



Rupert's Tales The Wheel of the Year Samhain
Yule Imbolc Ostara Written by Kyrja,
Illustrated by Tonia Bennington Osborn

Rupert the rabbit hops through the God 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 provoke thought and insight into the subject and themes of Rupert's Tales including death, life, rebirth and the seasons as expressed through poetry.

Note: This volume of Rupert's Tales is divided into four parts; Samhain, Yule, Imbolc and Ostara, one for each Sabbat of the God 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 magickal 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 magickal 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 Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, Ostara has a companion volume, Rupert’s Tales The Wheel of the Year Beltane, Litha, Lammas, Mabon. 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.
- SAMHAIN: How is Becky encouraged to deal with the passing of her Grandmother? How is it similar or different to the way you see death and mourning? Discuss mourning customs, different views of the afterlife.

Creative Writing Activity: Have students write or draw what they believe happens to a person or animal after they pass from this life. What does the next life look like? What happens? Share and discuss. *From the story—Why is everyone correct?*

- YULE: The children in Rupert’s Longest Night discuss the origin of the many holiday decorations we see at this time of year. Review and expand from the text, and then discuss any other symbols/decorations that are not mentioned in the story. What does your family put out every year, and why is it special? What makes these objects even more significant/special because they’re only seen for a brief period, and at a certain time of the year? How does it make you feel? Discuss holiday decoration and symbolism in other cultures and belief systems.

Creative Activity: Using recycled materials, make a shadow box of a room in your house with Yuletide decorations (or other Winter Holiday depending on your students’ backgrounds). Use the shadow boxes as visual aids in the discussion topics above.

- IMBOLC: Why does Rupert think that the people will not come to the Circle? What does the fairy show him? In the secular world, the 6-8 weeks between the end of the winter holidays and Spring can seem long and dark to many people—why do you think this is? What purpose does Imbolc serve to bring a positive light to this dark time? What is the significance of the rituals Rupert sees the humans performing in the lake-mirror? Why do you think the waking-up of Spring is done so early (Spring is at least 6 weeks from Imbolc)? Do you do any of these or other rituals, to welcome Spring?

Creative Writing Activity: Based on what is learned from the above discussion points, have students write a ritual to wake the Spring, and then perform it at the appropriate time.

- OSTARA: Spring has finally come to the forest, and Rupert has a sense of “urgency”. What do you think that is? Do you have similar feelings at this time of year? Why do you think that is? Who is the Green Man and how is he significant at this time of year?

Creative Activity: After establishing the identity and significance of the Green Man, use recycled materials, to have students make Green Man masks. Alternative: Using recycled materials, have students make masks of the characters in *Rupert’s Ostara Surprise* and act out the story.

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: SAMHAIN: Samhain, Lammas, sacred, grove, meadow, Circle (significance of capital C), sow, harvest, realm, cease, chant, fulfill, appoint. YULE: solstice, sabbat, shelter, priestess, crone, mistletoe, garland, druid, Yule. IMBOLC: ritual, Mabon, mischievous, quicken (in the context of the story), Ostara. OSTARA: clover, urgency, increase, Green Man, uneasy, Equinox 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 the first Rupert’s Tales book? 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 (Yule and Ostara). How are they similar? How are they different? 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 the four Rupert's Tales presented in this book. Alternative: How is it similar/different to what happens in both Rupert's Tales Wheel of the Year 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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