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Activity Guide

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Anansi and the Talking Melon

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ABOUT THE STORY

Anansi the spider bores a hole in a melon, climbs in, and eats so much that he can no longer fit through the hole. Trapped and bored, he mischievously talks to various animals from inside the melon, convincing them that the speaker is the melon itself. However, the trickster is soon found out, and Anansi is once again hungry and in search of a new trick.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Kimmel is a professor of education at Portland State University and the author of a number of picture books for children. Among them are other *Anansi* stories, *Anansi Goes Fishing* and *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, also available as Live Oak Readalongs. Dr Kimmel is also a storyteller and for years has been telling Anansi stories to enthusiastic audiences.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Janet Stevens has illustrated and adapted *The Town Mouse and The County Mouse*, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and several Hans Christian Anderson tales. She has illustrated *Anansi Goes Fishing*, *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*, and other popular picture books. She lives in Boulder, Colorado, with her husband and two children.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Explain that this is an amusing story about Anansi, a clever spider who persuades his fellow creatures that melons can talk. Point out that this is a “trickster” story about someone who tries to trick others but who ends up ticking himself. Tell children that many cultures have trickster stories and that this, from West Africa and the Caribbean, is one of them.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “Why was Anansi unable to get out of the melon?”
- “How did Anansi respond when the animals said that a talking melon was ridiculous?”
- “Why did the king become angry?”
- “When Anansi begins talking from the bunch of bananas, what do you think the elephant will believe?” (Make predictions)
- “Do you think Anansi is very smart?” Explain your answer. (Make judgments)

Vocabulary

Write the following words from the story on the board. Go over the words’ pronunciation and meaning with the group. Then ask children to use each in a sentence.

gullible	incredulous	clever
incredible	ridiculous	skeptical

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: Anansi’s Friends

In this story, Anansi’s animal friends don’t act much like real animals. Ask children to use reference books and other materials to write a brief report on one of the animals Anansi know: ostrich, hippo, elephant, rhino, warthog or turtle. Children can present their reports to the rest of the class.

Social Studies: Mapping Anansi

Have children work in small groups to look in books about Africa and atlases to find out where the animals in the story make their homes. Give each group an outline map of Africa, and have the children use drawings to indicate where on the continent the various animals in the story can be found.

Health: Melons and More Melons

Anansi burrows into a melon and eats it. There are many different kinds of melons on the world. Ask children to work in pairs to find and list the names of as many melons as they can. If they find the information, they should indicate which of these melons are grown in Africa.

Social Studies: Long Live the King

In this story, the king of the beast is a gorilla. Often, the king of the beast is depicted as a lion. Have children decide which African animal they think should be the king. They can draw a picture of their choice and write a statement supporting their decision. Collect all the statements and read them to the class. Then have the children vote on which animals they feel has the strongest supporting statement.

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.

More African Myths

Using the keywords African myths, have children check the Internet to find another interesting African myth. They can summarize or copy the myth they find and read it to the class. Encourage discussion on how the myth is similar to and different from the Anansi story.