



**Rabbit's Song** Written by S. J. Tucker and Trudy Herring, Illustrated by W. Lyon Martin

Trickster looks for teachers for mankind and finds them in coyote, crow, raven and rabbit.

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 *Rabbit's Song* including humility, and folk tales and songs.

*About the authors/illustrator (from the publisher's website, Magical Child' Books)*

“Singer, songwriter and guitarist S.J. Tucker is a self-made performing artist. Named Queen of the Bards by colleagues and recognized as the musical avatar of the lyrical and literary Mythpunk genre, S. J. tours the USA solo and as leader of two separate bands, Skinny White Chick and Tricky Pixie. Since she began her journey as a full-time performer in 2004, S. J. has released six full-length albums containing all-original material, as well as two live discs. Her sound stretches from comedy to lullabies to full-on punk and electronica.”

“Trudy Herring was a storyteller and author from Millington, TN. When she wasn’t telling tales, or penning short stories for anthologies, (Mark Fitzgerald’s *Tales of Fantasy*, Fall 2007 from Kerlack Publishing, “The Spell” and also from Kerlack Publishing, Spring 2009, “Dragon Solstice”) she was a spiritual leader and minister for Summerland Grove Church. *Rabbit’s Song* was her first book for children. Trudy passed away in December, 2010.”

“Author/illustrator of *An Ordinary Girl*, *A Magical Child* and *Aidan's First Full Moon Circle*, W. Lyon Martin has followed a Pagan path all her adult life. An Eclectic witch living in Eastern Missouri, she has written articles for Craft publications both on-line and in print including PanGaia, Broomstix, The Seeker Journal, NewWitch, Acorns Journal, Elements Magazine, Crescent Magazine, The Witch’s Voice and The Pagan-Wiccan Times. She has been a working artist since 1981, when she received an Associate of Applied Science degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She continued her training at the School of Visual Arts where she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1988. She has exhibited her watercolor paintings in art shows internationally, and her fine art paintings grace both public and private collections. Lyon's Craft website, [Magickware](http://Magickware.com) is geared toward unique handmade gifts, quality ritual supplies and fine art for the Pagan home. She lives with her husband, her daughter and two cranky cats of undetermined ancestry.”

### ***Pre-reading Activity***

Many cultures and traditions use animals to represent human qualities. Give each child a blank piece of paper or have them open to a clean page if they are using a writing journal. Have them write down the names or draw pictures of three animals that they feel represent them, and why. Discuss, and compare how and why certain animals may have different aspects associated with them depending on culture, geographical location etc.

### ***Topics for Discussion***

- Rabbit's Song utilizes the traditional elements of folk tale and folks song. Discuss and share examples of both of these genres, then compare and contrast to Rabbit's Song.

***CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY:*** Using another well known folk tale, have students turn the story into a poem/song in the spirit of Rabbit's Song; students can put the words to music by using the melody of Rabbit's Song—BUT they must use the same syllabic pattern in order for this to work. This exercise can be explored with several stories/melodies.

- Discuss the character of Trickster. Who do you think he is? Share examples of other Trickster stories and compare and contrast with how he is presented in Rabbit's Song (visually and in words).
- What did Trickster find lacking in bear, cat, tiger, dog, wolf and owl (review each animal and his reasoning)? Do you agree or disagree with Trickster's choices? Why or why not?
- What is Trickster trying to teach mankind? Why does he choose the animals that he does (review each animal and his reasoning)? Do you agree with his choices—again, why or why not?

***CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY:*** If you were Trickster, who what would you want to teach mankind, and what animals would you use to do the job? Have students do this as a journal exercise, or as an extended activity to write their own version of Rabbit's Song—in their writing they must explain their choices fully.

- Why do you think that Rabbit calls the chosen animals “the least?” Why would Trickster choose these animals (discuss specifically the purpose as stated in the verse, “Together we shall thwart the pains the gods do throw to earth, and turn aside their fiery darts with merriment and mirth)?

## **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: totem, install, tawny, merriment, mirth, render, throng, foolish, boon, cavorting, naughty, thwart, pause, humble, hare (as opposed to rabbit). Review the words as they come up in Rabbit's Song.

***Writing in rhyme.*** Define RHYME. Using Rabbit's Song 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 Rabbit's Song 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 SJ Tucker's recording of Rabbit's Song; discuss which syllables are emphasized.

