

Anansi and the Talking Watermelon

A West African and Caribbean folktale

Recommended Key Stage: KS1

Synopsis

Anansi spots some juicy watermelons in Elephant's garden. Unable to resist, he nibbles and nibbles until he's trapped inside! When Elephant discovers what he thinks is a talking watermelon, he proudly shows it to all his friends. One by one, Monkey, Tiger, and Giraffe are amazed by this chatty fruit. But when they reach the Golden Firebird, Anansi goes mysteriously quiet. Furious, the Firebird hurls the melon away, freeing Anansi.

Part 1: Share the Story

Share the audio recording **Anansi and the Talking Watermelon** told by **Wendy Shearer**.

Show the children a map of the world and show the journey from Africa to the Caribbean. And then from the Caribbean to the UK. This story has travelled all around the world to be here.

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

Suggested Key Stage 1 Questions

- What did you think of the story? What was your favourite part?
- What did you think of Anansi? How would you describe his character?
- What did you think of the elephant? And the monkey?
- What would you do if you were stuck in a watermelon?
- Was Anansi right to do what he did? Why did he do it?
- Have you ever pranked someone? What happened?
- Have you ever been pranked? How did it feel?
- What do you think will happen next? Will the elephant be fooled again, or will he do something differently?

Part 3: Play the Story

Activities	
Story Walk - Students stand in their own space around the room. - Tell the story slowly using Resource A - As you tell it, the students use the space to mime it while staying in their space. Be all the characters. Be Anansi eating a watermelon. Be the elephant being fooled. Be the Tiger growling - Try doing this with no sounds, just expressions.	Story Switch - Break up students into pairs. Throughout this activity announce "switch!" so each student gets a turn - In pairs, students try to retell the story using only facial expressions and actions, while the other student can translate these into the story - One student can try and tell the story entirely in sounds and sound effects, while the other students have to narrate from this.
The Interview - This is a role play activity with the students imagining that they are one of the characters in the story (i.e. Anansi, the elephant, etc) and they are boasting to an interviewer about their success. If they're Anansi, then they're boasting about how they fooled each of the animals. If they're another one of the animals, then they're boasting about how they found a talking watermelon. The interviewer can ask questions to find out more information or to find out how the character was feeling. - Demonstrate this with the students and together list ideas for questions to ask. Explain that the students don't have to use the questions and they can think of their own. - Take it in turns, so all the students have the opportunity to be a character from the story and to be the interviewer - Possible questions to use: - <i>Anansi, why did you do it? Why did you pretend to be a talking melon</i> - <i>How did you feel when you couldn't get out of the melon?</i> - <i>Did you think you'd get away with it?</i> - <i>Elephant, how did you find this talking melon?</i> - <i>What will you do with your new found talking melon?</i>	

Story Whoosh

- The teacher retells the story, with the children sitting in a circle
- They choose a student to join them in a circle and be Anansi. The student will move on the spot & do Anansi's expressions.
- When prompted they can even do Anansi's dialogue.
- Then the teacher chooses someone else to be the elephant who is fooled and they also join in the circle. The teacher tells the story, and the children show the expressions and, when prompted, act it out.
- However, at a certain point the teacher goes "Whoosh!" and all the students sit back down.
- Then the teacher will choose other students in the circle to be the characters, so that everyone gets a go.
- Tell the whole story through.

Part 4: Story Stimulus

Activities	
What Happens Next? When we left him Anansi was pretending to be a banana-What happens next? Some ideas - Does he fool the same animals again? He can't simply fool them the same way, that would be boring. How does he change his trick, besides being a different fruit? - Does Anansi fool different animals this time? And how is their reaction different? - Are the animals not fooled this time? Do they try and get their revenge?	Act it out Children act out different parts of the story in small groups. Each group should be given one "scene" from the story to perform, e.g. - Anansi eating the watermelon and getting stuck - Anansi fooling the elephant - The firebird rejecting the watermelon - Anansi pretending to be a banana The teacher can divide the story's scenes and the groups so that the whole story is performed. Each group can include a narrator to help explain the plot. When one group has finished, the next group can get up to start, so that the whole class is working together to tell the story.
Prank activity "My best prank" Ask students to tell/write a story about fooling someone, just like Anansi did. Ask "Have you ever been like Anansi and pretended to be someone you're not?" It can either be something that really happened, or they can make it up. After they are finished they can draw the prank to show exactly how it happened. Then, importantly, add "How I felt" and "How they felt" afterwards After this is finished, the students can also do "How I got pranked" where they tell/write about a time that they were fooled by someone else, just like the elephant and the tiger were fooled by Anansi As before, this story can be true, or something they made up. They can draw it and again and add "How I felt" and "How they felt"	

Part 5: Taking it Further

Similar Stories about Anansi

Anansi and the Basket of Stories

Anansi and the Turtle

Anansi and the Magic Stools

Anansi and Chameleon

Wider Curriculum Links

PSHE

KS1

- about how people make friends and what makes a good friendship
- about how to treat themselves and others with respect; how to be polite and courteous
- about what is kind and unkind behaviour, and how this can affect others
- how to listen to other people and play and work cooperatively

Design and Technology

- use the basic principles of a healthy and varied diet to prepare dishes

Learning Resources

Anansi and the Talking Watermelon

Resource A: Story Walk

- You are Anansi - a spider full of mischief
- You are hiding in a tree in Elephant's garden, try to make yourself look small.
- Elephant is growing huge, juicy watermelons, they look yummy, lick your lips
- Climb down the tree to taste the watermelon
- Take a big bite, and then another. Keep munching the watermelon.
- Pat your tummy, it's very full and now you're inside the melon
- Try to climb out. Oh no! you're stuck inside
- Elephant has picked up the watermelon and you feel very unsteady – wobble about
- Show that you have a good idea, you're going to play a trick on Elephant
- From inside the watermelon say, 'Put me down'
- Elephant thinks he has grown a talking melon, giggle to yourself
- Elephant is showing monkey. Listen as he says, "I have grown a talking watermelon."
- Shout out, "About as silly as a clever monkey!"
- Hold on tight as Elephant and Monkey
- Oh no! they've found their way into Tiger's lair. Show that you are worried.
- Shout out, "About as silly as a fierce tiger!"
- Giggle to yourself as you hear that Tiger now believes Elephant.
- Elephant, Monkey and Tiger have reached Giraffe.
- Shout out, "About as silly as a long-legged giraffe!"
- Giraffe is taking everyone to the Kingdom of the Birds, everyone is running and you are being jolted about.
- Finally, you all reach the Kingdom of the Birds
- Listen as the Golden Firebird commands you to speak.
- But you don't speak. Fold your arms to show you are not going to speak
- Golden Firebird commands you to speak again.
- Inside the watermelon, shake your head to show you are not going to speak.
- Firebird is so cross she has thrown the watermelon away, roll side to side to show how you tumble inside
- Bump! The watermelon has landed in a banana tree and you can escape
- Hold your tummy because you are feeling hungry again. Pick a banana to eat.
- Elephant is feeling embarrassed by his mistake and decides not to believe in talking watermelons.
- Call out again, "That's because only bananas can talk!"
- Giggle and giggle and giggle; you've tricked Elephant again.