

The Best Fish Catcher in Appalachia

(Storytelling and Puppet Play program. For Puppet Play, stick puppets should be fashioned from vacation reading program artwork of possum, bear and eagle.)

Down in the deep, dark – deep, dark – deep, dark forest by the cool, cool Amicalola River there lived a possum. And this possum was HUUUUUUNGRY.

He was so hungry his tail twitched. *(Have kids twitch their tails.)*

He was so hungry his ears flip, flopped. *(Have kids use hands for ears to flip, flop.)*

He was so hungry his belly mooaned. *(Have kids moooooan along with Possum.)*

One day Possum was sitting under his rhododendron shrub, reading his copy of How to Find Food and Influence People, when he saw it – a feather!

That feather was coming closer and closer and closer over a hill on the trail. *(Have kids use their pointer fingers as the feather as it's coming over the hill.)*

“Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy!” cried Possum. “A bird! A bird! No more twigs and berries for me! I’ll have a nice, small bird to fill my tummy!”

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And then he *heard* it...

*(Sung to Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.
Have kids sing along and do the motions with the song.
Each time you sing throughout the story, you can get a
little faster.)*

*We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe!*

That feather got closer and closer and closer until Possum saw that it wasn't a *small* bird at all – it was a great, big bird – an eagle. He was sitting on the shoulder of a great, big bear. And this bear had a great, big knapsack thrown over his other shoulder.

Bear and Eagle moseied down the trail and as they did they sang:

*We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe!*

Possum hid in his rhododendron shrub.

Bear and Eagle stopped. Bear set down the knapsack so they could admire their reflection in the river.

“No one has a sharper beak than you, Eagle,” said Bear.

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“And no one has sharper claws than you, Bear,” said Eagle. “No wonder we filled that knapsack with fish. No one is better at catching fish than Bear and Eagle!”

“No one even comes close!” said Bear.

Possum sat up straight. “Fish!” he thought.

His nose sniffed. *(Have kids sniff.)*

His tail twitched. *(Have kids twitch their tails.)*

His ears flip, flopped. *(Have kids use hands for ears to flip, flop.)*

His belly mooaned. *(Have kids moooooan along with Possum.)*

He picked up his copy of How to Find Food and Influence People .

He turned to Chapter Seven: “How to Catch Fish.” He had an idea.

Bear picked up the knapsack and he and Eagle began to mosey and as they mosied, they sang:

*We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We're the best from head to toe!*

Possum ran ahead through the shrubs.

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He found a nice spot on the trail.

He lay down. *(Have kids sit perfectly straight and still.)*

He closed his eyes. *(Have kids close eyes.)*

He let his tongue hang out to one side. *(Have kids hang their tongue out to one side.)*

And he did what possums do best – he played dead.

Pretty soon Bear and Eagle were coming down the trail.

“Eagle, you really do have the sharpest beak I’ve ever seen!” said Bear.

“Why, thank you!” said Eagle. “But it’s nothing compared to your claws. I pity the fish that meets those claws, if ya know what I mean!”

“That’s why no one is better at catching fish than Bear and Eagle!” said Bear.

“No one even comes – whoa!” said Eagle. “What do we have here? A dead possum?”

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“Well, he *is* a possum,” said Bear. “How can we be sure he’s dead?”

“I know!” said Eagle.

So Eagle took his sharp, sharp beak and he poked, poked, poked
Possum. (*Have kids pretend to poke, poke, poke.*)

And Bear took his sharp, sharp claws and poked, poked, poked
Possum. (*Have kids pretend to poke, poke, poke.*)

But this time, Possum’s tail did not twitch. Possum’s ears did not flip,
flop. And Possum’s belly did not moooan.

“He’s dead!” said Bear and Eagle.

Bear licked his lips. “Nothing beats a fish dinner, except for a fish
and *possum* dinner!” said Bear. “Mmmm, mmmm. Possum tacos.”

“Possum meatballs,” said Eagle.

“And for dessert – possum ice cream,” said Bear.

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Bear picked Possum up by his tail, swung him over his head three times and threw him into the knapsack.

“Aren’t we clever?” said Eagle.

“We *are* clever!” said Bear.

“That’s why no one is better at catching fish than Bear and Eagle.

Let’s sing!” said Eagle.

*We’re the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We’re the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We’re the best from head to toe, head to toe!
We’re the best from head to toe!*

While Bear and Eagle sang, Possum started to nibble the knapsack.

(Have kids pretend to nibble.)

He nibbled and nibbled and nibbled until finally he had nibbled a small hole in the sack. *(Demonstrate a small hole by making a circle with one hand and holding it up to your eye.)*

Possum dropped each fish out of the knapsack one by one by one, until the only thing left inside was – Possum!

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He nibbled a little bit more, until out popped his paws.

He nibbled a little bit more, until out popped his head.

He nibbled a little bit more, until out popped his empty, empty tummy.

He nibbled a little bit more, until out popped his legs.

He nibbled a little bit more, until out popped his toes.

Possum ran back down the trail picking up the fish one by one by one as he ran.

That night Bear and Eagle made a great, big fire. They were ready to have a great, big feast. Bear untied the great, big knapsack. He stuck in his great, big paw.

He felt all around, but didn't feel a thing. He held up the sack. He looked inside. But all he saw was Eagle staring back at him through the great, big hole at the bottom. *(Have kids make a circle by using both hands, hold them up to their faces and turn to look at their neighbor.)*

That night, Bear and Eagle didn't eat one single fish.

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But waaaaay back along that Appalachian Trail, Possum sat under his rhododendron shrub and ate fish after fish after fish. And as he ate he sang:

I'm the best from head to toe, head to toe!
I'm the best from head to toe, head to toe!
I'm the best from head to toe, head to toe!
I'm the best from head to toe!

Now, Possum didn't have a sharp beak like Eagle. And he didn't have sharper claws than Bear. But he was better at catching fish.

And from that day on, Possum was never HUUUUUUNGRY.