

Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby

A Georgia Tall Tale

By Aimen, Devin, and Klara

Characters

Protagonist: Brer Rabbit is **quick-thinking** and is able to use reverse psychology to **outsmart** Brer Fox. He also has **anger issues**.



Antagonist: Brer Fox is **amused** by his own **ingenuity** in trapping Brer Rabbit.

“This strange creature was not very polite. It was beginning to make [Brer Rabbit] mad” (1).

“Brer Fox rolled over and over under the bushes, fit to bust because he didn't dare laugh out loud” (2).

A photograph of a forest floor covered in a dense carpet of purple wildflowers. Tall, slender tree trunks are visible in the background, and a bright sun is shining from the right side, creating a lens flare and illuminating the scene with a warm, golden light.

Setting:

The location of this story takes place in **a forest in Georgia.**

The time of year is not given, but assumed to be **spring** because the text states, “said Brer Rabbit, doffing his hat. ‘**Nice weather** we’re having.’”

Summary

Brer Fox wanted to capture Brer Rabbit, but Brer Rabbit convinced Brer Fox to throw him into the briar patch, so Brer Rabbit escaped then both animals went home.

Rising Action: Brer Rabbit gets **angry at the tar baby** for not responding to him.

Climax: Brer Rabbit gets **stuck in the tar**.

Falling Action: Brer Rabbit convinces Brer Fox to **throw him in the briar patch**.

Denouement: Both animals **go home safely**.

Exposition: Brer Fox wants to **capture Brer Rabbit**, so he makes a tar baby.

Conflict: Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit are **enemies**.

Mood

The **mood** of the story is **lighthearted**. The characters seem **without a care in the world**, especially at the beginning of the story.

According to the narrator, “he heard someone whistling and chuckling to himself” (1). To elaborate, even the characters seem to be having a **lovely day with no stress**. This illustrates that the mood is meant to be lighthearted.

The narrator elucidates, “Brer Rabbit was so furious he head-butted the **cute little** creature” (2). This almost seems like an oxymoron because it is unusual to be angry at so-called cute creatures. This oxymoron as well as the overall way the story is told adds to the lighthearted mood.

Lastly, it states, “Brer Rabbit was sitting on a log combing the tar out of his fur with a wood chip and looking smug” (3). This is significant because Brer Rabbit just **narrowly escaped death** and he is **not traumatized** at all.

Instead, he feels **smug**. **Despite the seriousness** of the events of the story, it still seems **easygoing**.

Tone

The **tone** is **sympathetic**, as the narrator seems to sympathize with the characters. The author utilizes **strong language to clearly illustrate the feelings** of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox.

In the first paragraph of the story, it states, “Brer Fox hated Brer Rabbit on account of he was always cutting capers and bossing everyone around. So Brer Fox decided to capture and kill Brer Rabbit if it was the last thing he ever did!” (1). In other words, the narrator seems to sympathize with Brer Fox in believing that Brer Rabbit was aggravating.

The text states, “Brer Rabbit gulped. He was stuck fast. He did some fast thinking” (2). The narrator **paints a picture of Brer Rabbit’s perspective** filled with worry and quick thinking.

Finally, the narrator states, “Brer Rabbit let out such a scream as he fell that all of Brer Fox’s fur stood straight up” (3). This demonstrates Brer Fox’s feelings of unease despite his confidence that he wants to kill Brer Rabbit.

Lesson Learned

Brer Fox learned to not count a plan as a success before it is complete, and Brer Rabbit learned to **not make assumptions**.

What's different at the end of the story?

At the end of the story, Brer Fox **no longer** wanted to capture him. Brer Rabbit **has a plan** to capture Brer Rabbit. Consequently, Brer Fox is **no longer amused** and Brer Rabbit is now safe.

The Message of the Story

The message of the story is to **avoid jumping to conclusions**.

Why did the characters act the way they acted?

Brer Fox was **irritated** by Brer Rabbit, so he **expected** respect, so he was **furious** that the tar baby did not respond.

Theme

Character Development

At the beginning of the story, Brer Fox **foolishly** and **arrogantly** believed Brer Rabbit was as good as locked up **too early**. At the end, Brer Fox discovered that his plan was not foolproof. On the other hand, Brer Rabbit believed the tar baby was someone who could talk. By its conclusion, Brer Rabbit learned that the tar baby could not speak, so he **should not have gotten mad so quickly** when he **did not know the whole picture**.

Which tall tale elements did the story include?

Folktale Setting

The **forest** is a **common setting** in folktales. In this story, the setting plays a role as Brer Rabbit's clever ploy to be thrown into the briar patch saves his life.

Unbelievable Details

The entire story revolves around the **personification of animals who talk**, which is obviously unbelievable. In fact, the resolution of the story is Brer Rabbit talking Brer Fox into throwing him into the briar patch.

“Only please, Brer Fox, please don't throw me into the briar patch.”

-- BRER RABBIT