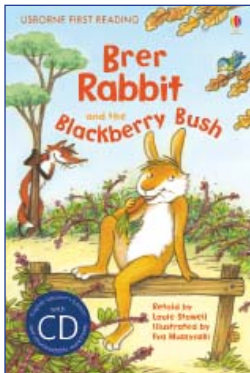


Brer Rabbit and the Blackberry Bush • Teacher's notes



Author: Joel Chandler Harris

Reader level: Elementary

Word count: 156

Lexile level: 330L

Text type: Folk tale based on African and Cherokee legends

About the story

Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox are sworn enemies, always trying to outwit each other. One day, Brer Rabbit is caught in Brer Fox's rope trap. The triumphant Brer Fox threatens to eat him, but to his surprise, Brer Rabbit sounds delighted and even suggests ways for the fox to cook him. The one thing he begs Brer Fox not to do is to throw him into the blackberry bush. Naturally, Brer Fox decides that's exactly what he *will* do.

Brer Rabbit is delighted to be in the blackberry bush. It turns out that he was born there, and he has no trouble in scampering away out of reach through the brambles. Brer Fox is left fuming... without his dinner.

About the author

Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) was an American writer who worked both as a journalist and a fiction writer. He's best known for his large collection of animal stories with Brer Rabbit (short for Brother Rabbit) as one of the central characters. The stories are known as Uncle Remus stories from the fictional character Harris used as the narrator. Many of the stories are heavily based on African and Cherokee folktales and legends, which Harris wanted to preserve through his retellings.



Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

Brer	p13	throw
blackberry	p14	nasty
bush		silly
p3 prickly	p16	threw
p4 enemies		through
p6 wriggled	p18	landed
p7 stuck	p20	laughed
p8 growled		deeper
p11 fry		dark
boil	p21	born
pie		

Key phrases

p4	Take that!
	Take this!
p5	to set a trap
p8	Got you!
	eat you all up
p9	Hurray!
p15	to pick up
p19	right in the middle



Brer Rabbit and the Blackberry Bush • Teacher's notes

Before reading

You may like to search online for images of blackberries on the bush. Choose images which show how tangled and thorny the bushes can be. If there are blackberries or brambles growing wild near your home or school, you could even bring in some stems to show the students.

Start by writing the word BLACKBERRY on the board and asking what a blackberry is. [You may need to clarify that you don't mean a mobile device!] Where do blackberries grow? You could mention that blackberries (and raspberries) belong to the rose family. Like roses, blackberry bushes have lots of thorns.

Show the students the book cover. Does anyone know what "Brer" means? Write Br__er on the board, and see if anyone can guess the missing letters. You can then explain that it's a short form of "Brother", and can be used to describe someone from the same area or background, not necessarily a family member.] Look closely at the cover. Who do you think is the other main character in this book?

.....

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

.....

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

- p4 How can you tell they're enemies?
 - p5 Can you see how the trap might work?
 - p9 Is that the answer Brer Fox was expecting?
 - p15 What do you think Brer Fox is going to do with Brer Rabbit?
 - p19 Does Brer Rabbit look sad about being in the blackberry bush?
 - p22 Why is Brer Fox so angry?
-



Puzzles (pages 26-29)

You might like students to work on these in pairs or small groups. If so, ask the "After reading" questions before doing the puzzles.

.....

After reading

Ask the students how they would describe Brer Rabbit [clever, cheeky, etc.]. And how would they describe Brer Fox [foolish, unlucky, mean, etc.]? Does anyone feel sorry for Brer Fox at the end?

How does Brer Rabbit manage to trick Brer Fox? You could mention the technique of getting someone to do something by pretending you want them to do the opposite [reverse psychology]. Can the students think of any other examples? You could help them out with a couple of suggestions, e.g. "Please give me an apple or a carrot - anything but that chocolate cake." OR "Can I go to bed now? I really don't want to stay up late." (You might warn them that most parents aren't so easily fooled!) How might they use the technique to get you to finish the lesson early?

As a follow-up exercise, the students could write their own Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox story, perhaps as a sequel. How might Brer Fox trap Brer Rabbit this time? And will Brer Rabbit escape?

