



## Coyote's Choice: Adapt and Survive

**Objective:** Students will learn about adaptable coyotes and the choices they make to survive. Students will encounter new information in an interactive and fun story in which they make decisions.

**Materials:** Story (page 2), props as desired.

**Vocabulary:** Adaptation, Survival, Predator, Prey

**Background:** Coyotes are the masters of adaptation. Even with man as their main predator, coyotes can successfully live in human occupied areas like farms, suburbs and even cities. Coyotes are experts at adapting to change, moving to a new habitat when they need to or sensing danger when it is near and avoiding it, even if it means turning away from food that looks suspicious when they are hungry. They do not always make the right choice, however, and cannot always adapt successfully. Sometimes they survive, sometimes they do not.

### Activity:

1. Read the following story to your students, having them make choices along the way as they think a coyote might make. Even if a child makes the wrong survival choice at a certain point in the story, he or she is to continue on to the next situation, and so on, until reaching the end of the story. When through, have the children share their choices, adaptations and experiences. How many of them *honestly* made *all* of the right choices and were able to make the necessary changes to survive each time? Which choices made it most difficult to make the right survival decisions? Which choices were the easiest?
2. Note: This activity can also be set up as a fun series of stations in which the initial situation is described and illustrated and children must choose one course or another by turning over a card or lifting up a flap to reveal the consequences of their decision. Then they can move on to the next station to test their wits.

## Coyote's Choice

You are a tiny coyote pup and your mother has gone off to hunt for food. While you wait in the burrow a strange piece of thin wire on the end of a stick is pushed toward you from the door of your den. You see it coming and are afraid of it so you

- a. cower back against the wall of the burrow to escape.
- b. attack the wire by biting it.

If you chose (a) you survived. If you chose (b) you were snared and taken away by a hunter.

2. You are now old enough to do some hunting on your own. There, up ahead, you see a dead animal that looks like it is more than big enough for a whole meal. When you get closer you see some strange tracks in the soil and smell an animal you have never smelled before. You are *very* hungry, but afraid to go closer to the dead animal. After watching a while and looking for signs of danger you decide to

- a. eat the meat of the animal.
- b. turn away and search for another meal.

If you chose (a) the meat was a poisoned trap set by a farmer and you are a goner. If you chose (b) you survived.

3. It has not rained for a long time, the plants are dying and animals are becoming scarce. You are very weak, yet you feel an urge to travel to look for food. You begin to walk away from your burrow but you find it hard to walk. You decide to

- a. push ahead and look for water and food elsewhere even though it means risking using up your last energy.
- b. return to the burrow and wait for the rain and food to return.

If you chose (a) you survived. If you chose (b) starvation set in and you became too weak to leave your burrow. You did not survive.

4. You come to a place where people are living because you know there is usually some food nearby. There is a place up ahead where the smell of food is strong, yet danger is very near and threatening. As night slowly advances with the setting sun, you decide to

- a. sneak in and eat as much of the food as you can under the cover of darkness.
- b. turn around and seek food elsewhere.

If you chose (a) you were able to eat safely while protected by the darkness. You survived. If you chose (b) your last strength was used when searching for food in another spot. You did not survive.

5. With your strength restored you travel a short distance seeking shelter – a place to sleep and digest your meal. There is a strange burrow above ground up ahead. It is large and the morning sun reflects off the strange smooth skin into your eyes. You climb up into it and try walking through the place that looks like the entrance, but you bump into something you cannot see. Finally you find an opening in the skin on the side and walk in, only to find many strange smells meet your nostrils. You sniff a few times and suddenly feel very tired. You decide to

- a. lie down and sleep here.
- b. move on to look for a safer place.

If you chose (a) you slept in an old abandoned car and made it your temporary shelter. You survived. If you chose (b) you found a large hollow tree to rest in and slept safely all day. You survived.

6. When you wake up the sun is setting and you are hungry again, but not starving like before. You leave your burrow and walk until you come to the edge of the woods. You see a field with some furry animals in it eating the plants, but you are not sure it is safe to enter field or whether those animals are food or not. As you move closer you notice a freshly killed rabbit in front of you. There are those strange tracks around it, like the ones you saw near that dead animal with the strange smell some time ago. But this meat smells good as you approach it and your hunger deepens. Then, as you move even closer, you notice something sticking out of the ground near the rabbit. It looks like it has large teeth and is made of the strange skin of that burrow with the smooth shiny skin. You look all around one more time to make sure that none of the dangerous animals who walk on two feet are around, then you

- a. pounce on the rabbit.
- b. run off into the underbrush, sensing danger.

If you chose (a) you felt a sharp, cold pain climb up your leg from one of your feet. Your foot is in a steel trap and there is no way out. You did not survive. If you chose (b) you survived.

7. If you have successfully survived by making all of the right choices so far, you will now raise a new coyote family. On the way back to your burrow you meet a coyote and decide to take her or him as a mate. Soon the next generation of coyotes is born and you have pups of your own to feed.