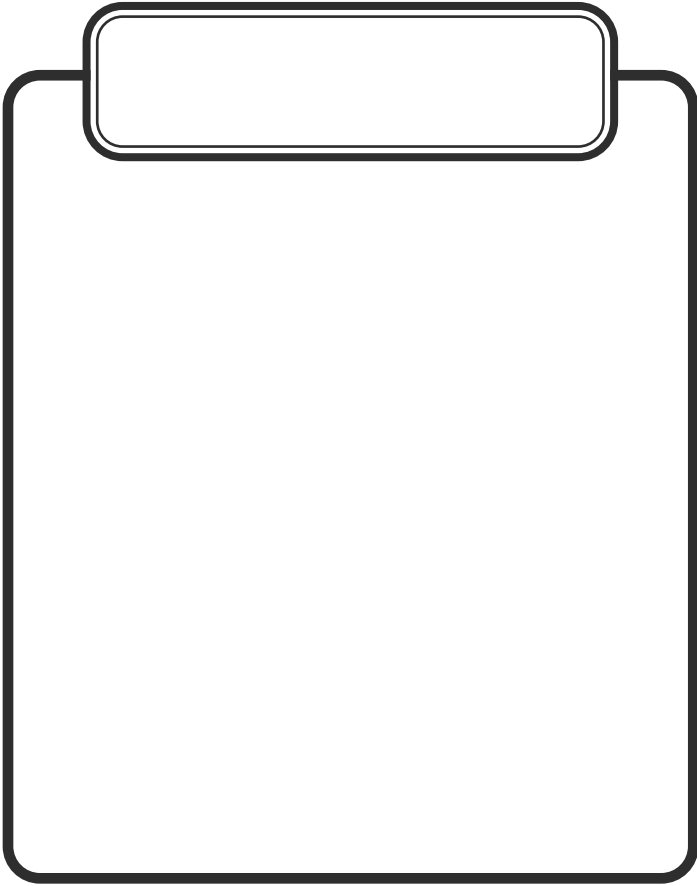
Perform It: Have kids act out a favorite trickster tale or invent a new story to act out or tell, using the components of the tale to structure their skit or oral story. Encourage costumes from the dress up-box, scenery made from materials found at home, or recyclables.

Build It: If you have play-dough or modeling clay, have the kids make a 3-D model of their trickster action figure. This could inspire some creative re-telling of the trickster stories!

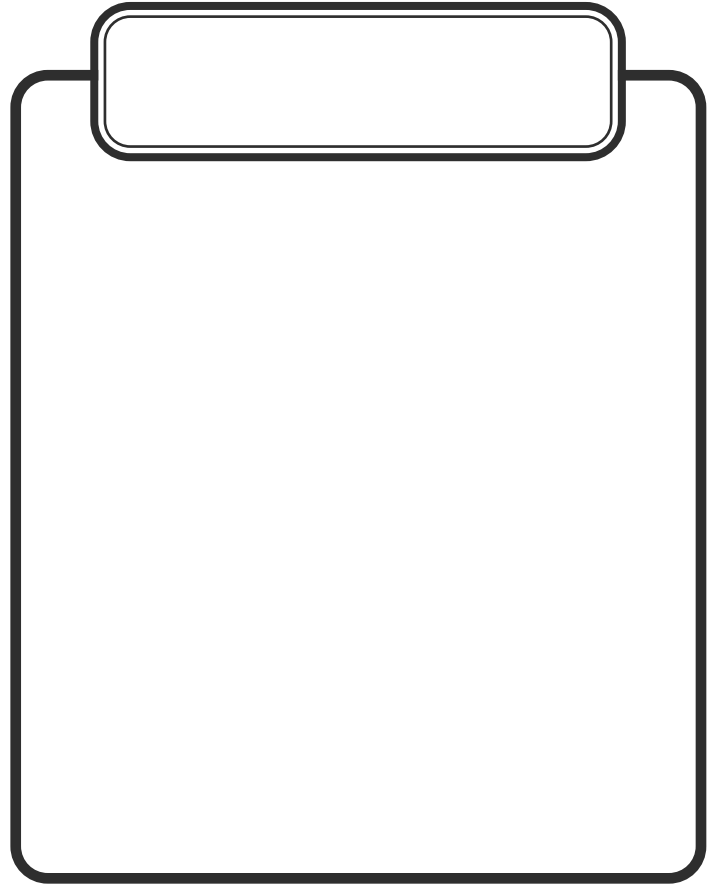
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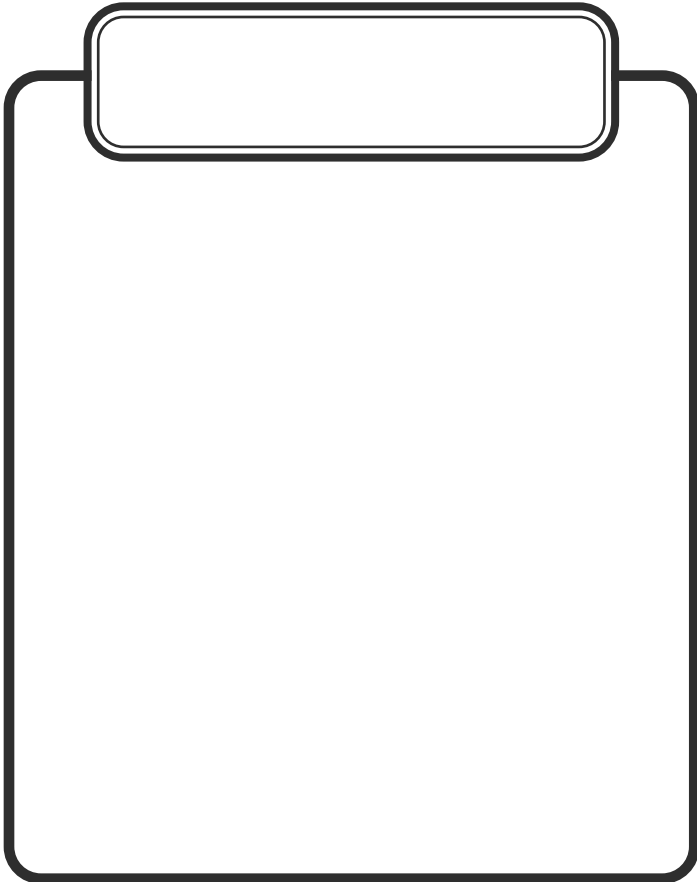
The **TRICKSTER**



