

Anansi, the tricky spider

Starting off

Fables are stories that often give human qualities to animal characters. The stories are used to explain human nature and teach a lesson or moral. Not all the animals are heroes all the time however sometimes the characters appear foolish and weak in order to learn a lesson. This helps to make the characters more believable.



1. Do you know any of the stories illustrated here?
2. Tell the stories to the class.
3. What message does each story teach?

LISTEN and SPEAK

Before you listen:

You learnt that a stereotype is a false belief that all people in a group have similar, often exaggerated characteristics. Animal characteristics can also be shown in stereotypical ways.

1. Look at the pictures of the three main characters in the story. What qualities do you think these characters will have in the story?



2. Match the following animals with the stereotypical characteristics they are usually given in stories.

Animal	Characteristics
lion	cruel and cunning
hare	quiet and brave
fox	noble and powerful
mouse	sly and tricky

3. Do you think the pictures show the snake, tiger and spider in stereotypical ways?

After you listen

Discuss the story, *Anansi and the Snake*, by answering these questions in pairs.

1. What is the theme of this story? Choose the answer you think is best:
 - a) Vanity will get you into trouble.
 - b) Small, weak creatures can win if they use their wit.
 - c) Everyone deserves to be important in some way.
 - d) Some animals are very stupid.
2. Imagine that you could talk to Anansi. What question would you like to ask him about this story?
3. How do you feel about what happened in the story?

SPEAK

The Anansi stories originated in West Africa. In the 1700s, many West African people were captured and taken to work as slaves in the Caribbean. They could have nothing with them on their dangerous journey across the sea, except for the stories they remembered. These stories were passed down from parents to children for many generations and were eventually written down.



Discuss these questions with your class:

1. Would you say the slaves had a lot of control over their own lives or very little?
2. The Anansi stories describe a tiny, tricky little spider who overcomes great difficulties by using his wits. Why do you think slaves would have enjoyed telling these stories?
3. What qualities do you think Anansi has that would be important for slaves?

READ

Some Anansi stories show Anansi as the hero of the story. He defeats the bigger, more powerful characters by being cunning and by not giving up. Other stories show him as greedy and lazy and in need of a life lesson.

Before you read:

Anansi and the moss-covered rock

One day Anansi was walking through the forest when he saw a strange moss-covered rock.

“How interesting!” said Anansi. “Isn’t this a strange moss-covered rock?”

Suddenly –KABOOM! Everything went black and Anansi fell down fast asleep. When he woke up, Anansi wondered what had happened to him. “I was walking along,” he reminded himself. “I saw this rock and said to myself isn’t this a strange moss-covered rock...”

KABOOM! Anansi fell down again and woke up about an hour later.

“Aha! I know what is happening,” said Anansi to himself. “This is a magic rock and every time someone comes along and says the magic words, ‘Isn’t it a strange hmmm-hmmmm?’ down they go. I know just how to use magic like this.!”

So Anansi went on walking until he came to Tiger’s house. Tiger was just about to sit down to eat. He had all his food out on the table. Anansi was very hungry but was too lazy to go and find his own food, so he said to Tiger, “Tiger, I’m just going for a walk in the lovely cool jungle. Don’t you want to come? It’s terribly hot today...”

“Alright,” said Tiger and the two animals went walking through the forest together. After a while, Anansi led Tiger to a certain place.

“Tiger! Do you see what I see?”

“Yes, Anansi! Isn’t this a strange moss-covered rock?”

KABOOM! Down fell Tiger and away ran Anansi to Tiger’s house where he made off with all Tiger’s food.

Soon Anansi was tricking all the animals in the forest. Whenever he was hungry, he persuaded an animal to go to the moss-covered rock, got them to say the magic words and ... KABOOM! they fell down fast asleep. Anansi helped himself to their food, some of it he ate and some he stored away in his house.

Now, Anansi did not know that he was being watched by quiet Little Spotted Deer. She hid in the forest and saw how Anansi tricked the animals. She decided to put a stop to his nonsense.

She collected a basket of sweet coconuts and waited for Anansi to come along and invite her to go with him for a cool walk in the forest. Of course soon Anansi led her to the strange moss-covered rock.

