



Lesson Extensions and Activities for

Anansi the Spider: A tale from the Ashanti by Gerald McDermott

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Reading Is Fundamental

Google Voyager Folktales Unit

Book Description

This story from the Ashanti people of Ghana describes how a spider named Anansi must decide which of his six sons to reward after they save him from terrible danger. “Anansi is folk-hero to the Ashanti. This funny fellow is a rogue, a wise and lovable trickster...who triumphs over larger foes.” In addition to being a trickster tale, this story is also a *pourquoi* story, explaining how the moon came to be in the sky.

Gerald McDermott uses vibrant colors, traditional African design motifs, and Ashanti language rhythms in his retelling of this Anansi adventure. He first told the story in a movie in 1969, and later adapted into a picture book which won a Caldecott honor in 1973.

Folktale Background

Pourquoi stories are a type of folktale that explains how or why something came to be, like how the elephant got a long trunk or why a tortoise’s shell looks like it is cracked. *Pourquoi* is French for “why.”

Trickster tales are also a type of folktale about a wily, cunning, character who tries to fool others or gain some advantage.

Vocabulary

- Folklore: the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth.
- Africa: The second largest continent located south of Europe and bordered to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the east by the Indian Ocean.
- Anansi: An Ashanti folktale character that is a spider.
- Ashanti: Culture of West Africa, in the country of Ghana.
- Skinner: A person who takes the skin off animals.
- Cushion: A pad or pillow used for support.
- Falcon: A bird with a short, curved beak, and long pointed, powerful wings used for flying.
- Mysterious: Creates wonder and questioning at the same time.
- Deserves: Have or show qualities worthy of reward or punishment
- Nyame: A God of All things, in the Ashanti people’s culture

Prior to Reading

- Share with students the Google Voyager Experience:
<https://earth.google.com/web/data=ClwSWHlgZDEyNzAzMDVmYzZmMTFIN2JIMmIyMTNhYjBmYzk2YmIaH0ZvbGt0YWxlcYBmcm9tIEFyb3VuZCB0aGUgV29ybGQiFWVmZWVkX3JpZl9mb2xrdGFsZXNfMA>
- In the experience, students will learn about the region where the story came from and some background on the main character Anansi (panel 5 of the Google Voyager Experience). Show students the video within the Google Voyager Experience to learn more about the country.
- Show students the cover of the book and ask students to make connections by sharing aloud their experiences with spiders.
- Discuss with students that this is a fiction story and ask them how they know based on the cover of the book. Create a list of common elements found in most fiction stories.

While Reading

- Before reading the story on pg. 3 students to do an “I see, I think, I wonder” statements for the story. Give students time to think and then ask them to share their statements in order.
- After reading page 6, ask students to turn and talk to a neighbor and make predictions about what trouble Anansi could get into.
- Ask students to think about how his son’s strengths could help save him from the fish on page 12. Have students volunteer to share their thoughts. Continue reading the story to see if anyone’s prediction was correct.
- Ask students to turn and talk to a neighbor about the trouble coming to Anansi on pages 17-18 and make predictions about which sons could help him. Continue reading the story to see if the predictions were correct.
- After reading page 25, ask students to discuss which son should win the prize and give a supporting reason as to why. Then have the class vote on a son. Create a tally chart and see which is most favored for the class.
- After finishing the story have students on the count of three whisper what the mysterious object is. Before counting to three, remind them that it is something we can still see in the sky today.

Post-Reading Activities

- Have students explore the various puzzles on RIF’s Literacy Central (<https://www.rif.org/Voyager-Stories-Folktales>).
- Assign students a leveled reading passage. The passages relate in some way to the book’s themes, concepts, characters, settings, or subject matter. Each passage’s Lexile measurement targets readers at the Beginning of Year (Easy), Middle of Year (Medium), or End of Year (Hard). The passages are meant to be used as independent-level texts that students can read on their own with minimal support. Use the Lexile scores to help you determine which level is right for each student. Print or download this passage as a supplementary, independent reading activity to help them develop reading fluency. (<https://www.rif.org/Voyager-Stories-Folktales> or https://www.rif.org/literacy-central/search?field_themes=All&type=All&f%5B0%5D=field_support_type%3A234)

Lesson Extensions and Activities

Here are some ways to further explore the story:

Primary Standard for all activities: RL.K.10 - Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

- **Arts Integration/ Math:** A motif is a decorative design or pattern. Show students how the illustrator used traditional African design motifs to create the pictures in the book. Have students identify the various geometric shapes and symbols they see. Provide students with cut out geometric shapes or stencils (older class) to create their own pattern or picture. Older students could re-create a scene or character in the book. Then have students work in groups to identify the shapes and symbols the peers used in their pattern or artwork.

