

Why There Are Shooting Stars

a tale told by the Zuñi Indians of California
by Natalia Belting



¹ Many moons ago Coyote was a great dancer. More than anything else, Coyote liked to dance. More than running in the hills, more than hunting, Coyote liked to dance. At night Coyote looked up at the skies, at the stars dancing.

"I would like to dance with the stars," Coyote said to himself.

² Coyote climbed to the top of the highest hill and waited until the stars began to dance. "Let me dance with you," Coyote called to them. But the stars only laughed.

3 "I'm a great dancer," Coyote called,
and his voice was heard all through
the land.

4 The stars laughed again.

5 "Let me dance with you," Coyote
called to them again.

6 "What do you say, friends?" the
stars asked each other.

7 "How can he dance with us?" the
red star asked.

8 "How indeed, when he's on Earth
and we're in the sky?" the blue
star asked.

9 "We can't dance on the earth," the
yellow star said.

10 "Coyote can't dance in the sky,"
the north star said.

11 "One of us could reach down and
hold his paw," the south star said.
And she called to Coyote, "You may
dance with me. Give me your paw."

12 Coyote stretched his paw toward the
star. He stretched as far as he could.
The star swung through the sky
toward Coyote. She took hold of his

paw. She swung Coyote after her
through the sky. She danced faster
and faster. Coyote was tired. Coyote
wanted to stop dancing.

13 But the star danced faster. She
danced around and around the sky
with Coyote until he couldn't see,
and he couldn't get his breath.

14 "I'm tired," Coyote said. "I'm ready
to stop dancing."

15 The star laughed and danced faster.
Coyote's paw slipped. He couldn't
hold on to the star any longer. He fell.
For ten snows he fell through the air,
and when he hit the earth he made
a great hole in it, and he was never
seen again.

16 But his brothers still try to dance
with the stars. Whenever there is a
shooting star, it's Coyote falling
through the sky.

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COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 This story was told to explain
 - a** what different stars in the sky are like.
 - b** why you sometimes see moving stars in the sky.
 - c** why coyotes don't dance anymore.
- 2 Coyote probably wished
 - a** that he could have danced better than the star.
 - b** that he could have brought his brothers to the sky.
 - c** that the star would set him back down on Earth.
- 3 The words *ten snows* mean
 - a** ten weeks.
 - b** ten winters.
 - c** ten days.

4 The Zuñi Indians would say that Coyote hasn't learned his lesson yet because

- a** there are still shooting stars.
- b** the stars in the sky are still dancing.
- c** coyotes don't talk to the stars any more.

5 This story is

- a** a true story.
- b** not true at all.
- c** only partly true.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 synonym for *months* (1)
- 2 started (2)
- 3 in fact; really (8)
- 4 animal's foot (11)
- 5 reached out; held out (12)
- 6 in the direction of (12)
- 7 moved in a curve (12)

C **too** = also

two = the number after *one*

Words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings are called homophones. *Too* and *two* are homophones.

Look at each word in **bold type**. Note the paragraph number. Look at the paragraph and find the homophone. Which of the two words fits in the blank in the sentence? Write the word.



LEARN ABOUT WORDS (continued)

8 read (7)

I _____ this tale today.

9 blew (8)

The sky was dark _____.

10 threw (16)

The star swung Coyote _____
the air.

THINK ABOUT IT

D The bird's **song** was as **sweet** as **honey**.

This sentence helps you understand how sweet the bird's song was. The phrase "as sweet as honey" is a figure of speech. It is a different way of saying that the bird's song was very lovely.

Choose the word from the first two sentences that best fits in the blank. Write the word.

- 1 A rock is heavy. A feather is light. When Coyote danced, he was as light as a _____.
- 2 Snow is white. Coal is black. The night sky was as _____ as coal.
- 3 Diamonds are bright. Mud is dull. The stars were as _____ as diamonds.
- 4 Lightning is fast. Molasses is slow. Coyote fell as _____ as lightning.
- 5 Rain is quiet. Thunder is loud. The star's laugh was as _____ as thunder.

E bak \emptyset + **er** = baker

skat \emptyset + **ed** = skated

smil \emptyset + **ing** = smiling

When a word ends with *e*, you drop that *e* before adding the endings *-er*, *-ed*, and *-ing*.

Each underlined word below ends with *-er*, *-ed*, or *-ing*. Write the word as it would be without the ending. For example, if you read *racing*, you would write *race*.

- 6 Coyote was a great dancer.
- 7 He liked to dance more than anything else.
- 8 He loved to watch the stars twinkling in the sky.
- 9 They sparkled so brightly.
- 10 Coyote was breathing hard after the dance.