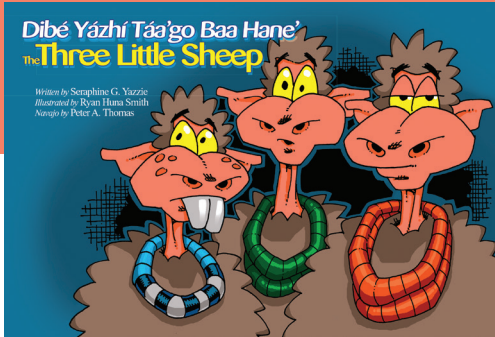
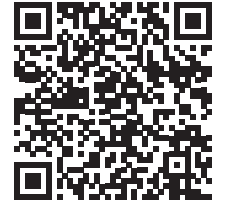


Teacher's Guide *The Three Little Sheep*

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About the Book

This story retells the familiar “Three Little Pigs” in a Navajo setting, replacing the pigs with three young sheep and the wolf with the ever-mischievous Coyote. Each sheep sets out to build a home—one from grass, one a teepee, and one a traditional hogan. True to his nature, Coyote tries to blow down each home, but only the hogan stands firm. When Coyote finally attempts to crawl down the stovepipe, the brothers cleverly build up the fire, sending him shooting into the air. The closing lines explain why, even today, Coyote is said to bring bad luck when met from the north—a humorous but meaningful reminder of his restless spirit.

The illustrations add warmth and cultural depth, grounding the story in the Navajo landscape. Readers see mesas, sagebrush, and sheep corrals that mirror familiar scenes from students’ communities. The artists’ playful depictions of Coyote—his sly grin, puffed cheeks, and surprised expression as he flies skyward—invite laughter and participation. These visual cues support oral storytelling, helping students anticipate dialogue, describe emotions, and build expressive vocabulary. Teachers can pause during a read-aloud to discuss how color, facial expression, and background details show movement, mood, and meaning, allowing students to “read the pictures” as part of comprehension.

Humor is central to the story’s appeal and its role in teaching cultural identity. Coyote’s foolish tricks remind children that cleverness and respect go hand in hand—a recurring moral in Diné oral tradition. Through laughter, students engage emotionally while absorbing values about responsibility, community, and respect for traditional homes. Acting out the story allows learners to embody these lessons, shifting between Navajo and English dialogue, exaggerating tone and movement, and experimenting with rhythm and repetition.

For Navajo teachers, this story becomes a powerful oral language and dramatization resource. Its familiar humor, rhythmic language, and expressive illustrations invite retelling, dialogue, and performance—skills that build confidence in speaking both Navajo and English. Most importantly, it helps students experience storytelling as living culture, connecting voice, laughter, and imagery to a sense of identity and belonging within their community.

Readability:

Common Core Grade Band: K–1 (Read-Aloud) / Early 2

Navajo Vocabulary from the Story

- Dibé Yázhí – Little Sheep
- Hooghan nímazí – Hogan (traditional Navajo home, permanent)
- Tł'oh hooghan – Grass hut (temporary shelter)
- Ałch'í' adee'á – Teepee (temporary shelter)
- Ma'ii – Coyote
- Naagháhi – Direction (East, North, South)
- Gad – Cedar (used for hogan)
- Tł'oh – Grass
- T'isbéí – Aspen
- Bii' – Inside

Discussion Questions (Aligned with AZ Standards)

Arizona ELA Standards (Grades 1–3): Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text; describe characters, settings, and events; make connections to cultural knowledge.

1. Why do you think the youngest sheep chose to build a grass hut?
2. How is the hogan different from the grass hut and the teepee?
3. What do the sheep learn about helping and protecting one another?
4. Why is Coyote an important character in Navajo stories?
5. How does this story remind you of other traditional tales, like The Three Little Pigs?

Classroom Activity Ideas

1. Act It Out: Assign roles (the three sheep, Coyote, Mother) and let students perform the story as a short play.
2. Build Mini-Houses: In groups, students use classroom materials (sticks, grass/paper strips, clay, blocks) to build the three types of homes.
3. Compare Homes: Make a chart comparing temporary vs. permanent homes. Ask students which homes they live in and why homes are important.
4. Map the Directions: Have students draw the sheep's travels to the East, North, and South, adding the types of homes in each direction.
5. Story Connections: Discuss why Coyote appears in so many Diné stories. Invite students to share or listen to other Coyote tales.

5-Day Grade 3 ELD Unit Plan

Day 1 – Introduction & Story Elements

Objective (SWBAT):

- Students will be able to identify the characters, setting, and main events in the story using oral responses and illustrations.

Standards:

- ELD 3-5.SL.1: Engage in collaborative discussions about grade-level topics and texts.
- ELD 3-5.RI.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of texts.

Vocabulary: dibé yázhí (little sheep), Ma'ii (Coyote), hooghan, t'oh (grass), alch'í' adeez'á (tee-pee).

Activity:

- Read aloud the first part of the story (the three sheep leaving their mother).
- Draw a simple chart: Characters – Setting – Events. Fill in together as a class.

Exit Ticket:

- Students name one character and describe where they live.

