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Teacher's Guide

ANANSI THE SPIDER

**An Original Adaptation
by Dave Pierini**

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BEFORE THE PLAY

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

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 *THEATRON*, 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?
4. What is your favorite story? Is it a true story or make-believe? Is it funny? Exciting? Scary? Moralistic? Have your students summarize their favorite stories and tell why they like them.
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?

DURING AND AFTER THE PLAY

DURING THE PLAY

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?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY

LANGUAGE: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

2.4,6 3.4 4.4 5.4

READING (Foundational Skills): Phonics and Word Recognition

2.3 3.3 4.3 5.3

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

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:

- Define the words and identify their parts of speech
- 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?
- Do any of these words have multiple meanings? Describe the different meanings
- 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.

SCIENCE

SCIENCE

Life Sciences

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

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?

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| tiger | ocelot | iguana |
| wild boar | high woods dog | tree frog |
| elephant | hippo | tayra |
| toucan | monkey | turtle |

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?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Comprehension and Collaboration

SPEAKING & LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

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

WRITING

WRITING: Production and Distribution of Writing

1.5 2.4,5 3.4,5 4.4,5 5.4,5

WRITING: Range of Writing

LANGUAGE: Conventions of Standard English

LANGUAGE: Knowledge of Language

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Be sure to revise and edit what you write.

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

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?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

HISTORY

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

A Child's Place In Time and Space; People Who Make a Difference; Continuity and Change; California: A Changing State; Making a New Nation; Ancient Civilizations

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Activity 5: Mixing Up the Map

When people descended or connected to a specific ethnic, racial, cultural, and/or religious group are forced to leave their homeland, these people are said to live in a *diaspora*. The Ashanti diaspora, or the scope of locales in which descendants of the Ashanti people of West Africa now live, includes the Caribbean and the Americas.

Use the map on page 11 to complete one or more of the following activities:

1. Research the forced migration of the Ashanti people and use the map to show where their descendants live now.
2. Think of a group that you have studied, or another group you know of, that has been scattered throughout the world and use the map to show where their homeland is/was and where their descendants live now.
3. Use the map to show where your ancestors came from and how they came to live in California. Are you part of a diaspora?

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.

Greetings	Guests invited to a meal	Guests invited to stay over
Eating etiquette	Gift giving	Courtship and dating
Parent-child relationship	Treatment of elders	Business meetings
General treatment and status of women	Student-teacher relationship	Holidays (specific holidays or in general)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ANTI-BULLYING AND CHARACTER COUNTS

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

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

7

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?

RESOURCES & ADDENDA

FURTHER READING & LEARNING

Electronic Resources

Anansi Stories

<http://anansistories.com>

Business Insider Guide to Business Etiquette Around the World

<http://www.businessinsider.com/a-guide-to-business-etiquette-around-the-world-2015-5>

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

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/activity/discovering-fairy-tales-myths-folktales-and-fairy-tales-activity>

Fractured Fairy Tales: A Writing with Writers Activity

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/activity/fractured-fairy-tales-and-fables-writing-writers-activity>

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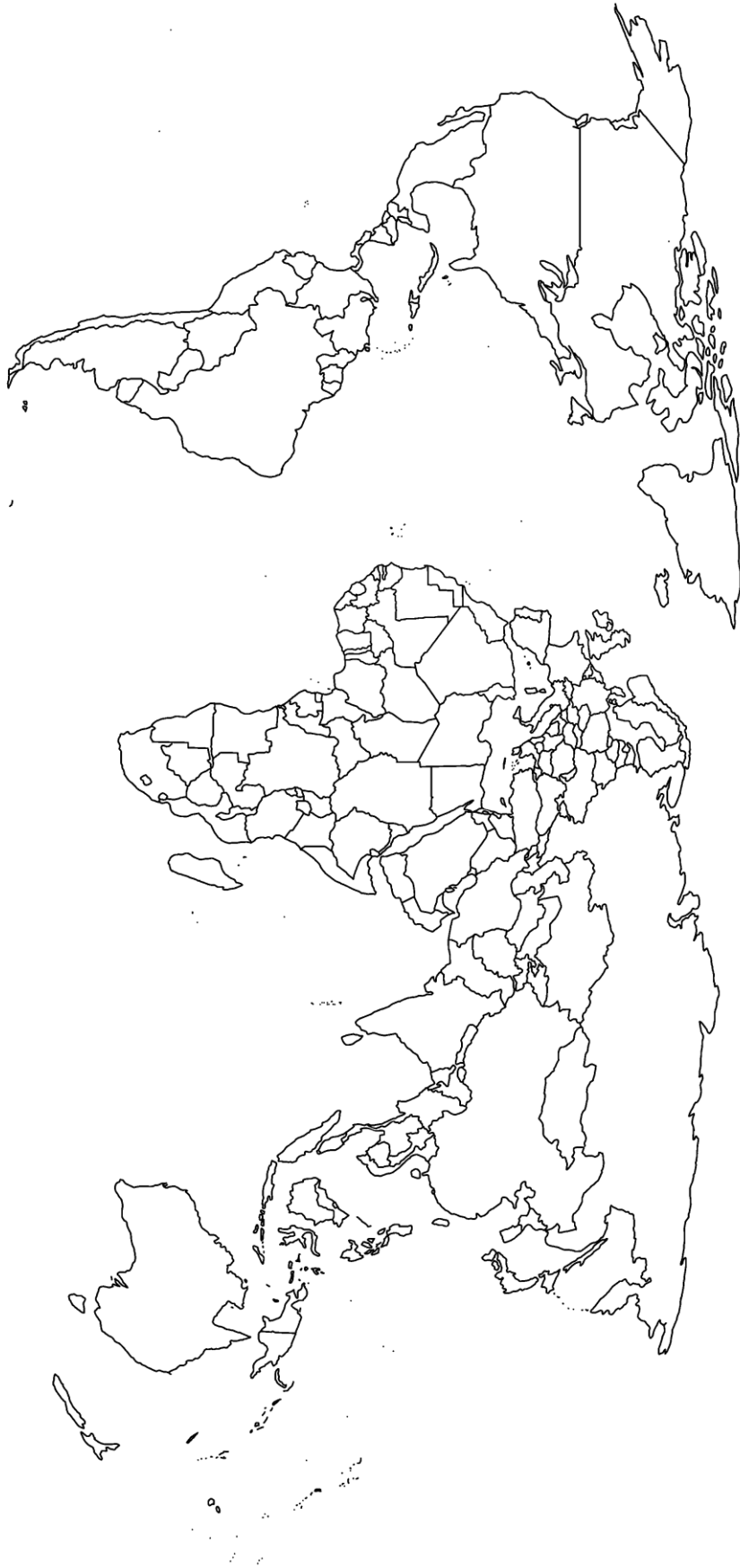
Jungle Words

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 |

O N D A D C E E M B F E E C D
N C P R Z I C N Z M C Z X L E
I W E R A N N G T N K G E E H
J I X L A O O H A E O R M V S
G A W R O R H T C A R R P E I
V N T S G T S Q Y A M T L R M
H N R E P M M W P O R H A M A
E T K O U M K E X A I A R I F
M C M C A H R A Q D O W Y S N
M A R G O T E C I F I R C A S
D I T Y U H E I N O U S V Q R
C M Q R H E V A E W X K D C W
P R B O J Q B Y Z Z Y R Q S V
C E Q C S K S A V W K X R G S
D R D N T R I U M P H A N T C





"The kids were completely engaged and entertained."

— Staff Member, Shriners' Hospital

SCHOOL MATINEES

You come to us!

Anansi the Spider

September 29 – November 6, 2015

Adapted by Dave Pierini

INTRODUCING! Anansi, the Spider! One of the GREAT folk heroes of the world! He is a rogue, a mischief-maker, and a wise, lovable creature who triumphs over larger foes. These African folktales will delight all ages.

A Christmas Carol

November 17 – December 18, 2016

Adapted by Buck Busfield

Dust doesn't have time to settle on this age-old story! And more than just dust flies with this B Street adaptation!

Frankenstein

February 16 – March 18, 2016

Adapted by Jerry Montoya

Travel in time to the first science fiction story ever written! Journey with Viktor Frankenstein and encounter his doomed creature! A surprising tale of friendship, alienation and love.

Alice in Wonderland

April 12 – March 18, 2016

Adapted by Buck Busfield

Don't be late for these very important dates! Come down the rabbit hole with Alice!

(916) 442-5635

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www.bstreettheatre.org/for-educators/school-matinee

B Street Theatre Outreach & Education 2015-2016

"You put the spark in them to write."

- 4th Grade Teacher, Cordova Villa Elementary,
Rancho Cordova

WORKSHOPS & RESIDENCIES

We come to you!

Introduction to Playwriting

Single interactive 90-Minute Playwriting Workshop designed to inspire and empower students to write their own plays.

Playwriting Towards Production

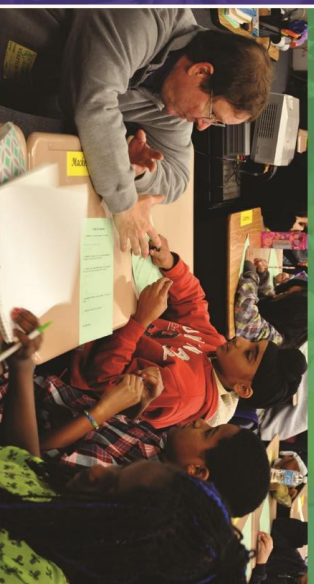
Three interactive 90-Minute Playwriting Workshops designed to lead students from inspired ideas to completed drafts of original plays.

Bespoke Theatre!

After-School Workshops & Residencies

Our Teaching Artists will tailor your after-school program to suit your organization's needs. Participants:

- Learn theatre games and exercises!
- Develop communication and performance skills!
- Perform plays either from their own writing or from B Street's own catalog of scripts!



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www.bstreettheatre.org/for-educators/workshops-&-residencies



"The quality of the production was outstanding."

— 5th Grade Teacher, Pine Grove Elementary, Jackson

SCHOOL TOUR

We come to you!

PRESIDENTIAL PALOOZA!

November 2 – 25, 2015

They manage congress, balance budgets, and negotiate for peace. How hard can the job of President be? Find out more in this colorful, engaging, and fast-paced tribute to the uncommon citizens who mastered the art of multitasking while occupying the highest office in the land!

PRESIDENTIAL PALOOZA - with a TWIST!

November 30 – December 18, 2015

Our B Street School Tour performers add our traditional holiday twist to the antics in the Oval Office!

HISTORY EXTRAVAGANZA II

January 18 – March 11, 2016

From Ancient Greece to the California Gold Rush, from Medieval Europe to the Making of a New Nation, and onto the Industrial Revolution! Enjoy this veritable buffet of select plays written by students of ALL grade levels based on topics tied directly to curriculum.

FANTASY FESTIVAL XXX

March 28 – June 3, 2016

Now in our 30th year! The winning plays of our annual playwriting contest for kids. Behold the extraordinary results of putting a professional theatre's staff at the service of young writers' talents.

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www.bstreettheatre.org/for-educators/school-tour