Teacher’s Guide

ANANSI THE SPIDER
An Original Adaptation by Dave Pierini

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SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN ARTS COMMISSION
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SYNOPSIS

B Street dives into the wonderful world of African folklore with these spirited adaptations of the exploits of Anansi the Spider. One of the great folk heroes of the world, or so he thinks, the rogue and mischief maker sets his sights on King Tiger and his wealth of stories. When King Tiger refuses to bequeath his treasury to Anansi and his friends, Anansi tricks him into telling some of his stories until he realizes that they too have the power to tell stories.

THEMES: Cultural Studies, World History, Literature, African Folklore, Geography, Science

BEFORE THE PLAY

THEATRE TERMS

Visual & Performing Arts

3.0 Historical & Cultural Context

Make sure you know the following terms so you can use them later.

SCRIPT: The written play that tells actors what to say and what to do.

ACTORS: The people who say the words and do the actions on stage.

CHARACTER: The person or thing that an actor pretends to be or portrays.

DIRECTOR: The person who tells the actors how to say the words and how to do the actions.

SCENERY or the SET: The backdrops, furniture, and other pieces that show the audience where the play is happening.

COSTUMES or WARDROBE: The clothes and other things an actor wears to show who they are.

PROPS: The things that actors use (such as a book or broom) during the play.

SOUND: The sound effects (like a doorbell or thunder) that help to tell the story.

LIGHTING: The lights that help the audience to see the actors and scenery on the stage.

THEATER: The place where a play is performed. It is from the Greek word THEATRÓN, which means “watching place.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration
K.1 1.1 2.1 3.1 4.1 5.2

Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas
K.4.6 1.4.6 2.6 3.6 4.6 5.6

Visual & Performing Arts
1.0 Artistic Perception

1. What is the difference between a play and a movie? What does it mean to adapt a story into a play or movie?

2. Introduce the terms listed in the Theatrical Terms list provided. Can you give examples of these terms from plays or movies you've seen?

3. What is a folktale and why do people in different cultures tell folktales?


5. How much do you know about Africa and its wealth of diverse cultures? Have your students find Africa on a map and make a list of what you as a class know about Africa and its peoples.

6. When you read a book or watch a play or movie about people of another culture, what are some differences you notice from your culture? What are some similarities you notice?
AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

While watching a live theatre performance, it is important to sit quietly and listen. It does not mean that you need to be silent. Be sure to laugh at the funny parts (or cry at the sad parts), and certainly applaud at the end! Actors love it when an audience is involved with the show by actively watching and listening.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
SPEAKING & LISTENING: Comprehension & Collaboration
K.2  1.2  2.2  3.2,3
SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas
K.4,6  1.4,6  2.6  3.6  4.6  5.6
VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS
1.0  Artistic Perception
4.0  Aesthetic Valuing
5.0  Connections, Relationships, Applications

1. Refer back to the Theatrical Terms list on page 3. What examples of these terms did you find in the play?
   a. What did you think of the scenery, costumes, and props? Did they help you understand the stories that were told? Why or why not?
   b. How did the music, lighting, and sound effects used during the show help you understand the stories being told?

2. Folktales tend to have a purpose for being told, or a moral or lesson to teach. What was the purpose, moral, or lesson for each folktale you were told during the play? What was the purpose for each folktale within the context or world of the play?

3. What was your favorite character or story from the play and why? What was your least favorite and why?

4. What themes did the playwright develop in each story? Did any themes last throughout multiple stories or the whole show? Define them.

5. Why do you think so many storytellers tell folktales about animals who act, think, and feel emotion the way humans do? How would the stories and character relationships from *Anansi the Spider* be different if the characters were human?

6. What differences between the culture the characters lived in and your culture did you notice? What similarities did you notice?
Activity 1: Jungle Words
The following words can be used in discussion of the play and in other activities.