Day 2 – Compare Homes

Objective (SWBAT):

- Students will compare temporary and permanent homes using a Venn diagram.

Standards:

- ELD 3-5.RI.3: Describe the relationship between a series of events or ideas.
- ELD 3-5.L.6: Acquire and use grade-appropriate academic and content words.

Vocabulary: t'oh hooghan (grass hut), alch'í' adeez'á (tee-pee), hooghan nímazí (hogan), gad (cedar).

Activity:

- Re-read the sections describing each sheep's home.
- Build a class Venn diagram on the board: "Temporary Homes vs. Permanent Homes."
- Students discuss why the hogan was stronger.

Exit Ticket:

- Students write or draw: Which house would you live in? Why?

Day 3 – Coyote the Trickster

Objective (SWBAT):

- Students will explain how Coyote acts as a trickster and why this is important in Navajo stories.

Standards:

- ELD 3-5.RL.3: Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to events.
- ELD 3-5.SL.4: Report on a text, telling details in sequence.

Vocabulary: Ma'ii (Coyote), nitsáhákees (thinking), dóó (and/so), náhookqos (north).

Activity:

- Re-read the parts where Coyote blows down the houses.
- Discuss: What is a trickster? Why does Coyote want to fool others?
- Students draw Coyote and label his “trickster traits.”

Exit Ticket:

- Oral response: “Coyote is tricky because he _____.”

Day 4 – Problem and Solution

Objective (SWBAT):

- Students will identify the problem in the story and explain how the sheep solved it.

Standards:

- ELD 3-5.RL.2: Recount stories and determine central message, lesson, or moral.
- ELD 3-5.W.2: Write informative texts to examine a topic.

Vocabulary: bá hooghan (inside the hogan), chizh (firewood), bee'eldlóó' (stovepipe).

Activity:

- Read the climax (Coyote trying to come down the stovepipe).
- Whole-class discussion: “What was the problem?” “How did the sheep solve it?”
- Students illustrate and caption the solution.

Exit Ticket:

- Write one sentence: “The sheep solved the problem by _____.”

Day 5 – Retelling & Performance

Objective (SWBAT):

- Students will retell the story using sequencing words and perform a short skit.

Standards:

- ELD 3-5.SL.5: Include visual displays to clarify ideas.
- ELD 3-5.W.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences.

Vocabulary: háálá (in the beginning), dóó (and/so), áko (then), nít'éeé' (finally).

Activity:

- Students work in small groups to retell the story using sequence words.
- Optional: Perform short skits (roles: sheep, Coyote, mother).
- Reflect: "What lesson can we learn from this story?"

Exit Ticket:

- Students share one moral of the story aloud.

A Readers' Theater Script Dibé Yázhí Taa'go Baa Hane' Three Little Sheep

Cast:

- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- Mother Sheep (Bimá)
- Little Sheep (Dibé Yázhí Ákéédée')
- Middle Sheep (Dibé Yázhí Át'a' Góne')
- Oldest Sheep (Dibé Yázhí Álàájí)
- Coyote (Ma'ii)

Scene 1 — Leaving Home

Narrator 1:

Once upon a time, there were three little sheep.
Łah dibé yázhí taa'go naakai.

Narrator 2:

They lived with their mother in a small house.
Bimá yił hooghan áłts'íísí léi' yii' dabighan.

Mother:

Children, it's time you learn to live on your own.
'Ahíł haojé'ígíí, t'áá nihí 'ák'i nidałdzil bídahwiidoł'áałji' ahoolzhiizh.

Narrator 1:

The three little sheep packed their things, kissed their mother, and set off.

Mother:

Look out for one another! Take care of each other!
"T'áá 'áłk'idadínóoh't'íí, łá' nihich'í' hodiiznáa'go nihíká 'adoolwoł biniiyé!"

Scene 2 — Building Homes

Narrator 2:

Each sheep went in a different direction.

Narrator 1:

The youngest brother went east and built a grass hut.

Little Sheep:

I'll make my home from soft grass.
T'oh bee hooghan áyiilaa!

Narrator 2:

The middle brother went north and built a teepee.

Middle Sheep:

I'll make my home from strong poles and deer hides.
T'iisbéí dóó bíjǰh bee hooghan áyiilaa!

Narrator 1:

The oldest brother went south and built a hogan.

Oldest Sheep:

I'll build my home from cedar logs and mud.
Gad dóó hasht'ish bee hooghan nímazí áyiilaa!

Scene 3 — Coyote Arrives

Narrator 2:

Coyote found out that the three little sheep had gone off alone.

Coyote:

(grinning) I'll visit the youngest one first!

Narrator 1:

When he arrived, he called out—

Coyote:

Little Sheep, Little Sheep, let me in!
Dibé Yázhí, Dibé Yázhí, yah iishááh!
Or I will huff and puff and blow your grass hut in!
Éí doodago nighan t'oh bee 'ályaaígíí 'altso nits'áá' ahxiih bízdeeso!

Little Sheep:

Go away! I won't let you in!
Nówohjí' anilyeed! Doo ná 'àà 'ádeeshííł da!

Narrator 2:

Coyote huffed and puffed and blew the grass hut down!

Scene 4 — The Teepee

Narrator 1:

The littlest sheep ran to the teepee of his middle brother.

Little Sheep:

Coyote blew down my grass hut!
Ma'ii shighan t'oh bee íishłaa yêè shits'ââ' naa'ayídzíísol!

Middle Sheep:

Don't worry! You're safe with me.
T'áadoo baa níni'í! Shíł síníkéeego doo nich'í' haada hodooníł da.
Coyote can't blow down my teepee!

Narrator 2:

But soon, Coyote appeared again.

Coyote:

Little Sheep, Little Sheep, let me in!
Or I will huff and puff and blow your teepee in!

Middle Sheep:

Go away!
Nówohji' anilyeed!

Narrator 1:

Coyote huffed and puffed—
and blew the teepee down!

Scene 5 — The Hogan

Narrator 2:

The two little sheep ran south to their oldest brother's hogan.

Little Sheep & Middle Sheep:

Coyote blew down our teepee! He wants to eat us!

Oldest Sheep:

Don't worry. You are safe here.
T'áadoo baa nihíni'í. Shighan nímazí bee haz'á.
I built my walls with strong cedar and mud.
Coyote can't blow this down.

Narrator 1:

The brothers played cards and drank coffee.
Coyote arrived, hungry and angry.

Coyote:

Little Sheep, Little Sheep, let me in!
Or I'll huff and puff and blow your hogan in!

Oldest Sheep:

You can't blow this hogan down!
Hooghan nímazí doo bíninil'âà da!

Narrator 2:

Coyote huffed and puffed,
and huffed and puffed again —
but the hogan did not move.

Scene 6 — Coyote's Trick

Narrator 1:

Coyote decided to sneak in through the stovepipe.

Narrator 2:

The oldest brother heard him climbing on the roof.
He threw more wood on the fire.

Coyote:

(yelling) Here I come!

Narrator 1:

Down he went—
whoosh!
Then back up again,
yowling!
He flew out of the stovepipe and disappeared toward the north!

Narrator 2:

To this day, people say—
Coyote brings bad luck if you meet him from the north,
because he's still angry that he didn't get to eat
the three little sheep.

All Together:

Yá'át'ééh! That is the story of the Three Little Sheep!
Díí hane' éí Dibé Yázhí Taa'go Baa Hane'!

Resources for Teachers

Coyote Stories for Read-Alouds (Grades 1–3)

Teachers should note that Coyote stories are traditionally told only in the winter months.

- Arnosky, J. (1999). *Coyote raid in Cactus Canyon*. Hyperion.
Animal adventure tale with Coyote mischief; accessible text for grades 1–2.
- Begay, S. (1992). *Ma'ii and cousin Horned Toad: A traditional Navajo story*. Scholastic Inc.
Retells a humorous Navajo tale in which the trickster Coyote (Ma'ii) tries to outwit his wise cousin Horned Toad but instead learns a lesson about humility and respect.
- Begay, S. (1995). *Ma'ii and the Mouse: A traditional Navajo story*. Scholastic.
Beautifully illustrated Navajo story; humorous encounter between Coyote (Ma'ii) and Mouse.
- Garcia, E. (2006). *Coyote and the sky: How the sun, moon, and stars began*. University of New Mexico Press.
Tells how Coyote played a role in creating the night sky. Supports science connections (astronomy).
- Malotki, E., & Lomatuway'ma, M. (1985). *Gullible Coyote: A bilingual collection of Hopi Coyote stories = Una'Íhu*. University of Arizona Press.
A Hopi bilingual collection of trickster stories with English translation, highlighting inter tribal comparisons.
- McDermott, G. (1994). *Coyote: A trickster tale from the American Southwest*. Harcourt.
Brightly illustrated; introduces Coyote as a classic trickster who wants to steal fire. Best for engaging younger students with humor and color.
- Mourning Dove (Quintasket, C.). (1997). *Coyote stories for children*. University of Nebraska Press.
Short, traditional Coyote trickster stories adapted for children. Useful as quick read-alouds.
- Roessel, R. A., & Platero, D. (1974). *Coyote stories of the Navajo people*. Navajo Curriculum Center Press, Rough Rock.

A collection of fourteen traditional Navajo legends that recount the clever tricks and misadventures of the trickster Coyote as he interacts with other animals and figures in Navajo folklore.

San Juan USD Navajo Coyote Video Series (Utah)

<https://media.sjsd.org/collections/coyote-stories>

The Heritage Language Resource Center of San Juan School District (Utah) produced a series of animated Navajo-language films called “Navajo Coyote Tales: From Legend to Film” in the 1970s. They use student artwork, cultural consultants, and Navajo narrators. The videos are in Navajo and often paired with English summaries. They follow traditional winter storytelling protocols.

Titles in the series include Coyote and the Horned Toad, Coyote and the Beavers, Coyote and Skunk, Coyote and Rabbit, Coyote and the Lizards.

Suggested Use: Show in short segments during winter months (October–February). Pair with read-aloud books or oral retellings. Use for language reinforcement, cultural knowledge, and story comparison.