



Señor Coyote, the Judge

At the foot of a mountain, Señor Rattlesnake was sleeping in the sun. A big stone rolled down the mountain and landed right on top of Señor Rattlesnake! He was stuck.

He tried over and over again to get out from under the rock, but it was no use. Then along came Señor Rabbit.

"Hello," said Señor Rabbit. "I see you are trying to crawl under that stone."

"Don't make fun of me," said Señor Rattlesnake. "Help me. It hurts. Just roll this stone off, and I'll see you get a reward."

Señor Rabbit knew that the rattlesnake was not a friend. But the rabbit himself was kind and didn't like to see anyone unhappy.

"All right," he said. "But I don't want a reward."

He pushed and pushed and pushed. Finally the stone rolled off Señor Rattlesnake.

"Now," said Señor Rattlesnake. "About your reward."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Señor Rabbit. "I told you I don't want any."

"I think you do," said Señor Rattlesnake.

"What do you mean?" asked the rabbit.

"I mean that you get to be my dinner!" said the snake, coming at Señor Rabbit.

"Oh, no," said Señor Rabbit. "Do not eat me." He walked back.

"Yes, my friend," said the snake, following the rabbit. "I must have my dinner."

Just then, up came Señor Coyote. "What goes on here?" he asked.

Both the rabbit and the snake began talking at once, trying to tell their stories.

"Stop," said Señor Coyote. "You need a judge. And I will be it."

Señor Rabbit and Señor Rattlesnake agreed.

Señor Rabbit began, "I came here and found Señor Rattlesnake under the stone. I pushed it off him. He offered me a reward, but I didn't want it. Now he wants to eat me!"

"Listen," said Señor Rattlesnake, "that is not true. I could have gotten out from under the stone at any time. I *like* it under there; it's cool. Señor Rabbit happened to come along. He's a fine dinner. And I have the right to eat him."

Señor Coyote thought a while.

"Let's see," he said at last. "We must be sure to have the right answer, my friends. Now you both say Señor Rattlesnake was under the stone. Right?"

"Yes," they both agreed.

"Very well," said Señor Coyote. "I must know just how everything was. Señor Rattlesnake, please come over here by the stone. Señor Rabbit and I will roll it on top of you. I'll know who's right, then."

The snake went over to the stone, and the other two rolled it on his back.

"Now," said Señor Coyote. "Is that the way you were, Señor Rattlesnake?"

"Yes," said the snake. He didn't seem happy.

"And that is the way you will stay," said Señor Coyote. "You have your reward for trying to eat Señor Rabbit."

And the two walked off. Señor Rattlesnake was left with lots of time to think about it.

By Ann Elwood.

Published by Globe Publishing Company.



Dear Parents

This delightful folk tale is from the southwestern United States and carries a moral about gratitude and trickery. I hope you enjoy listening to your child read this story out loud to you.



TIP OF THE WEEK

One of the most difficult things we ask students to do in interpreting literature is to "read between the lines," inferring information about characters and events that the author does not state outright. In the opening of this story, the rabbit says sarcastically, "I see you are trying to crawl under that stone." Young students often read something like this without realizing that the author is using the rabbit to make a funny comment. Even worse, students sometimes take this literally and think the snake was trying to crawl under the stone. Help your child understand these subtle messages by pointing them out as they are read.

The Questions



"Read between the lines" to answer the following questions:

1. How did the rattlesnake trick the rabbit? _____

2. How did the coyote trick the rattlesnake? _____

3. What is the moral of this story? _____

4. What is the author's purpose in writing this story? _____

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature