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Bonnie Halvorson Barger

The University of Montana

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Coyote and The Mice
A PLAY FOR FIRST GRADERS
Celebrating a Culture, Collaboration and the Arts

by

Bonnie Halvorson Barger

B.A., University of Montana--Missoula, 1976

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts in Fine Arts

Integrated Arts and Education

The University of Montana

2001

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*Coyote and the Mice:* a play for first graders celebrating a culture, collaboration, and the arts.

Chair:  Randy Bolton

ABSTRACT:

My final creative project was designed to:
- improve the relationship between school and parents of Arlee Elementary School by celebrating a cultural tradition and
- create a play for first graders using coyote stories by incorporating the arts.

I began research by explaining my project to our Indian Education teachers and getting their support. They shared books, articles and a wealth of knowledge. Using coyote stories was acceptable as long as we performed the play after the first snowfall in keeping with Salish tradition. I was encouraged to proceed.

My students and I read many coyote stories and listened to coyote stories on tape. They chose their favorite story and thus began the process of adapting the story into a play. A sense of community was in place as everyone worked together towards a common goal. I used what I had learned about the creative process through Creative Pulse, reading, and lively discussions with colleagues.

The first graders did everything including; adapting the story to a play, music, movement, creating the set and performing. My role was that of guide and mediator. I came away with an increased awareness of what first graders are capable of achieving, how incorporating the arts can meet the needs of all my students, and how much time (and patience) it takes to do a project such as this.

The performances took place in the library before parents, grandparents, and other classes. Attendance was outstanding. The audience was amazed at how first graders performed their play. My perception of the relations between parents and our school has changed. A play was created and relationships between school, parents, teacher, and students improved because a class of first graders so willingly shared a simple story with an audience.
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**Project Development**

My project began with a desire to improve relations between parents and the Arlee elementary school which is located on the Flathead Indian Reservation. During the past two years after our implementation of a new discipline policy, I observed a change in the atmosphere at the school. Parents were called at work and required to come in for meetings concerning their child’s behavior for minor and major offenses, i.e., not following the rules. For many, the school became a negative environment. Fewer parents were coming to the school for positive experiences whether it be for Parent / Teacher conferences or to help in the classroom. It could be that parents were working and could not take the time off or that parents did not feel comfortable helping in the classroom.

In reflecting on these attitude changes and thinking about a project proposal, I decided to have my first graders give a performance. I believed this would get parents in the school for a positive experience and give them exposure to Native American culture. It also showed parents what their children are capable of doing. They love to watch their children perform. My challenge was to find something new and interesting. The words; risk, rigor, and irrevocability came to my mind. It was a project that would be evaluated by parents, staff, and by University Professors. I knew that once I decided upon the project it had to be completed, relying not only on myself but on my students as well.

I decided to address the situation by creating plays using coyote stories which are traditionally told to our students by our Indian Studies teacher. Coyote stories had enriched my classroom once before when our former Indian Studies teacher, Kathy Felsman, told many of them to my class. These stories were familiar to the Salish students and most of the Arlee Elementary students. The art of storytelling in a play format would be a way for first graders to share these stories with others and a way to celebrate a rich cultural tradition of our Salish people.
Coyote Stories

Coyote stories are Indian folktales that have coyote as the central hero-figure. As Coyote lived on earth long before there were human beings, he was given his orders from He-Who-Sits-On-The-Top. Coyote has a very human personality. He is portrayed as being curious, mischievous and crafty in how he handled many of his adventures. Coyote stories were told orally by elders of the tribe and were used for practical instruction for the listener such as what foods to eat, where to find them, and how to cook them or how to make and use weapons for the hunt or war. In addition some tales were designed to simply satisfy curiosity about nature, or to remember an occurrence that happened within the tribe. Still other Coyote tales were meant to entertain, frequently with great humor.

First graders love the antics of coyote and are quick to remember how each story begins... Coyote was walking along one day, taking his time and enjoying the scenery...

Choosing a Story

After coming up with a plan, I knew my first step would be to share my idea with our new Indian Studies teacher, Vanessa Beery and our Salish language teacher and tribal elder, Frances Vanderburg. Frances reminded me that the Salish name for coyote is sncle. They both encouraged me to proceed and shared many books, articles, and a wealth of knowledge. Some of these included: Coyote Tales of the Montana Salish, Coyote Stories from the Indian Reading Series, Indins of the Northwest-Traditions, History, Legends, and Life, and The Bob-tailed Coyote from the Northern Cheyenne.

