

How the Turtle Cracked His Shell (Cherokee Story)

Narrator: Nowadays, turtles' shells have lots of cracks and lines all over them. This was not always how they looked. In the old days, when animals could communicate and talk, the turtle had a smooth, shiny shell. It was so shiny it almost looked like a mirror. That was back when animals communicated... yes, they could actually talk to each other. Back then, Turtle and Possum used to spend their days together, hanging out and eating fruit. One day, Possum went up a persimmons tree to get some persimmons fruit. It is a yellow-orange to red-orange delicious fruit and both Possum and Turtle loved to eat persimmons. Possum, being a good friend, shared the persimmons with his pal, Turtle, who waited on the ground. (The narrator gives each character dialog to sentence-imitate – chunking or phrasing the sentences as necessary.)

Possum: Hey little buddy, open wide. Here's one for you and one for me. (Possum tosses one to Turtle then eats one himself)

Turtle: Turtle opens his jaws wide then... Slurp! Smack! Glump! That was "delish!" Thank you so much for sharing, my friend.

Narrator: This sharing and eating went on all day.... (The narrator gives each character dialog to sentence-imitate – chunking or phrasing the sentences as necessary.)

Possum: Here's another one for you!

Turtle: Turtle opens his jaws wide then... Slurp! Smack! Glump! That was "delish!" Thank you so much for sharing, my friend.

Narrator: Now while this was going on, along came that big old wolf, loping out of the clearing. He plopped himself down right next to turtle and decided he was going to have some of those persimmons too. . (The narrator gives each character dialog to sentence-imitate – chunking or phrasing the sentences as necessary.)

Wolf: Hey, Possum.. Gimme some of them there persimmons!

Possum: Sure, we'd be glad to share.

Narrator: So Possum began tossing persimmons to both Wolf and Turtle.

Possum: Here's one for Wolf and another for Turtle.

Narrator: But Wolf was greedy and would not share. Every time Possum threw one to Turtle, Wolf jumped up and grabbed it with his huge jaws and swallowed it down, without really even tasting and savoring its delicious flavor. . (The narrator gives each character dialog to sentence-imitate – chunking or phrasing the sentences as necessary.)

Possum: Hey, that one was for Turtle! Don't be greedy. Don't hog all of them. We share here.

Narrator: Turtle and Possum knew there was little chance Wolf would ever share. Possum even tried to throw a few right into Turtle's mouth, but Wolf just leaped up and caught each one. Now Turtle was a pretty calm creature and did not get all riled up. He stayed calm and hatched a plan. He was a smart old Turtle. . (The narrator gives each character dialog to sentence-imitate – chunking or phrasing the sentences as necessary.)

Turtle: Hey Brother Possum, you aren't being fair to Brother Wolf here, just giving him the smallest persimmons. A big old wolf like him deserves only the biggest and best. Now toss him the biggest one you can find. (Turtle winks.)

Wolf: That's right. Do what Turtle says. Give me the biggest and the best. Toss me down one of those really, really big ones!

Narrator: Possum smiled and climbed very high into the tree where the biggest, sweetest persimmons grew.

Possum: Here it is, the biggest persimmons on the whole tree. Now open wide, Wolf. I wouldn't want you to miss a drop of this delicious juicy fruit.

Wolf: Oh don't you worry about that. I can handle it. After all, I am a big ferocious wolf with teeth as sharp as razors. (Wolf opens his mouth wide and smiles showing his glistening white teeth.)

Narrator: Possum winds up and pitches that persimmons as hard as he could, jamming it right down Wolf's throat.

Possum: How's that, Mr. Wolf?

Wolf: Glump! Wheeze! Gasp! Cough! (Wolf falls over dead with his feet sticking up in the air.)

Narrator: You see, Turtle knew Possum well enough to know his buddy had a great pitching arm and knew he was smart enough to figure out Turtle's plan.

Turtle: I knew you could do it. I had faith in you. That will teach those wolves to mess with us!

Narrator: Possum came down the tree and he and turtle headed off in the woods to find another persimmons tree.

Possum: We'd better get out of here. You never know when the Wolf's family might come along.

Narrator: And just as Possum had predicted along came Wolf's brother (for more characters— say family rather than brother).

Wolf's Brother/Family: Oh my goodness. What happened to you?????

Narrator: The brother/family picked up Wolf and performed the Heimlich maneuver, pressing had on Wolf's tummy and slapping his back. Wolf coughed hard, blowing out the persimmons as he gave a great gasp!

Wolf: Cough! Gasp! How embarrassing! To have a Possum and a Turtle try to kill me, a *great hunter and wolf!* I'm gonna get those two scaliwags!

Narrator: Wolf lifted his snout in the air to sniff for the two and began to howl..

Wolf: I'mmmmm gooooka get themmmmm... I'mmmmm gooooka get themmmmm... I'mmmmm gooooka get themmmmmmm. Yes I am!

Wolf's Brother/Family: You catch him and I will make a big fire back at the den. We can boil them into a nice soup or stew.

Narrator: Wolf headed off into the forest to find that dynamic duo and low and behold, there they were sharing persimmons, just as they had been when Wolf first came upon them. Wolf grabbed Turtle and then ordered Possum to the ground.

Wolf: Get down here you gigantic rat. I'm taking you and your little clever friend here back to the den. My family and I will have a delicious pot of possum and turtle stew.

Possum: I don't think so... You hurry along and take Turtle with you (winking at Turtle) I'll stay up here and enjoy my persimmons where you can't get me.. and without Turtle, there will be more for me.

Wolf: I'll be back for you later. You will not get away with this, embarrassing me & trying to kill me. Your day is coming!

Narrator: Wolf, with Turtle in paw, headed back to the den where his family had a great fire burning and a large clay pot was hanging above, filled with boiling water.

Narrator: Amazingly, Turtle did not look upset. He remained calm. He even looked sleepy.

Wolf: Okay, you glorified little reptile, you are about to become history. Since your pal Possum escaped, you will make a delicious turtle soup. Get ready... see that big pot of boiling water over there? I'm gonna take you over there and drop you in that pot and boil you up.

Turtle: Go ahead, be my guest. I'll just kick your flimsy clay pot into pieces!

Wolf: GGGGGRRRRR! I didn't think of that. Then I'll just throw you in the fire and roast you up!

Turtle: Hey you go, boy. I'll just pull my legs in my shell, tuck in my head and roll around in your old fire. I'll put it out lickety-split!

Wolf: HOOOOOOO! I didn't think of that. I am so mad, I don't care if I even eat you. I'm gonna throw you in the river, wise guy.

Narrator: Now we know that a wolf can be ferocious, but I never said he was smart. Wolf didn't know turtles were good swimmers.

Turtle: Oh goodness, you could put me in the pot or in the fire, but whatever you do, pleeeeeease, don't throw me in the river!

Wolf: That's exactly what I am gonna do! (Wolf winds up and hurls turtle far in to the river.)

Narrator: Turtle smacked down on a large rock in the middle of the river and then slowly swam to the bank, and pulled himself ashore.

Turtle: Oh, my aching back....ooouuch (Turtle lay on shore moaning, trying to heal.)

Narrator: And from that day forward, turtles' smooth shiny shells were no more. There were 13 tiny cracks and to this day there still are.