### ***Social Studies/Geography***

*United Kingdom.* Trickster tales can be found in many cultures, but Rabbit's Song mentions the country of Wales. Find Wales on a map. Identify the other countries in the UNITED KINGDOM. Discuss language and cultural differences (it's a small area in the grand scheme of the planet—but there are many differences between the peoples that live there!)

*Heraldry and Totem Poles.* Rabbit's Song utilizes animals to define human characteristic. Define the HERALDRY and its role in Medieval Europe. Explain the parts of a heraldic shield; discuss the role of animal/color etc. symbolism. Compare to how animals and colors are used in Rabbit's Song. Have students build a heraldic shield to represent themselves or their family. Explain and discuss choices.

*Alternative—This exercise/project can also be done with TOTEM Poles.* Discuss and define totem poles and totem animals. Utilizing Native American symbolism, have students construct a totem pole for their families, animal choices, symbolic colors etc. must be explained.

Resources for Heraldry and Totem Poles:

<http://www.fleurdelis.com/meanings.htm>

<http://www.yourchildlearns.com/heraldry.htm>

<http://www.heraldryclipart.com/>

<http://www.native-languages.org/totem.htm>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/na/totempole/>

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/canada/mtotem.html>

### ***Music***

*Folk songs.* Play “Rabbit's Song.” Discuss the nature of folk songs—songs that tell stories. Define and discuss the traditional role of the BARD. Define and discuss ORAL HISTORY and ORAL TRADITION. What is the story of Rabbit's Song? Listen to other folks songs and discuss storyline, melody and style (traditional instruments used by different cultures, and in different time periods and geographical areas.

Resources for music:

[http://folkmusic.about.com/od/toptens/tp/Top10\\_SS.htm](http://folkmusic.about.com/od/toptens/tp/Top10_SS.htm) (link to a list of American folk singers)

SJ Tucker, The Irish Rovers, Loreena McKennit have albums that feature music with Celtic folks songs.

Sites such as Pandora and Songza are good resources for discovering new folk songs/folk music (they filter music through style and instrumentation to find similar melodies)

### ***Art:***

*Watercolor.* Artist W. Lyon Martin did the illustrations for Rabbit's Song using WATERCOLOR. Explain and experiment with watercolor technique.

*Alternative uses for color.* Is a rabbit green? W. Lyon Martin uses alternative color choices throughout Rabbit's Song. Discuss how the use of color effects the story being told. Discuss color symbolism; what different colors can indicate depending on time, culture, geography etc. then apply to Rabbit's

Song; is it appropriate for a folk tale—why or why not? Use the following as resources for folk/fairy tale coloring pages. Have students experiment with the use of alternative color. Discuss and explain color choices.

*Alternative—Read other folktales/trickster tales (<http://www.americanfolklore.net/tricksters.html>) and have students illustrate the stories or scenes from the stories using alternative color and/or watercolor technique. Compare/contrast and discuss choices.*

Resources for art:

[http://www.first-school.ws/theme/cp\\_fairy\\_tales.htm](http://www.first-school.ws/theme/cp_fairy_tales.htm)

<http://www.kidskorner.net/coloring/fft.html>

<http://karenswhimsy.com/folktales.shtm>

***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 Rabbit's Song to define patterns and series (numbers follow sequences and patterns just like rhyming poetry). Identify the rhyming pattern of Rabbit's Song, 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:***

*Constellations.* Utilize W. Lyon Martin's illustration to introduce the concept of constellations. Discuss star positions and how they were viewed/named by different cultures. Do the constellations resemble the figure they represent?

Possible Cross Curriculum Project: (***Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Art***) Assign a constellation to each student. Have them research the mythology (from different cultures) behind each constellation and present their findings as an oral presentation and/or in writing. Students may also create art to illustrate their findings. Further suggestions for cross curriculum projects are detailed in the resources below.

Resources for constellations:

<http://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/constellation-star-to-star-coloring-page/>

<http://www.surfnetkids.com/constellations.htm>

<http://edselect.com/grade61.htm>

<http://www.coldwater.k12.mi.us/lms/planetarium/myth/index.html>

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/ScienceLAMakeYourOwnConstellationMyth5.htm>

<http://www.middleschoolscience.com/myth.htm>

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