It was acceptable to use Coyote stories as long as we read the stories and performed the plays after the first snowfall in keeping with Salish tradition. Frances stated she wished I would have done this when her grandchild was in my class. I was
grateful for their support and help. The risk of seeking approval for an idea had been rewarded.

I soon discovered there are many coyote stories. After reading several, I came to the conclusion that not all of the stories were appropriate for first graders. Some had too much violence. I wanted this to be a positive story and didn’t wish to create negative feelings towards coyote stories. I was having a harder time than I expected finding appropriate material. Another problem was that many were just not conducive to adapting to a play format. What a dilemma! I went back to the experts for more information.

They teased me about my naivete. They hadn’t realized that I didn’t know the extent of coyote “uncle” (Salish for coyote) stories. I was given a tape recording of Coyote & --Native American Folk Tales retold by Joe Hayes. It proved to be the solution to my problem. This tape was left by Kathy Felsman and had several stories more appropriate for first graders.

After Christmas vacation and the first snowfall, we (my first grade class and myself) began to listen to the tape in hopes of being able to choose a story from this list of titles: Coyote & Turkey, Coyote & Rabbit, Coyote & Mice, Coyote & Locust, Coyote & Rattlesnake, Coyote & Turtle, Coyote & Quail, and Coyote & Horned Toad. As it turned out these stories were not just from the Salish tribe. After further discussion with Frances she said these were very good stories and we should go ahead and use them.

My first graders loved listening to the stories, many of them more than once. I admit I was surprised at how well they listened. They “put the pictures in their heads” using their creative imaginations.

We narrowed it down to two favorites: Coyote & Turtle and Coyote & The Mice. I was happy we had chosen simple stories, since this was our first experience with this type of activity. The idea of turning these stories into plays and performing them for
other classes and parents was more than acceptable to them. They were excited and their enthusiasm was contagious, just the “go ahead” I needed.

Ideas and questions flowed. A few volunteered the help of their mom and dad. They were eager and willing to share. After a calming down period, we discussed “what is a play?” and I recorded their initial ideas. Some they came up with were: “a play has actors, it has a set, it has props, it can have music, there are lights, you get a program, it tells a story, you get to wear a costume, you can dance, people watch it, it has an audience, Missoula Children’s Theater did a play, and it is fun!” It was a great brainstorming session, everyone expressed an idea. We decided to come back to our “BRAINSTORM” later to see if we should add to the list. The rigor had begun.

**Writing the Script**

Even though my first graders did not list it on our “BRAINSTORM,” I knew we needed a script. The transcription process began. I listened to the tape over, and over, and over again until both stories were recorded in print. This took about four hours. I read them back and listened to them every step of the way so as not to leave anything out. It was taking a lot more time than I had anticipated. I was thinking about all of the variables involved in a play and decided that we should focus our time and energy on just one play. It would be better to work for quality versus quantity. The choice wasn’t hard to make. *Coyote and The Mice* (Appendix A) was the favorite of the class because “it’s so funny, teacher!” This story is about coyote and a tribe of mice who try to teach him a lesson. Every time the mice went to the stream to get water to drink, coyote would chase them back down their holes. The mice were tired of always being chased. They met and devised a plan to solve the problem and teach coyote a lesson.

After we had the story, *Coyote and The Mice*, in print, I revised it to a narrator/character script format (Appendix B). The only characters were coyote and the mice. I
realized that in order to have the whole class involved in the performance we would have
to come up with other parts. I took the script back to my class, read it and asked for their
input as to how to get everyone involved. They came up with the ideas of some people
being the stream, someone being coyote’s wife and daughter, someone being the mice
chief, and some being the musicians.

We had a discussion about the story: What was the setting? Who were the
characters? What was the problem? How was it solved? How did the story end? What
did they like about the story? I wanted my students to know that our play would tell a
story.

**What happens now?**

Questions came to my mind: “Where do we go from here?, How do we decide
who plays which part?, What should we do about a set?, Costumes? Music? Movement?
Where? When? Will the story increase cultural awareness and reduce dissatisfaction
among some people? Are first graders capable of a project such as this? Will the teacher
have enough patience?” My students had questions as well and enthusiastically asked;
“Can I bring the costumes?” “Can I invite my “yaya”? (Salish for maternal
grandmother). “When will it be?” The only way to answer these questions is to
continue. “The show must go on!” was my motto. Thus began my journey-- as coyote, I
was taking my time enjoying the scenery, in this case I was enjoying and observing the
creative process at work with my first graders.