Objective: The Students will identify various geometric shapes throughout the story and create their own picture or pattern using geometric shapes and stencils.

Standards:

RL.K.7 - With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear.

MC.K.G.A.2 - Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.

Material List:

- precut geometric shapes in various colors
- stencils
- plain white paper

- **Making connections:** Anansi had six spider sons in the story and each one had a special talent. Ask students to work in pairs and share their special talents and how it could be used to help their family. Then have students illustrate a picture showing how they use their talent to help their family. Ask for volunteers to share their illustration with the class and see if any other students identified a similar talent in themselves.

Objective: The Students will make personal connections to the text by identifying their own strength and how it could help their family.

Standards:

SL.K.6 - Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly.

SL.K.5 - Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.

- **Current Events:** Today Ghana is still known for its beautiful silk weavings. Take students on a virtual field trip to see how the traditional African design motifs are created by utilizing the Google Earth: https://earth.google.com/web/search/bonwire+kumasi+Ghana/@5.6037168,-0.1869643,60.57649097a,739144.48408152d,35y,0h,0t,0r/data=CpIBGmgSYgokMHhmZGI5NmViZWYxNTQyNWI6MHg1YzQ5Njc1OTVhZDkwZTE5Gd8uoLw0ahZAIQ2AAjly7se_KihCb253aXJlIEtIbnRIIFdYXZlcnMgWW91dGggT3JnYW5pc2F0aW9uGAlgASImCiQJLKY7SoQxHkARkNXRB9WvFUAZQHe5LXWopj8hVhEplSCDEMA Set up a learning center where students can explore how to create a weaving of their own using paper strips or fabric loops and a loom.

Objective: The Students will experience the culture from Ghana and the Ashanti people by viewing images of African motifs being created today.

Standards:

IB-PYP - Learner Profile –Open Minded- appreciate and value the culture and traditions of others.

Material List:

- Pre-cut construction paper for weaving
- scissors
- scrap paper strips
or
- loom and fabric loops
- printed directions or pictures of how to create weave <https://babbleddabledo.com/art-for-kids-paper-weaving/>

- **Writing/ Higher Level Thinking:** As a class have the students retell the story of *Anansi the Spider: A tale from the Ashanti*. Create a storyline on the board with students input. Then ask them to think about how Anansi could get into trouble in your school and how could one of his sons could help him?

or

Have students think about Anansi having another spider son or daughter. What important talent should the newest spider have to help the family and why?

Objective: The Students will use thinking skills and creativity to answer higher level questions and support them with details in their writing and/or verbally.

Standards:

RL.K.3 - With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

W.K.3 - Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Materials List:

- Primary Writing paper with picture box <https://www.allkidsnetwork.com/lined-paper/handwriting-paper/>

- **Science:** Discuss the importance of food chains and the roles of prey vs. predator. See if students can identify prey and predators in the story. Then show them how prey can become predator and predator can become prey. Build a food chain showing this example with a spider like in the book. What does the spider eat? What animals eat the spider? What could eat a fish or birds? Build a food chain showing the hierarchy with the animals from the book and some extras that the class thought of. Now, have students reflect on other animals they know in nature. By selecting just one animal see if you can build a food chain with animals and plants found in places the primary animal lives. For older students, set up poster boards around the room with an image of one plant or animal on it in the middle. Put students into small groups and have them visit the posters to add one animal or plant to each poster above or below the other ideas/images already on the poster to build the food chains.

Objective: The Students will collaborate and create food chains with animals living in one particular region or location.

Standards:

Next Generation Science Standards K-ESS3.1 - Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants and animals (including humans) and the places they live.

Material List:

- Poster boards or self-adhesive chart paper
- Images of various plants and animals (one per poster)
- Markers
- Access to nonfiction books about animals

- **Compare and Contrast:** There are many African folktales. Use the folktale Sun and Moon to do a compare and contrast activity with the book Anansi the Spider. Show students the two online videos. Both stories explain how the moon got into the sky. As a class, create a Double Bubble Thinking Map on chart paper to compare the two stories. Encourage students to talk about the elements of the films like the animation, music, characters roles and storyline.

Anansi the Spider: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1CIBaRpSOg>

African story about the Sun and Moon:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWU2oyqCg5o&list=PLS3RXAC6eH9Xg8PtQCJE664m_sm1mrjYx

Objective: The Students will compare and contrast two similar Ghana folktales by using a double bubble thinking map and listing at least three points in each section.

Standards:

RL.K.9 - With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures or characters in familiar stories.

RL.K.10 - Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Material List:

- Double bubble thinking map <http://youngteacherlove.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Screen-Shot-2014-04-23-at-4.04.57-PM1.png>
- LCD projector connected to a computer or laptop