



The Runaway Tortilla

Written by Eric A. Kimmel, Illustrated by Erik Brooks
WestWinds Press® 9781941821695, 8 x 10, HB, 32, \$16.99

A sassy tortilla, so light she jumps off the griddle, leads an elaborate game of chase through the desert while taunting a passel of critters—two horned toads, three donkeys, four jackrabbits, five rattlesnakes, and six cowboys. But has she met her match in Señor Coyote?

Reading/Writing/Language Arts

Read *The Runaway Tortilla* and answer the following questions:

1. What kind of business was El Papagayo Feliz (The Happy Parrot)? How do you know? Was it located in a town or out in the desert? How can you tell?
2. The horned toads were *basking* on a rock. Look at the picture in the book. What do you think *basking* means? Then look up the definition in a dictionary.
3. As the tortilla runs, she passes six cowboys. On the next page, the author calls the cowboys by a different name. What is the second name, and how is it different from the first?

Writing:

1. *The Runaway Tortilla* includes many different words to say “running” when the characters chase after the tortilla. List all of the different “running” synonyms you can find in this story. How would the book have been different if the author had used the same action word for all of the different creatures in the chase?
2. *The Runaway Tortilla* is based on a classic folktale you may have heard before called *The Gingerbread Man*. Pick a different well-known story, and rewrite it so that it takes place with new characters in your own area. What details should you include so that people recognize your part of the country in the story?
3. In many stories, the coyote is a trickster who gets what he wants by tricking other characters. Write your own trickster story featuring Coyote.
4. Señor Coyote tricks the tortilla by offering to show her a great buried treasure. Imagine the tortilla hadn’t been eaten, and write a story about the two of them going to find the buried treasure.

English & Spanish Vocabulary:

Teacher note: Some of these terms may be above grade level for your group. Pre-teaching vocabulary in context should help students with comprehension. Many of these terms would be appropriate for a bilingual classroom or a group looking for exposure to local culture and world languages. English terms fall under Tiers II and III for the Common Core State Standards. Spanish words are shown with their translation in parentheses.

taquería

querida (darling)

mesquite

cutback

bray

burro

sapos cornudos (horned toads)

conejos (jackrabbits)

cascabeles (snakes)

box canyon

vaqueros (cowboys, buckaroos)

arroyo (steep-sided gully)

cariño (honey, sweetie)

por favor (please)

chapulín (grasshopper)

tía (aunt)

tío (uncle)

1. Assign each term to a pair of students. Have student pairs act out the term or design a visual display to teach the word to their classmates.
2. On note cards, draw a picture of each animal mentioned in the book. On the back of each drawing, write the name of the animal in Spanish and English.
 - sapos cornudos (horned toads)
 - burros (small donkeys)
 - conejos (jackrabbits)
 - chapulín (grasshopper)
 - cascabeles (snakes)



3. *The Runaway Tortilla* Word Find:

Find these words from *The Runaway Tortilla*. They are hidden forward, backward, up, down, and diagonally.

x l v l g t b e t f n c
c n s t í a b q i q y a
o x e o n í l u p a h c
n y j t r r e v r r u a
e k o l i e s b j r o h
j q c r z u u e l z o e
o h u a r q q q e o f a
s e l e b a c s a c v m
f b z j r t o e e v f g
m a j c j i u e k m l a
o p i n w k d c o s p l
f y x x c u c a r i ñ o

arroyo
bray
burro
cariño
cascabeles
chapulín
conejos
cutback
mesquite
querida
taquería
tía
tío
vaqueros

Science/Natural History/Geography

(See also the questions in the reading and writing sections.)

Research the answers to these questions in your library or online:

1. *The Runaway Tortilla* takes readers through a desert region in Texas. Research deserts in the southwestern United States. What types of landforms, animals, and plants would you find there?
2. How are desert plants and animals different from those living in other biomes? Pick one other biome (forest, grassland, etc.), and compare the plants and animals you might find there with those described in *The Runaway Tortilla*.



Math

Kindergarten: (CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.OA.A.1)

- Four jackrabbits and three burros followed the tortilla. (Everyone else stopped for a snack.) How many animals followed the tortilla? Draw a picture to help.

Grade 1: (CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.1.OA.C.6)

- Before she met Señor Coyote, the tortilla was followed by six cowboys, five snakes, four jackrabbits, three burros, two horned toads, Tía Lupe, and Tío José. How many creatures (including the people) followed the tortilla in all?

Grade 2: (CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.2.OA.C.3)

- Count all of the creatures following the tortilla before she met Señor Coyote (include Tía Lupe and Tío José). Is the number of creatures following the tortilla even or odd? Draw pictures to help figure it out.

Grade 3: (CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.A.3)

- The four conejos (jackrabbits) are extra hungry today. How many tortillas will Tía Lupe need to make when they get home for each jackrabbit to have four? Draw a picture or an array to help you.



About the author:

Author Eric A. Kimmel has written more than fifty books and has won numerous awards, including the Caldecott Honor Medal. He and his wife, Doris, live in Portland, Oregon.



About the illustrator:

Erik Brooks is the author and illustrator of many books for children, including the Washington State Book Award winner, *Polar Opposites*, and the CBC/IRA Children's Choices Award winner, *The Practically Perfect Pajamas*.



| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| x | l | v | l | g | t | b | e | t | f | n | c |
| c | n | s | t | i | a | b | q | i | q | y | a |
| o | x | e | o | n | í | l | u | p | a | h | c |
| n | y | j | t | r | r | e | v | r | r | u | a |
| e | k | o | l | i | e | s | b | j | r | o | h |
| j | q | c | r | z | u | e | l | z | o | e | |
| o | h | u | a | r | q | q | q | e | o | f | a |
| s | e | l | e | b | a | c | s | a | c | v | m |
| f | b | z | j | r | t | o | e | e | v | f | g |
| m | a | j | c | j | i | u | e | k | m | l | a |
| o | p | i | n | w | k | d | c | o | s | p | l |
| f | y | x | x | c | u | c | a | r | i | ñ | o |

Word Find Solution: