

STORYVALUES™

The World's Wisdom for Today's Education

A MULTICULTURAL LITERACY &
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING
RESOURCE

Storyvalues

Anansi Brings Stories to the World
Written Version

Region:

A F R I C A

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Anansi Brings Stories to the World

Origin - Africa (Ashanti)
Retold by Cheryl Thornton
(Written version)

Once upon a time, long ago, there were no stories in the world. No stories to tell, listen to, learn from or laugh with.

All the stories were up in heaven, where Nyema, the sky god kept them in a golden box by his throne.

Anansi the spider man, wanted to buy the stories and share them with the world.

One day he cast a great web and climbed all the way up to heaven and presented himself to the sky god, asking to buy his stories.

Nyema was amused to see little Anansi and said, "You are here to buy my stories? I don't think you will be able to pay my price, but you may try. You may have all my stories if you bring me three things from the earth. First, you must bring me the leopard with teeth as sharp as spears. Second, you must bring me the hornets that sting like fire. Third, you must bring me the queen of the fairies. Bring me these three things, Anansi and I will give you my stories."

Anansi climbed back to the earth and went to the jungle where the leopard with teeth as sharp as spears lived.

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It was the leopard who found Anansi. The leopard said, “Hello Anansi. You are just in time to be my *lunch*.”

“Hello leopard,” answered Anansi. “Before you eat me would you like to play a game?”

Anansi knew that all cats liked to play games. He cut a length of vine.

“I know a game called Quick Tie,” said Anansi. “First, I quickly tie your paws together with this vine while you count. Then, I’ll untie you and you quickly tie my feet and hands together while I count. The fastest one is the winner.”

The leopard liked the rules of the game and decided he could eat Anansi once he had tied him up.

Anansi started and once he had the leopard’s paws tied together, the leopard said, “That was very fast Anansi. You can let me go now and I’ll take my turn.”

Anansi smiled and said, “I don’t think so! I’m going to leave you tied until I can take you up to heaven and buy the sky god’s stories.”

One down, two to go.

Next, Anansi had to find the hornets that sting like fire.

He took his drum down to the river and filled it with water, then walked to the hornets nest.

Anansi poured the water over the nest and said, “Hornets, it’s raining and the rain will tear your delicate wings to tatters. Quickly fly into my drum where you can stay nice and dry.”

The hornets flew into Anansi's drum.

Quick as a flash, Anansi covered the opening. The hornets buzzed, “Anansi, you can let us out now. The rain has stopped.”

Anansi smiled and said, “I don’t think so! I’m going to leave you in my drum until I can take you up to heaven and buy the sky god’s stories.”

Two down, one to go.

Next, Anansi had to capture the queen of the fairies. How would he do that? He thought and remembered that all fairies liked to eat mashed sweet potatoes.

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Anansi made a bowl of mashed sweet potatoes and put it by the tree where the fairies liked to dance. Then, he made a funny looking baby doll and covered it with sticky gum from the gum tree. He put the doll under the tree by the bowl of sweet potatoes. Anansi hid behind the tree and waited.

Pretty soon, along came the queen of the fairies. She saw the bowl of mashed sweet potatoes and said, "Good morning little baby doll. I see you have a big bowl of delicious mashed sweet potatoes. Would you please share some with me?"

Anansi answered for the baby doll from behind the tree, "Yes you may, fairy queen."

The fairy queen picked up the bowl and began to eat.

"These are delicious, thank you for sharing them, little baby doll," said the fairy queen.

Anansi did not answer for the baby doll.

The fairy queen said, "Little baby doll, when someone says thank you, you are supposed to answer, with 'You're welcome.' Let's try it again. 'Thank you little baby doll,'" said the fairy queen.

Anansi did not answer for the baby doll.

The fairy queen became angry and said, "You better say you're welcome or I'll smack you!"

The baby doll did not say anything, so the fairy queen smacked the baby doll and got stuck in the sticky gum.

"Let me go," cried the fairy queen.

Just then Anansi stepped out from behind the tree and picked up the baby doll with the fairy queen stuck fast and put her with the leopard and the hornets.

He spun a web around all three of them and climbed back up to heaven. There Anansi presented them to Nyema the sky god.

The sky god was amazed to see that Anansi had returned and exclaimed, "Anansi! You brought what I asked. And now you may have my stories."

