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Activity Guide

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Anansi Goes Fishing

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ABOUT THE STORY

Walking by the river, Anansi the Spider meets his friend, Turtle, carrying a large fish. Anansi loves to eat fish but is too lazy to catch one himself, so he decides to trick Turtle into catching one for him. However, he ends up doing all the work himself. 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. Among them are other Anansi stories, *Anansi and the Talking Melon* and *Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock*, also 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 several Hans Christian Andersen tales. She has also illustrated *Anansi and the Talking Melon*, *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 a “trickster” story about someone who tries to trick others but who ends up tricking himself. Tell children that many cultures have trickster stories and that this, from West Africa and the Caribbean, is one of them.

READING ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

Have children choose the correct word from the list to complete each sentence.

intend weave task honest quarrels judge disgrace

1. Warthog was a very good _____.
2. Anansi did not _____ to do any work catching the fish.
3. Anansi learned to _____ a net.
4. Making the net was a difficult _____.
5. Everyone though Warthog was _____.
6. Warthog helped others settle their _____.
7. Though Anansi did nothing wrong, he ended up in _____.

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- a. “What did Anansi want Turtle to do?”
- b. “Who did all the work, Turtle or Anansi?”
- c. “Why didn’t Warthog believe Anansi?”
- d. “Who was really smarter, Anansi or Turtle?” (*Compare and Contrast*)
- e. “Did Turtle outsmart Anansi or did Anansi outsmart himself?” (*Draw Conclusions*)

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: More About Spiders

Have children use encyclopedias and other reference works to find information about spiders. Ask them to find the answers to these questions:

Are most spiders dangerous? How do spiders catch their food?
Where do spiders live? How do spiders help people?

Health: Cooking a Fish

As Anansi and Turtle know, fish is a food that is very good for your health. Ask children to look in cookbooks to find a recipe for cooking fish that sounds good to them. They can copy the recipe and illustrate it. Then you can collect the recipes in a class fish cookbook.

Art: Making a Spiderweb

Have children work in small groups to make their own spiderwebs using sticks and string. Provide each group with a pair of sticks glued or tied in a cross shape. Children can attach string around the outside of the sticks, adding each new piece of string a little inside the last piece. Then have children draw and cut out pictures of spiders to glue to their spiderweb.

Science: Turtle Fact

Ask children to work with partners to find answers to these questions about turtles:

- What purpose does the turtle’s shell serve?
- Do turtles swim?
- How big do turtles grow
- What is the difference between a turtle and a tortoise?

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.

Folktales from Other Cultures

Have children use the keywords “children’s myths” or “children’s folktales” to find a folktale from another culture on the Internet. Urge them to look for folktales featuring a trickster like Anansi. Children can summarize the tale they find and tell it to the class. Lead a discussion focusing on the similarities and differences between the trickster in the tale and Anansi.