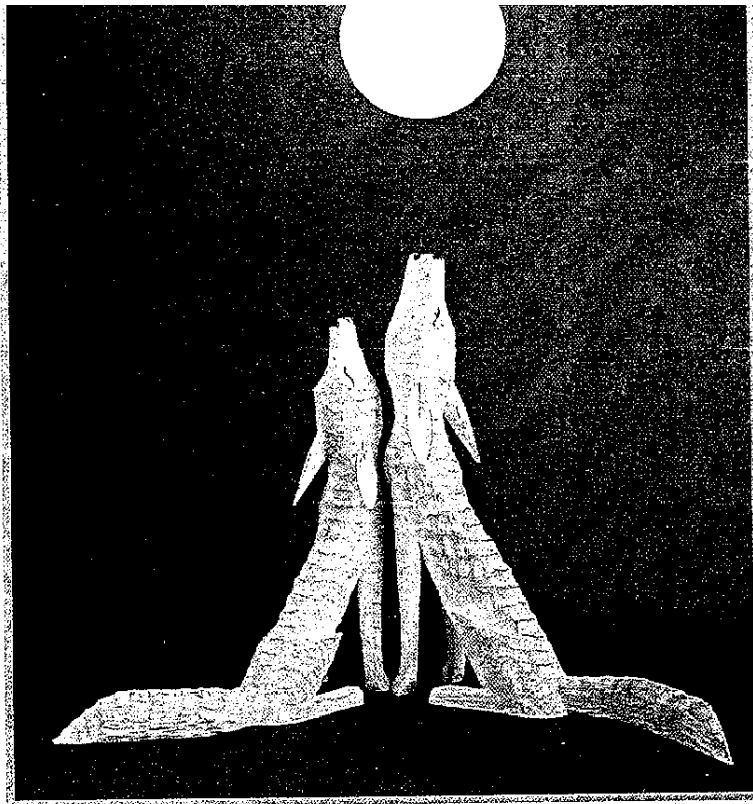


*"They
have all
the light
we need.
Let's
steal it."*

*Coyotes Howling at
the Moon (c. 1985)
by Alonzo Jimenez.
Cottonwood and
latex house paint.*



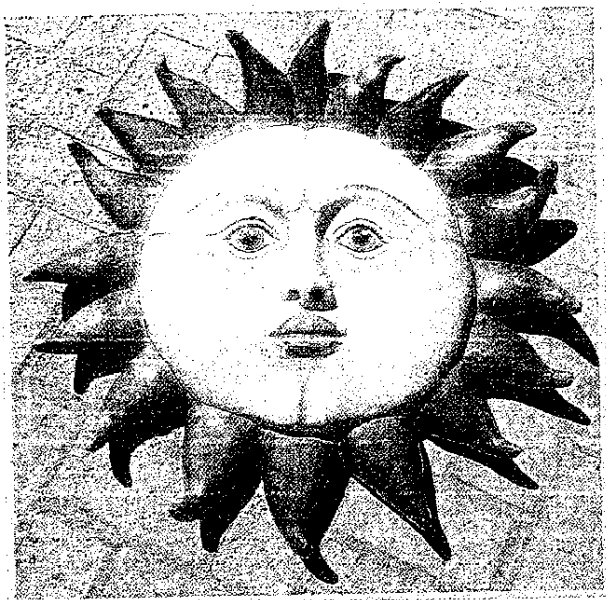
Coyote Steals the Sun and Moon

*traditional Zuni,
retold by Richard Erdoes
and Alfonso Ortiz*

Coyote is a bad hunter who never kills anything. Once he watched Eagle hunting rabbits, catching one after another—more rabbits than he could eat. Coyote thought, "I'll team up with Eagle so I can have enough meat." Coyote is always up to something.

"Friend," Coyote said to Eagle, "we should hunt together. Two can catch more than one."

"Why not?" Eagle said, and so they began to hunt in partnership. Eagle caught many rabbits, but all Coyote caught was some little bugs.



Original art by Sergio Bustamante and Clint Clemens.

At this time the world was still dark; the sun and moon had not yet been put in the sky. "Friend," Coyote said to Eagle, "no wonder I can't catch anything; I can't see. Do you know where we can get some light?"

"You're right, friend, there should be some light," Eagle said. "I think there's a little toward the west. Let's try and find it."

And so they went looking for the sun and moon. They came to a big river, which Eagle flew over. Coyote swam, and swallowed so much water that he almost drowned. He crawled out with his fur full of mud, and Eagle asked, "Why don't you fly like me?"