He brought out the golden box from beside his throne and handed it to Anansi.

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Anansi thanked Nyema and started climbing back down to the earth.

When he was still way up in the clouds, Anansi opened the box and threw the stories to the wind.

They blew north, east, south and west. The people on the earth caught them and told them again and again and again, from that day to this and that is how stories first came to the world.

*And there be my story,
be it bitter or sweet,
take what you like,
but leave enough for me to eat.*

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Region:

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Anansi Brings Stories to the World

Grades K-6 Support for Curricular
and Co-curricular Learning:

***Language & Literacy, Social Studies, Arts in Education
and Social and Emotional Learning.***

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Anansi Brings Stories to the World

Origin - Africa (Ashanti)

(Curricular Support in red.)

Story Synopsis:

In the beginning, all stories were kept in heaven with Nyema, the Sky God. Realizing that the world needs stories, Anansi the spiderman asks Nyema if he can buy the stories from him. Nyema agrees, but Anansi must first meet several challenges in order to close the deal and be allowed to bring the stories to the world.

How this Story from *Long Ago and Far Away* Relates to Us Today: Exploring the Premise or Big Idea of the Story.

This African Ashanti story, which is over 300 years old, has many qualities worth exploring with students. For example, the challenges set forth by Nyema to Anansi seem impossible at first. How would a little spider catch a leopard? Nevertheless, Anansi meets each challenge with **creativity, intelligence, and perseverance** *(Character Education)*

When he achieves his goal, Anansi also demonstrates **generosity** by allowing all the people to have and share the stories equally. As a whole, this beautiful African folktale demonstrates how stories, and the tradition of storytelling, are inclusive of everyone. *(Character Education, Equity & Inclusive Education)*

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Story Discussion Suggestions:

This story and the recording can be used to support Language & Literacy, Social Studies, Character Education and Social and Emotional Learning.

Please Note - Some of the suggestions for younger grades may be applicable to older grades as well.

All Ages - Play the recorded story to the class, pausing the story occasionally to make predictions. (*Inference*)

Here are some discussion suggestions for Kindergarten - Grade 2 classes:

- In the story, Anansi, the tiny spider man was able to meet all the challenges set forth by Nyema through **creativity, intelligence and perseverance**. What is creativity? What is *intelligence*? What is *perseverance*? Discuss the meaning of these words and come to a shared understanding. (*Text-to-Self, Character Education*)
- Discuss these qualities with your students, and arrive at a shared understanding of these terms. Note that even though Anansi was very small, he was able to achieve big goals. What goals do we share as a class? (*Character Education, Text-to-Self*)
- People in every part of the world have stories to tell. What can we learn about each other from stories? Encourage your students to share a personal story; about a meaningful adventure, a journey, or a family story. (*Text-to-Self*)
- Discuss how stories can help us discover what we have in common. (*Equity & Diversity*)

Here are some discussion suggestions for Grade 3 - Grade 6 classes:

- What do you think is the main idea or meaning of the story? (*Explore the oral tradition and discuss how in many cultures, stories were passed down to subsequent generations through storytelling.*) (*Text-to-Self*)
- Discuss and arrive at a common understanding of *inclusion, equality and fairness*. Discuss how this story illustrates and supports these characteristics. (*Text-to-Self, Character Education, Equity & Inclusive Education*)
- Talk about how such a tiny spider could meet all the challenges set forth by Nyema through **creativity, intelligence and perseverance**. (*Character Education*)
- What is creativity? What is *intelligence*? What is *perseverance*? (*Character Education*)
- In this story, Anansi set out to achieve a goal: to bring Nyema's stories to the entire world. Have your students talk about some personal goals they may have as well. (*Character Education, Text-to-Self*)
- How can creativity, intelligence and perseverance help us achieve our goals? (*Character Education,*)

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Literacy Connections - Discussion Suggestions:

Text-to-Self:

- What does, “Anansi Brings Stories to the World,” remind you of in your life?
- What in the story is similar to your life?
- How is the story different from your life?

Text-to-Text:

- Does, “Anansi Brings Stories to the World,” remind you of other stories you have heard or read?
- How is the story similar to other stories you’ve heard or read?
- How is the story different from other stories you’ve heard or read?

