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Activity Guide

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Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock

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ABOUT THE STORY

Anansi the spider is walking through the forest when something catches his eye. It was a strange moss-covered rock. When Anansi discovered the rock has special powers, he uses its magic to trick Lion, Elephant, Giraffe, and Zebra. But Little Brush Deer will not be fooled and uses the rock to teach Anansi a lesson. Originally a West African tale, this story is familiar in Caribbean culture, where Anansi is a beloved folklore character.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Eric Kimmel is a professor of education at Portland State University and the author of a number of picture books for children. He is also a regular contributor to the children's magazine Cricket as well as a storyteller. For years, he has told *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* to enthusiastic audiences.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Janet Stevens has illustrated and adapted *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and several Hans Christian Andersen tales as well as other popular picture books. She lives in Boulder, Colorado, with her husband and two children.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever had a trick played on them by someone else. How did the trick make them feel? Tell them that this book is about a spider who plays a trick on a group of his friends and then has a trick played on him.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why did Anansi say, 'Isn't this a strange hmm-hmmmmm hmm'?"
- "Why did Anansi want to trick Lion? Elephant? Little Brush Deer?"
- "Why did Little Brush Deer tell Anansi she didn't see anything?"
- "Did Anansi learn his lesson?" (*Draw Conclusions*)
- "How do you think Anansi felt when he arrived home to find it empty?" (*Make predictions*)
- "Do you think Anansi deserved what happened to him? Explain your answer." (*Make judgments*)

Vocabulary

Write these words from the story on the chalkboard. Have children choose five words and use them in a paragraph about the jungle. Children can read their paragraphs aloud, and the group can see how the same words can be used in different ways.

coconut
hippopotamus
zebra

rhinoceros
giraffe
yam

jungle
banana
spider

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: African Animals

Have children work in a small group to research one of the animals from the story: rhinoceros, lion, hippo, elephant, or brush deer. Groups can prepare a short report on the animals they have chosen. Encourage them to include information on where the animal lives, what it eats, what eats it, and whether it is endangered.

Music: African Tunes

Find a recording of African music and play it for the children. Some possibilities include: works by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, *Tabala Wolof*, *Sufi Drumming*, or *Music from Tanzania and Zanzibar*. Ask children to give their opinions of the music and to explain what they did or did not like about it.

Social Studies: Countries in Africa

Ask children to work in small groups to find out about one of the African countries that still contain many of the animals in the story, such as Kenya or South Africa. The groups can use reference books and encyclopedias to make lists of the animals that can be found in the country of their choice.

Language Arts: Hard C, Soft C

Review the difference between a hard c (cactus) and soft c (lace). Hand out cards that say *Soft* and *Hard* to each group member. Write the following words from the story on the board. Ask the group to hold up the card that tells how the c is pronounced in each word as you read it aloud.

caught	couldn't	certainly	rhinoceros
covered	coconut	certain	decided

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Anansi Stories

Have children use the keywords *Anansi the Spider* to find out about Anansi's origins and mythological background. Children can copy the information they find and report on it to the class.