We had chosen the story, written a script, and now it was time to discuss the
parts. We listed the parts as coyote, the mice, mice chief, stream, coyote’s wife and child,
a narrator to tell the story, and musicians. The students could choose which part they
would like to try. It was interesting to me that only one person wanted to be the coyote.
Two students wanted to be the narrator so we decided to let them take turns. If a student
didn't have a preference, I asked them if they would be a certain part. Everyone agreed. I was amazed and relieved at how well the choosing of the parts worked out. The number of people to play the parts of the stream, musicians, and narrator could be flexible. We ended up with five mice, five musicians, three people as the stream, a coyote, his wife, a daughter and two narrators. The mice made a quick decision as to who would be their chief. The whole class was in the performance!

It was interesting to me that each student had a part in the play that fit their personality. The shy students who don't like to talk, chose to be the stream and perform movement, while the students who enjoy music and are always “drumming on something” chose to be the musicians. The narrators love to read to the class, the mice are the “busy little movers” in the classroom, and coyote is a curious boy, not afraid to try anything. Coyote’s wife and daughter are two students who are concerned about others in our room and watch what happens. Each student seemed to know their own strength and each celebrated it in one another. I needed to be open-minded and let them do their own character development.

**Planning Ahead**

Prior to our rehearsals, I read the script over with the narrators a few times and then they practiced with each other. I also let them take their scripts home so they could read to their families. We talked about reading with expression so people would want to listen to them. They were well prepared when it came time for rehearsal.

Based on my experience working with first graders, I knew that we had to keep the time between practicing the play and giving the performance at a minimum. Too much lead time would provide opportunities for chaos and disorder plus the first graders would lose interest and enthusiasm. We began our rehearsals three weeks before the play, though not on a regular basis due to our classroom schedule.
During our first rehearsals, we moved tables and desks back in our classroom and made imaginary boundaries. The students decided where the stream and mountain should be, where coyote’s den should be, where the mice should live, where the musicians should stand, where the narrators should read from, and where the teacher should sit so she could be the audience. It took some time before we actually began to read the play. We did a run-through to get an idea of what needed to happen with each character. As our narrators read the story, they took on the role of directors. Quite naturally, they would tell the other students to speak louder, or in a different voice. They offered suggestions in a kind way.

**Movement and Music**

We had to figure out how the “stream” would move to show how it flowed, how the mice would move from place to place, and what would coyote’s wife and child be doing while coyote was taking his walk to the stream. Since I had done some of the activities from Karen Kaufmann’s book; *The Language of Movement*, my students were familiar and comfortable with moving through space at different levels. They could also draw upon their own experiences to help them choreograph a stream, grass, mountains, coyotes, and mice.

Another area of the arts we were incorporating into the play was music. We took a fun rhythm that the students loved: “Slap, slap, clap, hold”. (a one, two, three, four beat) and rewrote a poem we had learned with this rhythm using our coyote story (Appendix C). Our musicians would play at the beginning and the end of the play. They were also in charge of sound effects throughout the story. The students made the decisions as to when sound effects should happen and what the sounds should be by listening once again to the story. I shared some of my drumming rhythms that I had learned during a class taught by Dorothy Morrison in the Creative Pulse. The musicians...
were eager to try them. Our instruments were an African drum, a Native American drum, a flute from India, a pennywhistle, a shaker, and a piece of pvc pipe-four feet long and four inches round. Our orchestra was ready.

We now had the different roles chosen: narrators, coyote, his wife and daughter, mice, mice chief, musicians, music, sound effects and movement.

Rehearsals

Rather than perform the whole story during each rehearsal, I decided to break it down into character parts. I thought this might help the creative process as well. The performers would only have their particular part to think about. I didn’t want them to feel overwhelmed, or lose interest and enthusiasm. Our sessions included musicians, coyote and family, mice and mice chief, and the stream. The narrators were available to read and the rest of us would be the audience. After each session, we would briefly discuss what we learned and how we could make it better.

We established some rules for our practice times (Appendix D).

1. Listen to the narrators while they are reading.
2. Be quiet and listen while other actors are speaking.
3. Stand quietly while waiting for your part.
4. Stay in character. (This one had to be explained.)