"You have wings; I just have hair," Coyote said. "I can't fly without feathers."

At last they came to a pueblo,¹ where the Kachinas² happened to be dancing. The people invited Eagle and Coyote to sit down and have something to eat while they watched the sacred dances. Seeing the power of the Kachi-

1. **pueblo** (pweb'lo): Native American village in the southwestern United States.

2. **Kachinas** (kə·chē'nəz): gods or spirits of ancestors. In the Pueblo cultures of the southwestern United States, masked dancers imitate the Kachinas in sacred rituals.

nas, Eagle said, "I believe these are the people who have light."

Coyote, who had been looking all around, pointed out two boxes, one large and one small, that the people opened whenever they wanted light. To produce a lot of light, they opened the lid of the big box, which contained the sun. For less light they opened the small box, which held the moon.

Coyote nudged Eagle. "Friend, did you see that? They have all the light we need in the big box. Let's steal it."

"You always want to steal and rob. I say we should just borrow it."

"They won't lend it to us."

"You may be right," said Eagle. "Let's wait till they finish dancing and then steal it."

After a while the Kachinas went home to sleep, and Eagle scooped up the large box and flew off. Coyote ran along trying to keep up, panting, his tongue hanging out. Soon he yelled up to Eagle, "Ho, friend, let me carry the box a little way."

"No, no," said Eagle, "you never do anything right."

He flew on, and Coyote ran after him. After a while Coyote shouted again: "Friend, you're my chief, and it's not right for you to carry the box; people will call me lazy. Let me have it."

"No, no, you always mess everything up." And Eagle flew on and Coyote ran along.

So it went for a stretch, and then Coyote started again. "Ho, friend, it isn't right for you to do this. What will people think of you and me?"

"I don't care what people think. I'm going to carry this box."

Again Eagle flew on and again Coyote ran after him. Finally Coyote begged for the fourth time: "Let me carry it. You're the chief, and I'm just Coyote. Let me carry it."

Eagle couldn't stand any more pestering. Also, Coyote had asked him four times, and if someone asks four times, you'd better give him

what he wants. Eagle said, "Since you won't let up on me, go ahead and carry the box for a while. But promise not to open it."

"Oh, sure, oh yes, I promise." They went on as before, but now Coyote had the box. Soon Eagle was far ahead, and Coyote lagged behind a hill where Eagle couldn't see him. "I wonder what the light looks like, inside there," he said to himself. "Why shouldn't I take a peek? Probably there's something extra in the box, something good that Eagle wants to keep to himself."

And Coyote opened the lid. Now, not only was the sun inside, but the moon also. Eagle had put them both together, thinking that it would be easier to carry one box than two.

As soon as Coyote opened the lid, the moon escaped, flying high into the sky. At once all

the plants shriveled up and turned brown. Just as quickly, all the leaves fell off the trees, and it was winter. Trying to catch the moon and put it back in the box, Coyote ran in pursuit as it skipped away from him. Meanwhile the sun flew out and rose into the sky. It drifted far away, and the peaches, squashes, and melons shriveled up with cold.

Eagle turned and flew back to see what had delayed Coyote. "You fool! Look what you've done!" he said. "You let the sun and moon escape, and now it's cold." Indeed, it began to snow, and Coyote shivered. "Now your teeth are chattering," Eagle said, "and it's your fault that cold has come into the world."

It's true. If it weren't for Coyote's curiosity and mischief making, we wouldn't have winter; we could enjoy summer all the time.

MEET THE WRITERS

"Common Elements and Rich Diversity"

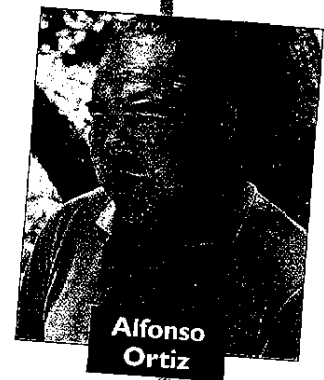
Richard Erdoes (1912–) was born in Vienna, Austria.

Alfonso Ortiz (1939–1997) was born in San Juan, a Tewa pueblo in New Mexico. Having studied and written about Native American cultures, Erdoes and Ortiz together edited *American Indian Myths and Legends* (1984), from which "Coyote Steals the Sun and Moon" is taken. They asked readers to notice "both the common elements that run through stories told at opposite ends of the continent and the rich diversity of detail":

“Legends, of course, vary according to a people's way of life, the geography and the climate in which they live, the food they eat and the way they obtain it. The nomadic buffalo hunters of the Plains tell stories very different from those of Eastern forest dwellers. To the Southwestern planters and harvesters, the coming of corn and the changing of seasons are of primal concern, while people of the Northwest who make their living from the sea fill their tales with ocean monsters, swift harpooners, and powerful boat builders. All tribes have spun narratives as well for the features of their landscape: how this river came to be, when these mountains were formed, how our coastline was carved.”



