ARTSmart: Coyotes

Compare and Contrast

Use the Venn Diagram that follows to list how these coyotes are different and the same.
Peter (Fritz) Fritts Felten, Jr.
Born 1933, Hays, Kansas
Coyote, 1969
Woodcut
Gift of Nancy S. Vogel, Ph.D. in memory of John H. and Irene Schaake Vogel and Gerald M. Vogel, 2015.123

Felten is known for his stone sculptures of Bison—a giant one welcomes visitors to Hayes, Kansas. His version of the Coyote (*Canis latrans*) seems to capture some of the human character traits associated with the animal. Coyotes have been referred to as wily or crafty and Felten’s seems to be kin to the cartoon character Wile E. Coyote, perhaps hatching a plan against his nemesis, the Roadrunner.
Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, (Salish/Ksanka (Kootenai))
Born 1940, Flathead Reservation, Montana
*Coyote Turned the Giants into Boulders*, 2014
Printed by Neal Ambrose-Smith
Linoleum cut
KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Joe and Barb Zanatta, 2018.372

Quick-to-See Smith and her son Ambrose-Smith collaborated on this print of a coyote encountering and conquering the big city. Animals are a common feature of Native American lore. Smith has written: “Coyote is part of our Salish creation story, s/he helped Amotken "turn on the lights" at the beginning of the world. Coyote is also every human, foolish, bright, conniving, beneficent, helpful, greedy and generous. Coyote is a trickster and is always turning everything around, upside down.”
Coyote Facts
*Canis latrans*

- Coyotes weigh only about 20 pounds, making them the size of a medium dog.
- Coyotes raise their pups in dens or holes in the ground. They usually have two to four pups.
- Coyotes make high yipping sounds. These sounds get louder and faster when they close in on prey.
- Coyotes are carnivores, but they eat fruit and vegetables too. They can also be scavengers, eating dead animals and trash.
Do Coyotes Howl At the Moon?
Howling is one of a variety of vocal communication that is used by canids to communicate. One reason for howling is to advertise their home range or territory. Coyotes use other methods such as scent markings like urinating on their boundary and leaving scat for their competitors to find, but howling signals to other coyotes further away and lets them know that the territory is taken. Another reason a coyote howls is to locate a member of their pack. Coyote howls are much like human voices in that they are unique and recognizable by their family, or pack.

Much of coyote behavior happens at night. When the moon is fuller on a clear night, coyotes have the advantage of seeing better and further in the dark. If the coyote happens to live in the forest regions, this provides an excellent opportunity that he will take advantage of to hunt for food into the night. In these regions, particularly in the Northeast where coyotes are larger, they will hunt together as a pack to take down larger prey such as deer that are also using the moonlight as a light source. When hunting in packs, coyotes will howl to signal to the other members where they are and when they are ready to attack.

While the coyote is out hunting his territory, he will howl to other potential intruder coyotes that are looking for a moonlight meal that they are not welcome.

So it is more appropriate to say “Coyotes howl under the moon.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RMGGV32raE
Howling Coyote
There are 19 different subspecies of coyote, according to the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS). The size and coat color of coyotes varies slightly across these subspecies. For example, coyotes that live in the mountains have darker coats, while ones that live in the desert have lighter coats. Coyotes are capable of mating with dogs and wolves, producing hybrid offspring known as coydogs and coywolves. These hybrids are unlikely to occur in the wild.
Coyote Lore

Prior to the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire, Coyote played a significant role in Mesoamerican cosmology. The coyote symbolized military might in Classic era Teotihuacan, with warriors dressing up in coyote costumes to call upon its predatory power.

In Aztec mythology, Huehuecóyotl (meaning "old coyote"), the god of dance, music, is depicted in several codices as a man with a coyote's head. He is sometimes depicted as a womanizer, responsible for bringing war into the world by seducing Xochiquetzal, the goddess of love.

The god Quetzalcoatl may owe its origins to pre-Aztec Uto-Aztecan mythological depictions of the coyote, which is portrayed as mankind's "Elder Brother", a creator, seducer, trickster, and culture hero linked to the morning star.

Mural from Atetelco, Teotihuacán depicting coyote warriors
Coyote features as a trickster figure and skin-walker in the folktales of some Native Americans, notably several nations in the Southwestern and Plains regions, where he can assume the form of an actual coyote or that of a man. As with other trickster figures, Coyote acts as a hero who rebels against social convention through deception and humor. Folklorists believe coyotes came to be seen as tricksters due to the animal's intelligence and adaptability.