Our rehearsals went well depending on the weather, the day, and a variety of other variables. I realized my role was to keep the rehearsals short and fun and give positive feedback to the actors. One girl commented: “I’m really glad we’re doing this, teacher. It’s fun!”

The play was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Friday, March 23rd and Monday, March 26th in the elementary library. Notices were sent out to parents and other classes in the school (Appendix E).
Costumes and Props

The first graders were anxious to make or get costumes. One of our parents brought in a coyote hide. Coyote was authentically dressed. We had sets of colored t-shirts that had been dyed by a high school design class that we were able to use for the rest of the cast — blue shirts with waves painted on them for the stream, pink shirts with flowers painted on them for the musicians, and white shirts for the mice which they colored to make them look like mice, and yellow shirts with fire painted on them for the narrators (because they liked them). Coyote’s wife and daughter made coyote headbands and wore gray shirts that I brought from home. The mice also decided to make mice headbands after they saw the coyote headbands (Appendix F and G). Our costumes were simple and easy for the students to take on and off.

The students who were playing the part of the stream needed something to show stream movement. For this we used blue chiffon material—one yard wide and about eight feet long. This had been left over from the high school prom. The three students playing the part of the stream worked together to make it “flow”. The props and costumes were in order.

The Set

We needed to have a set that was movable- so we could carry it down the hall to the library, inexpensive- because we had no budget, and simple- so first graders could make it in a limited amount of time and space. From past experience I knew that cardboard boxes would fit the criteria. I sent home a letter to parents requesting help. Soon after a parent went to a furniture store and brought back four large couch and refrigerator boxes. Hooray! We were on our way.
After a discussion about scenery and what it was, we listened to the story again. The students decided we needed mountains, hills, water, a hole for the mice, a den for coyote and his family, and tall green grass. We added our ideas to our “BRAINSTORM” list.

The cardboard boxes were cut into theatre scenery. We divided into three groups: a green grass group, a blue stream and mountain group, and a brown hill and den group. Everybody put on a paint shirt, grabbed a large paintbrush and sat on their “flat” waiting for the teacher to distribute the paint. The room was buzzing with activity. I wandered about the room supervising paint spills and refilling paint pots. We finished in one afternoon just before recess. The students cleaned up the mess. There is a sink in our room so clean-up was done by the students under the watchful eyes of the teacher. We let the paint dry during recess and then leaned the flats up against the wall for the rest of the day.

After school, I borrowed an exacto knife from the art teacher and cut out waves, mountains, grass, hills, a dirt mound, and a den. I then set them up in the room to see how they would look. They worked!

The next day we did a rehearsal in the room with our set. The mountains, stream, grass, hills, dirt mound, and den kept falling over when the coyote would accidentally touch them as he moved on his way or the mice would knock down their hole as they scurried about—another problem to solve. One boy said, “Teacher, we need to use wood to make braces so our set can stand up.” We had no wood at the time so we made right angle braces out of leftover cardboard and used duct tape to secure them to the back of each piece. This kept the set pieces from falling over. Another problem was solved.

Some of the students wanted to decorate the set pieces. They added cotton for snow on the mountains, drew waves and flowing water on the stream, added paper for
grass, colored a hole for the mice and drew a den for the coyotes. These little touches made the scenery look more real and added dimension.

Our scenery was ready but I felt we also needed a backdrop so we could hide the bookshelves in the library and give more of a stage appearance for the actors and audience as well. The purchase of two plain white shower curtains, curtain rings, and permanent ink markers and first grade artists to draw scenery solved the problem. The artists talked about what they were going to draw from the story—mice, mountains, coyotes, kids, sky, sun, clouds, and a rainbow. They made sure they were working from the same end of the curtain so nothing would be upside down. What insight!

A stand was built for our backdrop and we were able to hang the two shower curtains side by side. The curtains moved readily on the rod and fit perfectly as a backdrop in the end of the library room. The set was complete. We had all the elements of our play.

*Script, Movement, Music, Costumes, Props, the Set...putting it all together*

Now it was time for full rehearsals. These took place with costumes, set, props, and music in our classroom. Before we began each rehearsal we reviewed our rules (Appendix D). Each time we practiced, something changed. More problems to solve.

Coyote Marley no longer wanted to be coyote. Solution: One of the narrators would be coyote and coyote Marley, became a member of the stream team. Mice chief Becca no longer wanted to be chief. Solution: One of the other mice volunteered. The musicians were struggling with being together on the rhythm. Solution: more practice at recess.