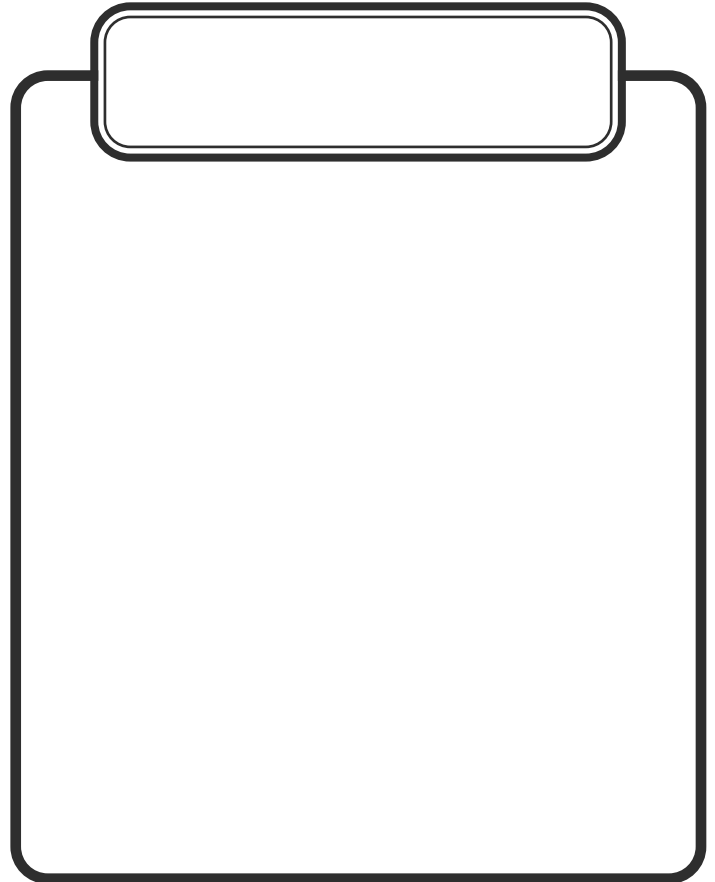
The **TRICKSTER**



The **TRICKSTER**



The **TRICKSTER**



Top Skills:

Best Trick Ever Played:

Biggest Nemesis:

Power Level:



Top Skills:

Best Trick Ever Played:

Biggest Nemesis:

Power Level:



Top Skills:

Best Trick Ever Played:

Biggest Nemesis:

Power Level:



Top Skills:

Best Trick Ever Played:

Biggest Nemesis:

Power Level:

