

Ghanaian folktale
English

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Long, long ago, the Sky God, Nyame, kept all stories locked in a wooden box, high in the sky.

People down on earth had no stories to tell and they were very sad.

They asked Anansi the clever Spider to help them.

Anansi spun a long thread, and climbed up his sticky thread all the way to heaven.

"Can I have the stories, please?" he asked the Sky God.

But Nyame laughed at Anansi and said, "Oh, these are very expensive stories. You wouldn't be able to pay for them, little spider."





"How much do the stories cost?" asked Anansi.

"You'll have to bring me three rare and fierce animals," Nyame answered, "A leopard with sharp teeth like spears, a hornet that stings people, and a snake that swallows people whole."
He laughed and laughed. He thought his stories were quite safe.

So Anansi climbed slowly back down his sticky thread to the earth. He thought and he thought, and he came up with a plan.

He dug a deep hole, covered it with branches and dirt so it was hidden, and he went home for supper. In the morning, sure enough, a leopard had fallen into his pit. He was furiously scratching at the side of the pit, but he couldn't get out.





"Oh let me help you, my dear friend!" said Anansi. "Just lie down on these sticks and I'll pull you out."

Anansi wound his sticky web round the leopard and the sticks, and pulled him up to heaven to show the Sky God.

But Nyame just laughed and said, "Where are the other two?"

So Anansi went back down to earth to get the second creature. He thought and he thought and he came up with a plan.

He took a gourd full of water and went to the tree where the hornets lived. He poured out some of the water all over their nest. Then he cut a leaf from a banana tree and held it over his head, and he poured the rest of the water all over himself.





He called out to the hornets, "Hey hornets! Come see! It is raining! Quick - get inside my gourd and it will keep all of you dry." Hornets don't like to get wet, so they all flew into Anansi's gourd.

Then Anansi quickly spun a web across the opening so the hornets couldn't get out no matter how much they buzzed.

He carried them up to heaven and showed them to the Sky God. But Nyame just said, "Where's the last one?" (He wasn't laughing so much anymore.)





So Anansi went down to earth again. He thought and thought and he thought, but he couldn't come up with a plan. So he asked his wife, who had a very good idea.

Together they found a good long thick branch and some strong vines. When they got near the stream where the snake lived, they began to argue.

"The branch is longer!"

"No, it isn't!"

"Yes it is!"

Soon the snake came out and asked what the argument was.

"I was arguing with my wife," said Anansi. "She says this stick is longer than you are. But I don't agree."

"Of course I'm longer than that stick!" said the snake.

"I'm very long! I'm a huge snake! Just put your stick next to me and measure!"





So Anansi did that, and he tied the snake to the stick with his vine to keep him straight.

When he was all tied up, Anansi took the snake up to heaven.

Nyame had to admit that Anansi had paid his price. So he went to his wooden box, opened the lid, and gave all the stories to Anansi.

Anansi carried the stories triumphantly down to earth. He shared them with his wife, and with all the other animals and people.

Stories are for telling, not for keeping in wooden boxes.



Anansi gives people stories

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