These were just a few of the problems we encountered. The first graders came up with the solutions and after a brief discussion led by the teacher, we came to the
conclusion that we should do our best with the part we have. (Especially since the play was less than a week away.)

I began to doubt my sanity at starting the whole process. Frustration was creeping into my patient demeanor. I took a deep breath and reflected on why I began this journey in the first place. I wanted my students to have a positive experience with performance and the arts and I wanted to improve relations between home and school. In addition, I hoped my first graders would improve problem solving skills, and have fun working together. I reminded myself to not expect perfection. The element of joy in the experience was most important.

We scheduled two full rehearsal times in the library so the cast could get used to the different setting. Our librarian, Mrs. Black, was very helpful during our rehearsals. She offered a few suggestions, which the cast used, and volunteered to video-tape the performances. Our rehearsals went well and we felt we were ready for the performance with a real live audience.

**Live Performance**

Friday, March 23rd. The set was up and ready in the library. Our audience consisted of parents, grandparents, two sixth grades, two first grades, a second grade class and other teaching staff members. They were all eager to see the show.

Back in the classroom, excitement was in the air as the first graders put on costumes. Nervousness could be seen on some faces. I had them all think about their part in their heads. We loosened up our bodies and took a deep breath. We went over our rules once again. I told them to speak loudly, smile, and have fun. If they’re having a good time the audience will have fun also.

We made our way to the library. It was time for the show! Little giggles and comments came from the class as they observed the audience. The narrator shushed
them and asked if everyone was ready. The performance began and the show did go on. If someone forgot a line or a sound effect, someone else was quick to help out. Beginning to ending, they did a great job! I was so proud of them. They followed our rules of performance and my instructions. The applause was thunderous! They took their bows, smiled, waved, and were ready to pack up and get out of costumes! I could tell by the looks on their faces and their actions, they experienced pride and joy in their accomplishment. This is it, irreversibility.

After the performance, we received wonderful comments. I shared with parents some of the process we went through to get to the final performance. Many were amazed at what a fantastic job these first graders had done. A second grader asked, “Why didn’t we do this last year? It looks like so much fun!”

After all the excitement had died down and we were back in the room, I talked to the class about their performance. What did they learn? What did they like? What did they not like? Did they have fun doing the play? Would they do it again sometime? I thought it was a good way for them to reflect on Coyote and The Mice. It was apparent that all enjoyed their performance and they were happy with their work. The element of joy had not been lost.

The second performance went well also. The cast was more relaxed and some got a little goofy. This was to be expected, they’re first graders after all. Once again we received positive comments. Our sixth grade reading partners wrote a glowing thank you letter/review (Appendix I).

Perhaps a first grade tradition has begun. The sharing of a coyote “sncle” story in a play, after the first snowfall, of course.
Reflection

In reflecting on our work, I realized how this project met the needs of all my students. All of them were actively involved in the aspects of this play.

I was reminded of my studies in Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences during The Creative Pulse. As I thought of the specific intelligences, I would list some of my students and recalled how each individual went about working and solving problems during the whole process of the play and the performance. I came to the conclusion that this project was more than just a play. The whole process had created an enriching experience for all.

Students were improving their self esteem by experiencing the successful completion of a project. The shy children in the class were able to gain confidence by performing in the safety of a group. All of them had the opportunity to use a variety of talents and skills. The students who always seek attention were the center of attention in a positive way.

We all shared our time and energy in getting the play ready to present. They shared by performing the play for others—parents, other classes, and school staff. Cooperation and responsibility were evident as they put the needs of the group ahead of their own special interests and showed support for one another. They had the opportunity to help one another as they prepared for the play. They experienced being attentive, on time, and prepared, and gained practice working together in both large and small groups.

Problem solving skills were developed as these first graders determined who would have what part in the play, decided on costumes, props, and sets, and decided when and where to go for help if it was needed.

Academic skills were practiced as they read and researched coyote, figured out how to stabilize the set, did the artwork, and came up with movement and music. Knowledge they learned elsewhere was able to be applied from beginning to end.
Another plus to all of this work was the school-home connection. Parents had the opportunity to become involved with the school in a positive way as they helped their children practice lines, assisted with costumes and the set, and showed support of their children's education by attending the performance. The intent of the project had more than met its goal. The parents had a positive school experience.

