

## How Anansi Won the Stories, p. 2

### Introducing the Lesson

#### Vocabulary for the Selection

Before students begin reading the selection, refer them to the definitions of vocabulary items from the selection. These are located in the Glossary beginning on page 93 of the student text.

dejected, adj. Depressed

flailing, pres. part. Waving around; beating, as with a flail

hoisting, pres. part. Lifting something heavy

ingenuity, n. Cleverness, inventiveness, creativity

#### Prereading

Discuss with students the **Prereading** note on page 2 before they begin reading the selection. Make sure that students understand the following concepts before they begin reading:

- The meaning of the term *oral tradition*. The oral tradition of a culture is the collection of works passed by word of mouth from generation to generation. "How Anansi Won the Stories" is a work from the oral tradition.
- "How Anansi Won the Stories" as a work in the oral tradition. The story originated in the oral traditions of tribal groups in West African and spread to various parts of the New World.
- What a *trickster character* is. Tricksters are commonly found in stories from the oral tradition the world over. A trickster character is a mischievous character who plays tricks on others.

#### Close Reading

Have students glance through the questions under **Key Ideas and Details** on page 9 and answer these questions as they read through the selection. (See

the answers given below under "Answer Key.")

#### Checktest

After students have read the selection, administer the multiple-choice checktest to ensure that they have done the reading.

#### Discussing the Selection

After students have finished the checktest, hold a class discussion of the selection.

Choose a student to read aloud **A Reading of the Selection** on page 8. Make sure that students understand the meaning of the term *pourquoi story* (a story that explains origins, or how something came to be). Ask, "What does the story 'How Anansi Won the Stories' explain? (It explains why there are stories and why the stories of different peoples are different.)"

Choose a student to read aloud the note under **Cultural/Historical Context** on page 8. Discuss how West Africans brought to the New World were cut off from their own cultures but still managed to keep parts of those cultures alive and how this story is an example of such a survival.

Read the note under **About the Author** on page 8. Ask "What is a griot?" (a West-African oral storyteller)

Refer students to the questions raised under **Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure**, and **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas** on page 9. Discuss the questions raised in these sections, in turn. (See the answers given below under "Answer Key.")

## How Anansi Won the Stories

### Answer Key

#### Key Ideas and Details

1. What does Anansi want from Nyame? Why does he want these?

He wants the stories, all of which belong to Nyame.

2. What does Anansi offer Nyame in exchange? What does Nyame tell Anansi that he must do instead?

He offers a fine silk purse and three cubeb berries.

3. How does Anansi use the gourd and the bamboo pole? What assistance does he get from Guineafowl?

Anansi captures the hornets in the gourd and the python in the bamboo pole. Guineafowl helps Anansi build the pit that they use to capture the leopard. He also taunts python, causing leopard to leap into the pit.

4. In what does Nyame give Anansi the stories? What happens to the stories after Nyame gives them to Anansi?

Nyame gives Anansi the stories in a large gourd. Anansi drops the gourd, and the stories "float off all around the world."

5. According to the storyteller, or narrator, where does this story come from? (Hint: Where do all stories come from, according to this story?)

This story, like all stories, comes from those that were in the gourd given to Anansi.

#### Craft and Structure

The tasks that Nyame gives to Anansi are to capture the hornets, python, and leopard.

Anansi captures the hornets in a gourd. He captures the python in a bamboo pole. He captures the leopard in a pit.

Anansi's exceptional qualities include his intelligence and ingenuity. He depends for his success on his wit, whereas heroes in other stories often depend for their success on their physical strength or endurance.

Anansi tricks the hornets into going into the gourd by telling them that it is raining and that they might drown. He tricks python into going into the bamboo pole by appealing to python's vanity and presenting the pole as a test of strength. He tricks leopard into jumping into the pit by covering the pit to hide by having Guineafowl stand on the other side of the pit and taunt python.

Anansi visits the sky god Nyame. The story explains the origins of stories and why the stories in different lands differ from one another.

The narrator of "How Anansi Won the Stories" is some person (an elder, most likely) speaking to a group of children. Children would probably enjoy this story because many like tales about tricksters and talking animals.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

"How Anansi Won the Stories" presents prescientific, or mythological, explanations of phenomena. Mountain ranges are explained by modern science as resulting from geologic activity, such as vulcanism or the movement of one plate of the Earth's crust against another. The movement of the sun across the sky is explained by modern science as an apparent motion caused by the revolution of the Earth. To a person on the Earth, the sun appears to move, but it is actually the Earth that is moving. Prescientific stories, like "How Anansi Won the Stories," typically provide mythological explanations for origins. For example, the ancient Greeks thought of the sun as Helios or Phoebus Apollo, driving his

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fiery chariot across the sky. One version of a Central American myth explains the origins of the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl in this way: The two young people, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, were in love. Iztaccihuatl's father sent Popocatepetl off to war and then told his daughter that the young man had died in battle. The daughter died of grief, and on returning and finding her dead, Popocatepetl killed himself, and God then turned them into mountains. Scientific explanations of phenomena are based upon natural law, and mythological explanations are not.

### Writing Practice

Use the Writing Rubric: Narrative to assess the student's work. This rubric is available at <http://callistoeducation.com/Teacher9.htm>.

### Speaking and Listening Practice

You may wish to have students work together in groups to produce actual storyboards. If you choose to do this, make sure that each group contains at least one student with artistic and/or graphic design ability.

### Language Practice

1. Many wonderful stories are told about the West African character Kwaku Ananse.
2. The Anansi stories originated with the Ashanti people of Ghana, Africa.
3. Anansi stories are still being told in the sea islands off the coast of Georgia, in the United States.
4. These stories are also told by people who live on various Caribbean islands such as Curaçao and Jamaica and in various Latin American countries such as Grenada, Colombia, and Costa Rica.
5. Tricksters are found in many Native American and African-American folktales.

6. The Greek god Hermes is a trickster character who, when still a child, steals the cattle belonging to the sun god Helios.

7. Anansi stories are told in the Bahamas; the Bahamians call him Anansi Drew.

8. One American folk name for spiders, Aunt Nancy, comes from the Anansi stories.

## Differentiating the Instruction

Here are some ideas for differentiating your instruction for the selection:

- Ability with spoken language generally outpaces reading and writing ability. You may wish to read aloud part or all of the Prereading and other study apparatus for the selection to your English language learners.
- Consider reading part of the selection aloud to you class and having them then complete the reading on their own.
- Divide you class into study groups and have each group choose, with your assistance, a gifted reader to introduce (and read aloud) each part of the study apparatus.

## Additional Resources

Here are some ideas for differentiating your instruction for the selection:

- Badoe, Adwoa, and Baba Wague Diakite. *The Pot of Wisdom: Ananse Stories*. Groundwood Books, 2008. Story collection.
- "Anansi and the Pot of Beans." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sau3E2LEfcl>. Animated video.
- "Anansi and Turtle Go to Dinner." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ugi5KYfQO-0>. Animated video.