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It is important to remember, however, that symbolic meanings are rarely as “cut and dry” as this, and the West also has a more positive spin on the fox’s seemingly unwholesome nature. Since they were believed to be guardians of grape vines, foxes were one of the totemic animals of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. During the Middle Ages, there existed a literary character known as Reynard the Fox, who appeared in a number of

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popular stories that broadly satirized contemporary society. Although Reynard embodied many of the typical qualities of his species, including slyness and a self-serving attitude, he was able to use these qualities to outwit his mentally slow adversaries, thus demonstrating that cleverness can be just as important as strength when fighting an opponent.

Moving beyond Western culture, the fox also held powerful symbolism in other areas of the world. Although the trickster aspect still attached itself to the fox in these areas, it was usually presented in a more positive way. Among certain tribes and cultures in the Americas, for example, the fox has secured a position as more beneficial to humankind than most European renditions of the creature. To give a few examples, the Miwok people of California tell how Fox partnered with Coyote to create the world, including all its landscapes, other animals and even human beings; in British Columbia there are stories of how Fox, again with Coyote, was able to steal the secret of fire and passed it along to humanity; and the Inca civilization of Peru placed the fox on an even higher level of cultural importance. Not only did the Inca assign the fox a place in their own creation story, but the fox also figures as a character in the local version of the flood story. The black section on the end of his tail supposedly comes from the fact that it touched the water as the fox was dislodged from his safe post by other animals. Among the Inca, the fox was associated with the constellation we now know as the Pleiades, which marked the place in the sky where the sun rose at the winter solstice.

One more area where the fox holds prominent cultural symbolism is in Japan, and here perhaps we find the creature's significance to be the most consistently positive. The fox is considered a symbol of wealth in Japan and is strongly associated with Inari, the god of agriculture and fertility. Not only were they Inari's messengers, but also foxes themselves were believed to assume the form of beautiful human women. Although this phenomenon could bring both good and bad luck to actual humans who encountered them, depending on the circumstances, it still speaks to the prominence foxes held in traditional Japanese culture. There also exists in Japanese folklore creatures called kitsune (actually the Japanese word for 'fox') who were portrayed as celestial foxes with multiple tails; the more tails one of these creatures had, the older and wiser it was. In the modern Japanese franchise Pokémon or "Pocket Monsters", the creature known as Ninetales is strongly based on the kitsune, both in terms of appearance and in the abilities it possesses.

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