An experience is worthwhile if you learn something along the way. As I stated in the beginning I was like coyote, *taking my time and enjoying the scenery*. The scenery being my observations of my first grade class. Through this experience, I learned that first graders are more capable than I thought when it comes to the arts. All they need are opportunities to express themselves creatively. I have proven to myself that exposure to the arts is paramount in meeting the needs of all my students. They learned how to express themselves, using their imagination and artistic abilities to create the set, props and costumes; and develop the movements and rhythm of the play.

I learned that first graders can help bridge the gap between school and home. This was evident in the positive feedback I received from parents. Visitations in the classroom increased. An appreciation of what we do in our first grade class was expressed by many. I learned that it takes a lot of help and support from others to do a project such as this. Most importantly, I learned the rewards of doing this project are many, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

_Evaluation_

I know if it had not been for Creative Pulse, I would not have accepted this challenge or taken a risk to try to make a dream come true. Our studies during Creative Pulse, of ourselves, the creative process, and the arts, have helped provide me with knowledge, experiences to draw upon, and the confidence to accept a challenge and take a risk.
The process of writing this paper has me going back over the past three summers and Creative Pulse. I’ve been reviewing books, rereading notes and articles, and reflecting on some of our sessions. This has all been a journey, step by step, with roads traveled upon, destinations arrived at, and experiences shared. I have gained knowledge and insight as to my place in the world. As coyote, I was able to take my time and enjoy the scenery.

I’m already thinking of ways to improve upon this project. I will begin earlier in the year to prepare my students for a performance by doing reader’s theatre, reciting familiar poems or nursery rhymes, or acting out fairy tales. These could be done in front of a class or a small group to gain some experience in performing in front of an audience. “Show and Tell” is also an example of speaking in front of a group.

I will keep better notes, have a timeline, and build upon my prior knowledge and experience. I will continue to try different ideas and learn from my students. We’ve taken the risk, done the rigor, experienced irrevocability and reflected on the challenge.

My project intent has been successfully completed. It is my belief that a coyote (sncle) story/play will become a tradition for our first graders. The journey continues.
APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

*Coyote and the Mice*

Adapted from Native American Folk Tales retold by Joe Hayes

Have you ever heard Coyote laugh? They say there's a simple way to make him laugh, all you have to do is call him by a certain name, so it's easy, that is, if you can remember the name.

Once there was a whole tribe of mice living in the tall grass near a spring, they had a good life. There was plenty of water to drink and the tender grass shoots were good to eat. Bushes growing nearby gave them leaves and sticks to make their nest with.

But the mice had a problem, every time they went down to the water to drink, coyote would appear and chase them back down their holes. He hardly ever caught one, they were too quick. But it was a nuisance being chased around by Coyote!!

So one day the mice held a council to discuss what might be done about Coyote. The mouse chief stood up and spoke, “I think we should play a trick on Coyote, and teach him a lesson. They all scratched their heads and tried to think of a trick, then the mouse chief got up an idea. “Let me see, there was a name you could call coyote and make him laugh, my father taught it to me once, now what was that name, the mouse chief thought and thought, but couldn't remember. He went from mouse to mouse, asking “do you remember the name, do you remember the name.” They all shook their heads. But finally one little mouse piped up, “yellow behind the ears”. “That's it,” cried the mouse chief, “yellow behind the ears”, and then he told his plan.

He said the next morning all the mice should hide themselves in the grass beside the trail. When coyote came down to get water, the mouse chief would give the signal, and they would all holler, “yellow behind the ears!!” and make coyote laugh.

But the other mice said, “but why do we want to make coyote laugh?” The mouse chief reminded them that coyote had a den nearby where he had a wife and several babies. Every morning coyote filled his mouth with water to take home for his family. They had all seen him do it. “But” the mouse chief chuckled, “he, he, he, he, he, can he carry water in his mouth and laugh at the same time?” The mice all giggled. Now they understood what a good trick it would be.

The next morning all the mice were hiding in the grass alongside the path coyote would take to the spring. Coyote came down to the water, first he drank deeply to quench his own thirst. Then he filled his mouth ‘til his cheeks bulged and started up
the trail towards home. He had hardly started up the trail, when the mouse chief scurried to the top of a little pile of dirt and gave the signal.

"Yellow behind the ears" shouted all the mice together, and Coyote laughed, "he, he, ho, ho, ho, he, he, heh" and he spit his water all over the ground.