1. entertain  6. circumstance  11. ocelot
2. exemplary  7. famished  12. sacrifice
3. heinous  8. perturbed  13. weave
4. arachnid  9. triumphant  14. hoard
5. gorge  10. entrance  15. clever

Use a DICTIONARY to do the following:
   a. Define the words and identify their parts of speech
   b. Divide each word into syllables and identify roots, prefixes, suffixes, and language of origin. Can you add any prefixes or suffixes to make different words?
   c. Do any of these words have multiple meanings? Describe the different meanings
   d. See if you can use any of these three words in a sentence

Define the compound word “wordsmith” and infer what the word “smith” means. What are words ending in “smith” can you think of? List them, define them, and draw pictures to illustrate your understanding.

Activity 2: Crazy Critters
Animals like those featured in Anansi the Spider can be found in many parts of Africa and all over the world. Using the map provided on page 11, have your students map where these animals can be found. Why do those animals prefer these habitats? Why couldn’t they live anywhere else?

The Ashanti people originally lived in West Africa. What kind of spiders do they have in West Africa? What kind of turtles? Can these specific species live anywhere else?
Activity 3: Find Your Story

WRITING: Text Types and Purposes
1.3 2.3 3.3 4.3 5.3

Write or tell a story using one of the following prompts. Share it with the class.

1. At the end of the play, Anansi and his friends realize that they have the power to tell stories. Describe a time when you discovered a talent or ‘superpower’ you didn’t know you had.

2. In the play, Anansi insists that he repaid Tammy’s kindness by saving her baby. Describe a time when you returned a favor or repaid someone’s kindness.

Activity 4: Telling Tales

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
Continuity and Change; California: a Changing State; Making a New Nation, Ancient Civilizations

READING (Literature): Key ideas and Details
1.2 2.2 3.2 4.2 5.2

WRITING: Text Types and Purposes
1.1 2.1 3.1 4.1 5.1

WRITING Research to Build and Present Knowledge
1.7,8 2.7,8 3.7 4.7 5.7

The vast folklore surrounding Anansi the spider originally came from the Ashanti people in West Africa and spread to the West Indies and elsewhere because of the African Slave Trade. Those who study folklore have found that these stories helped African captives and their descendants hold on to their culture while teaching valuable lessons. Many cultures look to their folklore for wisdom, inspiration, and a sense of community in times of trial, which is one reason why similarities between folktales and traditions are worth noting. Some common traits include:

- Heroes and Heroines who exemplify or represent cultural ideals
- Tricksters and keepers of wisdom
- Stories that explain “why” or teach a lesson

Listen carefully to your classmates’ presentations and ask them questions.

Be sure to revise and edit what you write.

Divide the class into groups and have each group choose a common story from a culture you are studying, or another they know of, that fits one of the traits above to study. Have each group find a version of that story they like best and research some background information, or context, on the culture that created this story. Each group should share the story and context with the class.

After the class has heard/seen each group’s presentation, each student should choose one to reflect on and answer the following questions in a written composition:

- Why was/is this story important to the people who hold it as folklore?
- How do you think the cultural context of these people (the climate and terrain where the storytellers lived, their family and social structures, morals, values, history, and other aspects) affects the way the stories are told and interpreted?
Activity 6: Be My Guest!

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
WRITING Research to Build and Present Knowledge
1.7, 8 2.7, 8 3.7 4.7 5.7

When Turtle stopped by Anansi’s house at dinner time, Anansi felt he must at least agree to share his meal because that was the custom. Every culture has customs of etiquette that demonstrate hospitality, politeness, and social standing in various social situations that can change over time. Studying these customs helps us interact with people of other cultures more easily.

