



Rupert's Tales The Wheel of the Year Beltane
Litha Lammas Mabon Written by Kyrja,
Illustrated by Tonia Bennington Osborn

Rupert the rabbit hops through the Goddess season of the Pagan year learning real life lessons along with the significance of each sabbat.

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for book clubs, literature circles, library, home and classroom study. It is intended to encourage discussion and experimentation with rhyme, and provoke thought and insight into the subject and themes of the first Rupert's Tales of the Wheel of the Year including the life cycle and the seasons as expressed through poetry.

Note: This volume of Rupert's Tales is divided into four parts; Beltane, Litha, Lammas and Mabon, one for each sabbat of the Goddess season of the Pagan year. Depending on the age of your readers, this book can be approached as a whole, or as four "mini books." For consistency, this guide will address this book as a single unit. Reading and activities can be broken out according to need.

About the author/illustrator (from the author's website, Rupert's Tales)

"Kyrja is the author of Rupert's Tales, a growing series of children's books featuring Rupert the rabbit, who learns about the Wheel of the Year when people come to the forest where he lives to celebrate seasonal holidays. Kyrja celebrates Sabbats, moon phases, and other magical gatherings with Friends of Rupert and performs Rupert's Tales and Tunes at festivals. She also writes fantasy-genre fiction novels, including the recently released Mi's Search for Beauty. She is a long-time member of an official Adopt-A-Road crew, helping to care for Mother Earth, and is a member of the Pooka Pages Team, occasionally contributing short tales to the free e-zine. Kyrja loves to write and sing children's songs so may burst suddenly into song at any given moment!

Kyrja's latest adventure has been launching the Friends of Rupert show through the Illuminati Network, an organization dedicated to providing information from an occult perspective to promote diversity and understanding. In addition to Rupert's Tales songs and stories, episodes will include such topics as the science of magick, mundane and magical uses of herbs, moon phases, tools of the craft, and more."

"Tonia Bennington Osborn's life-long labor of love has been to explore and express the miracles that make up her world. Born in Florida and raised in Ohio, Tonia distinguished herself as a serious artist by age 11 when she received an award from the Young Author's Guild for her work in illustrations. From there, her recognition and respect only grew. Her impressive resume describes and defines a successful and meaningful career filled with prestigious honors and awards.

Formally educated at OSU, the Columbus College of Art & Design, the Dayton Academy of Design, Tonia expertly creates in soft pastel, graphite, watercolor, acrylics, and oils. Her favorite subject is figuratively drawing and portrait work. Her favorite medium is soft pastel on suede, an art form which

she has lovingly embraced and genuinely enriched through her own unique innovations and experiments. Tonia's work is displayed internationally at various galleries and private clientele.”

Pre-reading Activity

Give each student a blank piece of paper or have them open to a clean page if they are using a writing journal. Have them draw a large circle, and then create their own Wheel of the Year—write, draw, color, or cut images and words using recycled magazines. Discuss, and compare how each student divided up her year. What days are important or favored and why?

Questions for Discussion

- Why do you think a wheel is used as a visual expression of the passage of time?
- Illustrate and discuss the Pagan Wheel of the Year.
- What are the eight Sabbats? Discuss the agrarian nature of the Sabbats and how the Pagan Wheel of the Year is related to the secular seasons, Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.
- Rupert’s Tales The Wheel of the Year Beltane, Litha, Lammas, Mabon has a companion volume, Rupert’s Tales The Wheel of the Year Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, Ostara. What do you think the reasons were for dividing the tales out in this way? Discuss the God and Goddess seasons of Pagan belief.
- Compare and contrast to how time is tracked and divided in the spiritual and mundane world. Compare the secular calendar to the calendars of various belief systems/cultures.
- BELTANE: Why do you think Rupert the Rabbit is safe from owl, just for the one night? Read Rupert’s Tales The Wheel of the Year Samhain. What similarities and differences can you draw between these two days that are opposite points in the Wheel of the Year? What do Rupert’s experiences tell you about each of these days?

Creative Writing Activity: Totem Animals—why do you think an OWL explains Beltane to Rupert? (Discuss owl qualities/symbolism.) Pick an animal that is special to you, and go through a day as that animal (create an animal mask: <http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/mask-crafts> or http://www.firstpalette.com/Craft_themes/Animals/animalmasks/animalmask.html). Write and/or draw about your experience. What does that tell you about that animal?

- LITHA: Most people keep track of the change of seasons by a date on the calendar, but really, subtle changes take place every day. How is this illustrated in Rupert’s Longest Day? Do you agree or disagree? Discuss. What would happen if these changes did not take place?

Creative Activity: Keep a seasonal calendar and record daily changes in weather, temperature, plants, animals, etc. only using one word. Write the words out in order to create a poem to express the changing of the seasons.

- LAMMAS: Rupert and the children learn about Lammas through an older woman, a “crone.” When you first hear the word “crone” what do you think? Why is that? What is the role of the crone in this tale?

Creative Writing Activity: Visit and/or interview an older family member or friend. Share stories, recipes, experiences, etc.. Have students write and illustrate what was shared. Additional: depending on logistics, plan a trip to a nursing home to share stories, music and crafts. Have students write and/or

illustrate stories they hear and make them into a book.