"Who said that?", Coyote snapped, and looked around him, but the mice were hiding back down their holes. Coyote walked back to the spring, looking carefully about him as he went. He filled his mouth again with water. The mouse chief let him get a little bit farther up the trail this time. Then he ran to the dirt mound and gave the signal.

"Yellow behind the ears"

"He, who, ho, he, he, hee! Who said that?" Coyote darted this way and that and he called out a warning, "Remember, I am Coyote. If you say that again — I'll EAT YOU!!!" Coyote walked cautiously back to the spring, turning his head to the left and to the right, he filled his cheeks and turned around slowly. He said to himself "I don't care if they say it again, this time I won't laugh." The mouse chief let Coyote get half way up the hill from the springs edge, then he signaled.

"Yellow behind the ears"

Coyote squeezed his lips together. His eyes bulged and he snorted and spurted while he tried to hold his laughter. But "whoa, ho, hee he, hee" he laughed louder than ever. "Who said that?" Coyote roared. He ran from bush to bush sniffing and digging with his paws, he poked his nose behind each clump of grass. But the mice were safe in their holes, giggling to themselves.

Coyote crept back to the water, his ears were pricked, his eyes scanned slowly about him, his nose twitched as he scented the wind. Slowly he filled his mouth, raising his head to look around after each sip. Then he sprung around and ran up the trail as fast as he could. The mouse chief let him get almost to the top of the hill and then, "Yellow behind the ears!!"

Coyote hooted "Whoo hoo, ha, ha, ha ha ha" Then a thought struck Coyote. "GHOSTS! It must be ghosts" And Coyote was afraid of ghosts. He ran off howling "Ghooooosts, Ghooooosts"

When he arrived home without any water his wife was furious. She sent him away again. He had to run clear around the mountain to the next spring to get water for his family. And that's where Coyote went for water from that day on!
So now the mice could go down to drink whenever they pleased. They would sit back on their haunches and let the cool water trickle down their throats. And sometimes the mouse chief would get a little twinkle in his eye and then give the signal. The mice would all shout “Yellow behind the ears” and they would laugh even harder than Coyote.
Narrator: Have you ever heard Coyote laugh? They say there’s a simple way to make him laugh, all you have to do is call him by a certain name. It’s easy, that is if you can remember the name.

Once there was a whole tribe of mice living in the tall grass near a spring, they had a good life. There was plenty of water to drink and the tender grass shoots were good to eat. Bushes growing nearby gave them leaves and sticks to make their nest with.

But the mice had a problem, every time they went down to the water to drink, coyote would appear and chase them back down their holes. He hardly ever caught one, they were too quick. But it was a nuisance being chased around by Coyote!

So one day the mice held a council to discuss what might be done about Coyote. The mouse chief stood up and spoke:

Mouse Chief: “I think we should play a trick on Coyote, and teach him a lesson.”
**Narrator:** They all scratched their heads and tried to think of a trick, then the mouse chief got an idea.

**Mouse Chief:** “Let me see, there was a name you could call coyote and make him laugh, my father taught it to me once. Now what was that name?”

**Narrator:** The mouse chief thought and thought, but couldn’t remember. He went from mouse to mouse asking:

**Mouse Chief:** “Do you remember the name? Do you remember the name?”

**Narrator:** They all shook their heads. But finally one little mouse piped up.

**Little Mouse:** “Yellow behind the ears!”

**Mouse Chief:** “That’s it!” “Yellow behind the ears”

**Narrator:** and then he told his plan...He said the next morning all the mice should hide themselves in the grass beside the trail. When coyote came down to get water, the mouse chief would give the signal, and they would all holler:

**Mice:** “Yellow behind the ears!!”
Narrator: and make coyote laugh. but the other mice said,

Mice: “But why do we want to make coyote laugh?”

Narrator: The mouse chief reminded them that coyote had a den nearby where he had a wife and several babies. Every morning coyote filled his mouth with water to take home for his family. They had all seen him do it.

Mouse chief: “But, hee, hee, hee, hee, hee, can he carry water in his mouth and laugh at the same time?”

Narrator: The mice all giggled. Now they understood what a good trick it would be. The next morning all the mice were hiding in the grass alongside the path coyote would take to the spring. Coyote came down to the water, first he drank deeply to quench his own thirst. Then he filled his mouth ‘til his cheeks bulged and started up the trail towards home. He had hardly started up the trail, when the mouse chief scurried to the top of a little pile of dirt and gave the signal.

Mice: “Yellow behind the ears!”