- In the Maidu creation story, Coyote introduces work, suffering, and death to the world.
- Zuni lore has Coyote bringing winter into the world by stealing light from the kachinas.
- The Chinook, Maidu, Pawnee, Tohono O'odham, and Ute portray the coyote as the companion of The Creator.
- A Tohono O'odham flood story has Coyote helping Montezuma survive a global deluge that destroys humanity.
- The Crow creation story portrays Old Man Coyote as The Creator.
- In the Dineh creation story, Coyote was present in the First World with First Man and First Woman, though a different version has it being created in the Fourth World.
- The Navajo Coyote brings death into the world, explaining that without death, too many people would exist, thus no room to plant corn.

After the European colonization of the Americas, Anglo-American depictions of Coyote are of a cowardly and untrustworthy animal. Unlike the gray wolf, which has undergone a radical improvement of its public image, Anglo-American cultural attitudes towards the coyote remain largely negative.
Learn more about coyotes
Additional Coyotes from the BMA collection

Patricia DuBose Duncan

*Coyote and Tall Grass*, 1987
Xerograph with colored pencil on paper
KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of the artist, 1998.72

*God’s Dog*, 1991
Xerograph collage with prismatic color and charcoal on paper
KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of the artist, 1998.60
This print is the Beach Museum of Art’s 2021 Common Work of Art, chosen to go with K-State’s First Book, *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline. It is on display in the museum’s Wefald Gallery.

**Neal Ambrose-Smith**

*From Upstream I Caught Fish*, 2008
Color lithograph on paper
KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, Friends of the Beach Museum of Art purchase, 2010.27
Picture Books

Yosemite’s Songster
One Coyote’s Story
Ginger Wadsworth
Illustrated by Daniel San Souci

Coyote Tales
Thomas King

COYOTE MOON
Maria Gianferrari
Pictures by Bagram Ibatoulline
Coyotes howling at the moon are an iconic image. The following stencils can be used in a variety of ways. Tape one down and paint your background around and then pull it away. Or use the stencil to cut out coyotes to add to your background. Coyotes can howl sitting down or standing.
Howlan Coyotes & Frolicking Fish
Oaxacan Woodcarvers Fashion a Whimsical World from Wood

Nestled in the valleys of the Sierra Madre del Sur mountains in southern Mexico, not far from the bustling of Oaxaca City, are small rural villages. The people who live there farm the land, raise animals and make art.

In one of these villages, San Martin Tilcajete, about 80 percent of the 1,500 villagers are working as woodcarvers. The tradition of carving began years ago when the poor people of the region made toys out of wood for their children. Over time, some carvers became very skilled and began creating finely crafted pieces. One of the premier carvers in San Martin, Epifanio Fuentes, is known for his beautiful angels. His eldest son, Zery is a fourth-generation carver who is also becoming well respected for his work.

Zery began working with wood when he was 8 years old. Under the guidance of his parents, he learned to carve and paint. Two of his younger brothers have also begun carving. Zery’s wife, mother and four sisters paint the carvings.

Oaxacan woodcarvers use a special type of wood called copal. When the wood is green, it is soft and easy to carve. After it dries, it does not split or crack as many other types of wood do. Sensitive to the demand for their raw material and the effect on the environment, the artisans are also involved in reforestation projects.

To begin a carving, the bark is removed from the wood with a machete. The general form of the figure is also carved with a machete, and then a smaller knife is used to shape the contours and create the details. Most carvings are made of several pieces of wood that are joined with small finishing nails.

Carving and assembling a small figure can take from one to several hours. Next, the surface is sanded with several grades of sandpaper. Painting the figure is the final, and most time-consuming step. Detailed patterns in bright, contrasting colors are typical. Like most Oaxacan woodcarvers, the Fuentes use acrylic paint.

Zery Fuentes is following in his father’s footsteps to make beautiful woodcarvings in the artistic tradition of his village. At the same time, he continues to carve new animals and paint them with different patterns and designs in a way that keeps the art form vital and new.

Classroom Project

Create a Drawing of a Whimsical Animal

Materials:
- White drawing paper 8 1/2” x 11”
- Pencil
- Bright color markers
- Crayons
- Glue
- Construction paper 6 1/2” x 11”

1. Use a piece of white paper and draw with a pencil an animal large enough to touch three edges of your paper. You can draw your animal in a realistic style or create one from your imagination.

2. Use colored markers to create interesting patterns on the body of your animal. Be inspired by the examples you see here! Bright colors and dancing patterns made with lines and shapes will give your animal a whimsical charm. Color it completely.

3. Use a pair of scissors to cut around the outside edge of your animal. Place it on top of your construction paper and glue your animal on it. Display it in a prominent place.
You can use this diagram to make your own Howling Coyote Alebrije.
Create a Coyote

1. Fold up
2. Fold to left
3. Fold flap up

4. Turn over
5. Fold other flap up
6. Rotate 45°

7. Fold both ends to center
8. Separate flaps
9. Fold center point down

Origami