

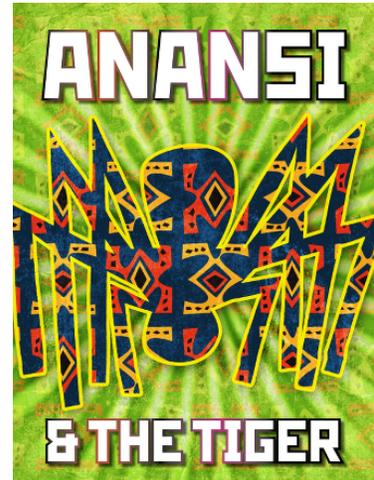


Anansi and The Tiger

adapted by Chris Smith

Things To Know/ Things To Think About

For those unfamiliar with Anansi, he is a West African spider god originally featured in many stories of the Ashanti people of Ghana. In fact, Anansi is such a familiar part of the oral tradition of the Ashanti that the phrase “spider tales” has come to refer, not just to Anansi stories, but to all folktales and fables.



Interestingly, there is even a story that helps account for how Anansi became associated with storytelling culture. In one version of this tale, Anansi lives in a world empty of stories because the sky god, Nyame, keeps them all for himself. Anansi strikes a deal with Nyame, and in return for capturing a dwarf, a python, hornets, and a leopard, Nyame makes Anansi the god of all stories. In this way, Anansi brought stories into the world.

In most stories, Anansi is depicted as a trickster figure with human qualities, despite taking the form of a spider. Despite his small size, Anansi often gets the better of those bigger and stronger than him by relying on his wits. He often uses his intelligence to avoid certain death, and take revenge on those who slight him, however, unlike the trickster figure Loki in Norse Mythology, Anansi is largely benevolent. Because of the qualities Anansi represents, his stories were easily absorbed into the African slave cultures of the Caribbean and North American mainland. During the Atlantic slave trade, thousands of West Africans were taken from their homes and brought to the new world, taking their oral tradition with them. Facing abuse from masters and overseers alike, the stories of Anansi were a source of comfort for the African community abroad. Not only did these stories provide examples of how an underdog could overcome almost any obstacle, but they also helped preserve African culture and identity in a new, and often hostile environment. This piece is perfect for an introduction to the oral tradition, folklore, and fables, particularly the fables of West Africa. In addition, this piece makes a nice contrast to the Greek myths, Native American folktales, and Middle Eastern folk tales found in the Books That Grow library. Furthermore, this piece can be taught in a social studies course, and used to show how African slaves adapted to, and coped with, life in the new world.

Standards Addressed:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9

Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

Before Reading

1. Many different cultures have “trickster figures” in their folktales and fables. Can you think of any others? What are these characters like? And are they usually good or bad?

During Reading

1. When Tiger realizes Anansi has fish in his satchel, how does he respond? Instead of asking to share with Anansi, what does he do instead? What does this say about Tiger? *(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3)*
2. How does Anansi out-wit tiger? Use examples from the story to support your answer. *(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1)*

After Reading

1. How does Tiger change over the course of the story? And what does he learn from Anansi? Both questions have more than one answer, so you can respond however you would like. *(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2)*

Connections In Text

1. Consider the story through Tiger's eyes. Write a short version of this story from Tiger's perspective. Does viewing things from his point of view make him a more sympathetic character, why or why not? *(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6)*
2. Compare "Anansi and The Tiger" to the Books That Grow piece, "Jabu and The Lion." How are these stories similar and different? What ending do you like more, and why? *(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9)*

Further Readings

For Teachers:

http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/vtl07_la_rv_genre_lppourquois/identifying-characteristics-anansi-the-spider/

This link provides educators with a video lesson where a narrator tells a story about Anansi, and helps introduce students to the character. The link also comes complete with supplemental activities to accompany the video lesson.

For Students:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D25eKPWa-j0>

This link provides students with access to animated film about the story where Anansi gets eight legs. The film is lighthearted and humorous, but also showcases a number of Anansi's most trademark attributes.

Vocabulary

G7 Challenging Vocabulary:

intensified, nimble, prowess, distraught, lurked, poised, pluck, pelt, fruitlessly, irate, enthralled, despondent, covet, antagonize, snare

G5 Challenging Vocabulary:

craving, immense, sauntering, impressive, wilderness, confident, spurted, antagonize, aroma, feeble

G3 Challenging Vocabulary:

drifted, clever, fierce, grasped, starving, frail