Narrator: shouted all the mice together, and Coyote laughed;

Coyote: “he, he, ho, ho, ho, he, he, heh” (coyote spits his water all over the ground). “Who said that?”
Narrator: Coyote snapped, and looked around him, but the mice were hiding back down their holes. Coyote walked back to the spring, looking carefully about him as he went. He filled his mouth again with water. The mouse chief let him get a little bit farther up the trail this time. Then he ran to the dirt mound and gave the signal.

Mice: “Yellow behind the ears”

Coyote: “He, whoo, hoo, he, he, hee! Who said that?”

Narrator: Coyote darted this way and that and he called out a warning,

Coyote: “Remember, I am Coyote. If you say that again --- I’ll EAT YOU!”

Narrator: Coyote walked cautiously back to the spring, turning his head to the left and to the right, he filled his cheeks and turned around slowly. He said to himself:

Coyote: “I don’t care if they say it again, this time I won’t laugh.”

Narrator: The mouse chief let Coyote get half way up the hill from the springs edge, then he signaled.

Mice: “Yellow behind the ears!”
**Narrator:** Coyote squeezed his lips together. His eyes bulged and he snorted and spurted while he tried to hold his laughter. But...

**Coyote:** “whoa, ho, hee hee he, heh heh heh!!!” (coyote laughs louder than before). “Who said that?”

**Narrator:** Coyote roared. He ran from bush to bush sniffing and digging with his paws, he poked his nose behind each clump of grass. But the mice were safe in their holes, giggling to themselves. Coyote crept back to the water, his ears were pricked, his eyes scanned slowly about him, his nose twitched as he scented the wind. Slowly he filled his mouth, raising his head to look around after each sip. Then he sprung around and ran up the trail as fast as he could. The mouse chief let him get almost to the top of the hill and then:

**Mice:** “Yellow behind the ears!!”

**Coyote:** “Whoo hoo, ha, ha, ha, ha ha”

**Narrator:** Then a thought struck Coyote.

**Coyote:** “GHOSTS! It must be ghosts!”

**Narrator:** And Coyote was afraid of ghosts. He ran off howling:
Coyote: “Ghooosts, Ghooosts”

Narrator: When he arrived home without any water his wife was furious. She sent him away again. He had to run clear around the mountain to the next spring to get water for his family.

And that’s where Coyote went for water from that day on!

So now the mice could go down to drink whenever they pleased. They would sit back on their haunches and let the cool water trickle down their throats. And sometimes the mouse chief would get a little twinkle in his eye and then give the signal. The mice would all shout:

Mice: “Yellow behind the ears!!”

Narrator: and they would laugh even harder than Coyote.
APPENDIX C

Coyote Poem

Beginning of the play....

We went for a walk the other day.  
The little mice came out to play.  
Coyote saw them by the stream.  
He jumped out and chased them away!

Ending...

When little mice come out to play,  
Coyote runs the other way.  
And so our story is all done.  
We hope you had a lot of fun!

Rhythm:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{slap} & \quad \text{slap} & \quad \text{clap} & \quad \text{rest} \\
\text{slap} & \quad \text{slap} & \quad \text{clap} & \quad \text{rest}
\end{align*}
\]

Note: Students often use this rhythm at basketball games.
APPENDIX D

Our Play Rules

1. Listen to the narrators while they are reading.

2. Be quiet and listen while other actors are speaking.

3. Stand quietly while waiting for your part.

4. Stay in character.
Dear Parents,

We have scheduled our play: Coyote and the Mice. It will be held Friday, March 23rd and Monday, March 26th at 2:30 p.m. in the elementary library. We hope you can come. We've been working very hard on our production!

Sincerely,
the Barger Bunch

Mrs. Barger

Brianna

Willie

Becca

Nelson

Zack

Dustin

Mariah

Logan

Sharada

Kyla

Daw

Aspen

Zachary

Marley

Daniel

Lucretia

Cody

29
Dear Barger Bunch,

Thank you for inviting us to your play. The narrator read very loud and clear. Everyone memorized their lines well and corrected each other in a nice way. The mice added humor to the play with actions and script. We enjoyed the songs, and the music was great. Your acting careers are sure to blossom.

Michael

Misty

Cindy

Bill

Seth P.H.

Travis O.

Alanna C. Walling

Rachel L. Wilson

Samantha

Julie

Thank you!

L.E.

Sean

3-27-01
Bibliography