Richard Erdoes



Alfonso Ortiz

CHOICES: Building Your Portfolio

Writer's Notebook

1. Collecting Ideas for Observational Writing

Coyote and Brer Rabbit are both tricksters, yet each has unique **traits** (qualities or characteristics). Similarly, a person may resemble other people in some ways but still have traits that set him or her apart. Picture a person you see frequently but don't know well. Jot down all the details you can think of that make this person special.



Creative Writing/Art

2. Brer Lion's Revenge

Brer Lion must have been furious about falling for Brer Rabbit's trick. Write a **sequel** (a continuation of the story) in which Brer Lion tries to get even with Brer Rabbit. Does he get his revenge or just more embarrassment?

If you prefer to draw, design your sequel in comic-strip form.



Cottonwood Lion (c. 1985) by Alonzo Jimenez. Cottonwood, unraveled hemp, and latex house paint.

Performance/Art

3. Do Not Open

Many stories use the **motif** of characters who are forbidden to open a box—and, of course, do. Some examples:

- "Coyote Steals the Sun and Moon" (Zuni)
- "Pandora's Box" (Greek)
- "Urashima Taro" (Japanese)

Use one of these stories, or a story of your own, to write a **script** for a **puppet show**. Make puppets and perform your show for your class or for a group of children. Don't forget the most important prop—a box containing a picture or symbol of the secret contents.

Research/Summary

4. Myth Hunt

A **creation myth** is a story from a particular culture that explains how the world came to be. "Coyote Steals the Sun and Moon" is a Zuni myth about the origin of winter. Research a myth from another culture that explains the origin of one of the seasons. Start your search on the Internet or in the library. What key words will you use in your search? Once you've found a myth, summarize it briefly. You might want to illustrate a character or setting in the myth. Collect your summaries in a booklet. Be sure to list your sources at the back.

Language
Handbook
HELP

See Pro-
nouns with
appositives,
page 765.
Case, pages
762-764.

Technology
HELP

See Language
Workshop
CD-ROM.
Key word
entry: case.

Two Pronoun Problems

1. Sometimes a pronoun is followed directly by a noun that identifies it ("we students," "us players"). Such a noun is called an **appositive**. If you don't know which pronoun to use **before an appositive**, remove the appositive and try each form of the pronoun separately.

EXAMPLES We/Us students are collecting myths.

The trophy went to we/us players.

You wouldn't say, "Us are collecting myths." Therefore, We must be correct. You also wouldn't say, "The trophy went to we," so *us* must be correct.

EXAMPLES We students are collecting myths.

The trophy went to us players.

2. Sometimes it's hard to know which pronoun to use **following a preposition**. The answer is simple: Always use a pronoun in the objective case. In the following example, *between* is the preposition. It should be followed by a pronoun in the objective case.

EXAMPLE Just between you and me, the dinner was a disaster.

With *between*, people often use a nominative-case pronoun because they think it sounds correct. "Between you and I" is not correct, however. The correct form is "between you and me" or "between him [or her] and me."

Try It Out

Choose the correct pronoun from each underlined pair.

1. The work continued without Ted and I/me.
2. Us/we players put our reputations on the line.
3. The opposition wanted to crush us/we guards.
4. Everyone ate cake except Jackie and I/me.
5. The deal is between Fran and he/him.

VOCABULARY

HOW TO OWN A WORD

Regional and Cultural Sayings: What Do You Call It?

What do you call a piece of playground equipment that consists of a long board balanced on a support in the middle and on which two people may sit at either end? Depending on where you live, you might call it a seesaw, a teeter-totter, or a teeterboard. Many of our words and sayings reflect the regions and cultures we come from. Read the sentences below, and tell what the underlined words and phrases mean. Then, tell how you would express the same idea if you were talking to a friend.

1. "So it went for a stretch, and then Coyote started again." (page 464)
2. "He was trucking through the woods when he ran smack into Brer Lion." (page 467)
3. "But back in yonder times, all the animals lived everywhere." (page 467)
4. "The lions and tigers and elephants and foxes and what 'nall run around with each other. . . ." (page 467)