Text-to-World:

- What does, “Anansi Brings Stories to the World,” remind you of in the real world?
- How is the story similar to what happens in the real world?
- How is the story different from what happens in the real world?

Text-to-Media:

- Does, “Anansi Brings Stories to the World,” remind you of a movie or television program?

Cultural Explorations:

This story and the recording can be used as a means to increase awareness and acceptance of cultural diversity. (Early Civilizations, Equity and Diversity)

About Ghana This story originates from the Ashanti people, from the region of Western Africa, located primarily in the country currently known as Ghana. Using a map or globe, show your students where Africa is located. Explain that Africa is a continent, made up of over 50 independent countries. Show your students where the country of Ghana is in Africa, and in relation to where your community is located. *(Text-to-World, Geography)*

Ask your students to share any personal stories they may have involving Ghana, or the continent of Africa. Perhaps someone has relatives, has travelled, or is from there. Just as Anansi shared the stories with the people, encourage your students to share their stories with the class. Explore interesting facts about Ghana, past and present. *(Text-to-Self, Text-to-World)*

Support for Arts in Education:

This story and the recording can be used as a means to empower students to explore, interpret and express the content of each story in their own unique way. (Visit the Art/Photography/Music Gallery section of this story’s web page to learn more about the

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specific photographs and art images shown.) (Visual Arts)

Support for Arts in Education:

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Creative Visualization and Art Suggestions:

Have your students listen to the recording in a quiet, peaceful setting, perhaps with the lights off and with their eyes closed. Have them pay close attention to how the music and sound effects work with the narration to establish a mood and sense of place. Ask students to express in their own way how these stylistic elements relate to the meaning of the story. *(Visualization)*

Have students draw the scene of their choice, based on the imagery as depicted in the narration and the music. Encourage personal expression and originality; there is no 'right or wrong way' to express one's own vision. This story features vivid imagery and characters that can provide the basis for art projects: Anansi meeting Nyema, Nyema giving Anansi the three tasks, Anansi capturing the leopard, Anansi capturing the fairy, etc. *(Visual Arts, Visualization.)*

Music Project Suggestions: (Arts in Education - Music)

The recording of, 'Anansi Brings Stories to the World,' features several traditional African instruments, including Marimba, Kalimba, Finger Drum, Gyl (xylophone-type instrument), Talking Drum, Atimevu Drum, Harp, and others. The sound is further enhanced with more conventional instruments like cymbal, wind-chimes, and various percussion instruments. *(Visit the Art/Photography/Music Gallery section of this story's web page to see photographs and to hear the sounds created by these musical instruments.)*

Music from African cultures is as diverse and interesting as the cultures themselves. Explore with your class the various types of African music. *(Music)*

Drama Project Suggestions: (Arts in Education - Drama)

The story, 'Anansi Brings Stories to the World,' can be performed as a drama. Using the written version as the basis for a script, develop a performance with your students, incorporating scenic art similar to the art from Ghana.

The Anansi stories are an ancient and essential part of West African society. Originating from the oral tradition, these folktales were originally told by **griots**; storytellers who would keep and express the history of a tribe or village through stories and songs. Have students learn to tell this or other Anansi stories. *(Storytelling)*

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Book Suggestions: *(Text-to-Text)*

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

Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock by Eric A. Kimmel and Janet Stevens

Anansi Goes Fishing by Eric A. Kimmel and Janet Stevens

Anansi and the Magic Stick by Eric A. Kimmel and Janet Stevens

Anansi and the Talking Melon by Eric A. Kimmel and Janet Stevens

Anansi Does the Impossible!: An Ashanti Tale by Verna Aadema and Lisa Desimini

Anansi Goes to Lunch by Bobby Norfolk

The Illustrated Anansi: Four Caribbean Folk Tales by Philip Sherlock and Petrina Wright

Brother Ananis and the Cattle Ranch by Harriet Rohmer and Stephen Von Mason

Anansi and the Box of Stories: A West African Folkale by Stephen Krensky

The Adventures of Spider: West African Folktales by Joyce Cooper Arkhurst

Anansi and the Pot of Beans by Bobby Norfolk

Story Sources:

A Story, a Story by Gail E. Haley, Atheneum 1971

Anansi and the Box of Stories: A West African Folktale by Stephen Krensky, Millbrook Press, 2008