Divide your students into groups and have them choose one of the following topics, situations, or relationships below and research the customs practiced by the peoples you may be studying in History/Social Science (or another culture of choice). Have each group share with the class using visual displays and/or demonstrations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greetings</th>
<th>Guests invited to a meal</th>
<th>Guests invited to stay over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating etiquette</td>
<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Courtship and dating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-child relationship</td>
<td>Treatment of elders</td>
<td>Business meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General treatment and status of women</td>
<td>Student-teacher relationship</td>
<td>Holidays (specific holidays or in general)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anti-Bullying Thematic Questions for Anansi the Spider

1. Which characters in the story are bullies? Which characters get bullied?
2. What do the characters do to bully each other? Why are these types of behavior unacceptable?
3. According to the play, why did some characters mistreat others? What were the consequences of their actions? How could these consequences have been avoided?
4. How did the characters who were bullied react? What did they do to stop others from mistreating them? How else could they have reacted?
5. When Anansi agreed to share his meal with Turtle, but then kept him from actually eating it, Turtle decided to "get even" with Anansi by inviting Anansi to his house thinking he could not come under water. Did you agree with the actions Turtle took? Why or why not? What is the difference between "righting a wrong" and "getting even?"
6. At the end of the play, we find out that King Tiger hoarded all of the stories because he wanted the other animals to respect him. What are some positive, constructive and inclusive ways to gain and keep people’s respect and why? What are some negative and destructive ways to gain and keep people’s respect and why?

Character Counts Thematic Questions for Anansi the Spider

Hospitality and Generosity:
The term “hospitality” can be defined as the generous or friendly treatment of guests by way of providing food, drink, comfort, conversation, rest, etc.

1. Which characters from the play showed generosity or good hospitality in your opinion? How did they do so? Who was ungenerous or inhospitable and how?
2. When Anansi asked Old Mother Iguana if he could have some of her famous spicy beans, she agreed to give him some if he would help plant her garden. How did Anansi repay her trust and generosity? What would you have done?
3. What does it mean to be polite? Which characters in the play were impolite and why?

Honesty and Respect:
1. How do you know when someone is telling you the truth and when they are not?
2. Describe why the characters acted the way they did in each of these examples. Did the results of their actions justify the actions themselves?
   a. Anansi challenges Elephant and Hippo to a tug-of-war game where they unknowingly play against each other. When each believes he/she has lost to Anansi, both apologize and/or give in to his requests.
   b. When Anansi takes some of Old Mother Iguana’s famous spicy beans, he tries to hide them in his hat instead of telling her the truth.
3. Think of a time when you tricked someone or told a lie in order to get what you wanted the way Anansi and his friends tried to trick King Tiger? Did you succeed? What were the other consequences of your actions? What would you have done differently?
FURTHER READING & LEARNING

Electronic Resources
Anansi Stories
http://anansistories.com

Business Insider Guide to Business Etiquette Around the World

International Diaspora Engagement Alliance
http://www.diasporaalliance.org/am-i-part-of-a-diaspora/

ARTSEDGE Animal Habitats Lesson Plans
https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-k-2/Animal_Habitats

Web Activities
Discovering Fairy Tales: A Myths, Folktales, and Fairy Tales Activity

Fractured Fairy Tales: A Writing with Writers Activity

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## Jungle Words

### Word Search

Find these words in the word search.

| 1. entertain | 6. circumstance | 11. ocelot |
| 2. exemplary | 7. famished | 12. sacrifice |
| 3. heinous | 8. perturbed | 13. weave |
| 4. arachnid | 9. triumphant | 14. hoard |
| 5. gorge | 10. entrance | 15. clever |

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ONDADCEEMBEFCED
NCPRZICNZMCZXLE
IWERNNGTNKGEEH
JIXLAOOHAEORMVS
GARORHTCARRPEI
VNTSGTSTQYAMTLRM
HNREPMMWPORHAMAE
ETKOUMKEXAIARIF
MCMAHRAQDOMYSN
MARGOTECIFIRCAS
DITYUHEINOUSVR
CMQRHEVAEWXKDCW
PRBOJQBYZZYRQSV
CeqCSKSAVWXRGSS
DRDNTRIUMPHANTC
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