- MABON: Discuss the multiple meaning of the word “Present”. How do both apply to Rupert’s Mabon tale? How is Rupert’s assisting Melvin celebration and work at the same time?

Creative Activity: Mabon is a time to bring in the Harvest—plan and celebrate a harvest meal including decorations and researching local produce (plan an additional trip for students to go to a farm to pick produce). Have each student bring in an item to share.

Projects Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

Vocabulary. Have students define the following words and use each in a sentence that shows that she knows the meaning of the words: BELTANE: Beltane, mysterious, grove, knobby, bramble, thicket, guidepost, worship, trample, (May) eve. LITHA: Litha, twitch, gloom, disguise, flutter, squint, request, jest, shrivel, musty. LAMMAS: Lammas, cypress, crone, harvest, sacred, reap, shoo. MABON: scurry, celebration, festivities, dismay, absurd, stubborn, suspicious, wards, yield. Review the words as they come up in the various tales.

Writing in rhyme. Define RHYME. Using each of Rupert’s Tales as a model, review selected stanzas to illustrate rhyming words. Have students make lists of rhyming words for practice. Discuss why there are some words that do not rhyme.

Examine the rhyming words in each of Rupert’s Tales to find the story’s RHYMING PATTERN. Define SYLLABLES. Find multi-syllabled words in the lines of selected stanzas. Count the syllables in each line. Define RHYTHM. Listen to some of Kyrja’s Rupert’s Tunes; discuss which syllables are emphasized.

Anthropomorphic Stories. Discuss Anthropomorphism in writing. The main character of Rupert’s Tales is a rabbit who displays human feelings and actions. Why and how is he relatable, even though he is a rabbit? Compare and contrast Rupert to other anthropomorphic characters (ie: Duck for President, Bed Time For Francis, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, etc.).

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY: Have students create their own anthropomorphic stories around a chosen holiday, sabbat or birthday as Kyrja has done in Rupert’s Tales.

Music

Rupert’s Tunes are a companion to Rupert’s Tales to teach through song. Define and discuss the traditional role of the BARD. Define and discuss ORAL HISTORY and ORAL TRADITION. What are the stories told in Rupert’s Tales Wheel of the Year Beltane Litha Lammas Mabon? Listen to some of *Rupert’s Tunes* and discuss the storylines and/or lessons being taught. Discuss the melody and style of the songs.

Resources for music:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/FriendsOfRupert?feature=watch>

<http://friends-of-rupert.webs.com/rupertstalesandtunes.htm>

Sites such as Pandora and Songza are good resources for discovering similar music (the sites filter

music through style and instrumentation to find similar melodies)

Art:

Pastel. Artist Tonia Bennington Osborn did the illustrations for Rupert's Tales using PASTELS. Explain the use of, and experiment with, pastel techniques.

Alternative—Have students illustrate scenes for which Osborn DID NOT provide pictures from Rupert's Tales using pastels. Fit new illustrations into the text and have students discuss techniques and choices.

Resources for art:

<http://www.sakuraofamerica.com/oil-pastel-drawing-techniques>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSN399WynSw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxsSD3mGDHk>

Math:

Counting and adding. Count the syllables (beats) in each line and add them up. Add the total number of each line to get a stanza total, and then a grand total for the entire story.

Patterns and series. Utilize Rupert's Tales to define patterns and series (numbers follow sequences and patterns just like rhyming poetry). Identify the rhyming pattern of Rupert's Tales as well as other rhyming poems (try other forms such as the limerick or sonnet). Use multiplication tables to illustrate number patterns or series. Examine and discuss the similarities between the mathematical and literary patterns.

Science:

Solstice and Equinox. Define EQUINOX and SOLSTICE in scientific terms, then compare and contrast to how they are presented in Rupert's Tales (Litha and Mabon). How are they similar? How are they different? Discuss the same with Rupert's Tales, Yule and Ostara. What conclusions can you draw from this about the relationship between science and the Wheel of the Year?

Seasons. Starting with the discussion of EQUINOX and SOLSTICE discuss and track the scientific causes of the changing seasons on our planet. How is it similar and/or different to what happens in both Rupert's Tales books.

Possible Cross Curriculum Project: (**Language Arts, Art, Science, Math**) Assign a sabbat to each student. Have him research the history, symbols, deities, etc. behind his sabbat. Make large pie wedge-shaped sections on recycled paper (brown bags are good for this) and have each student illustrate his sabbat (drawing, coloring, collage using recycled magazines and catalogs, etc.). Have each student present his findings as an oral presentation and/or in writing. With each presentation, a "spoke" is added to the Wheel of the Year until it is complete.

Alternate: Discuss how the Wheel of the Year is flipped for the Southern Hemisphere. Start a pen-pal program with students from the "other side" to trade tales and experiences.

Resources for the Wheel of the Year:

http://www.witchvox.com/va/dt_va.html?a=usma&c=parent&id=2729

<http://www.llewellyn.com/journal/article/782>

http://www.ehow.com/info_12058626_projects-teaching-wheel-year-children.html

The following sites are geared towards adults with information on sabbats in the southern hemisphere:

<http://aussiewytch.wordpress.com/sabbats/>

<http://spheresoflight.com.au/index.php?page=sabbat>

<http://www.labyrinth.net.au/~obsidian/mi-sabbat.html>

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