“What is this?” said Anansi, pretending to be puzzled by the rock.

“What is it?” said Little Spotted Deer.

“This!” said Anansi pointing at the rock. “Csn’t you see it?”

“I can’t see anything,” said Little Spotted Deer,

“Surely you can see it!” said Anansi, who was getting angry. “Look where I’m pointing!”

“There’s nothing there!”

Anansi stomped his thin legs. “Of course you can see it! You just don’t want to say it!”

“Say what? What am I supposed to say?” said Little Spotted Deer.

Anansi shouted ‘You’re supposed to say: “Isn’t this a strange moss-covered rock!”

KABOOM! Down fell Anansi.

Little Spotted Deerran to call all the animals and they went straight to Anansi’s house where they took back all the food that he’d stolen from them.



After you read:

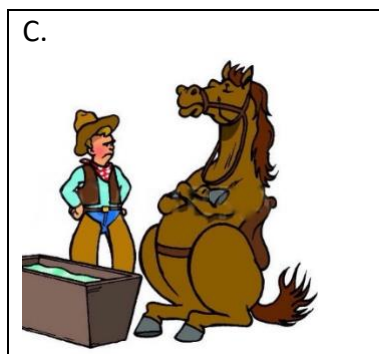
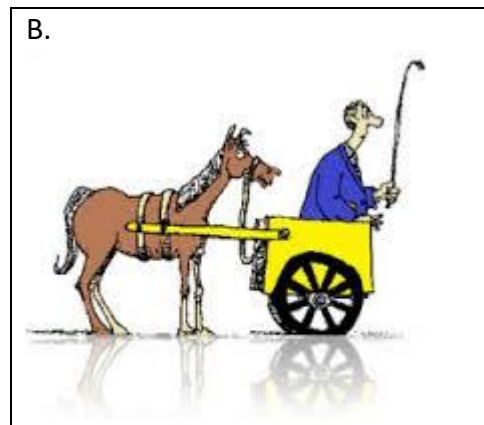
1. Who is the hero in the story?
2. Who is the villain?
3. What values does this story teach? Choose the best answer:
 - a) It is important to do as little work as possible.
 - b) It’s important to use your wits to survive.
 - c) You must work for your own rewards in life.
4. Complete this sentence: The main message of the story is_____.
5. Which of the following characteristics of a fable apply to this Anansi story?
 - a) Fables are usually very short.
 - b) Fables teach a moral lesson.
 - c) At least one character has bad or weak qualities. These qualities cause the character’s downfall.
 - d) The moral lesson of the story is linked to the bad character’s downfall.

LANGUAGE

1. Rewrite these idioms then write the correct meaning next to each one. Do not use columns:

Idiom	Meaning
a) A leopard cannot change its spots	Don't stir up trouble.
b) Don't count your chickens before they hatch	However hard you try you cannot change your basic nature.
c) Don't look a gift horse in the mouth	If you love me, you must love everything about me.
d) Keep your feet on the ground	It is rude to try and work out how valuable a gift is; just be grateful.
e) Let sleeping dogs lie	Be sensible and practical, even when you achieve success.
f) Love me, love my dog	Wait until you actually have something before you start thinking it's yours.

2. What idioms are represented by each of these pictures



LANGUAGE

Auxiliary verbs (helping verbs)

Many verbs are made up of two words

Example: I am writing a story.

We will be running in the race.

The verbs *writing* and *running* are helped by special verbs called auxiliary verbs.

Auxiliary verbs are helping verbs because they are needed to form many of the tenses.

Auxiliary verbs help the main verb.

Some tenses, like the present perfect continuous, need more than one auxiliary!

Example: I was writing a story.

We are running in the race.

Other auxiliary verbs are, *shall, will, must, could, might, may, would, should*

Exercise 1

Rewrite the sentences and fill in the missing auxiliary verbs:

- a) We _____ going to play a trick on you.
- b) The dog _____ been barking all day.
- c) They _____ be late if they don't hurry up.
- d) Anansi _____ talking to Tiger in the forest.
- e) I _____ not do as you say!
- f) Anansi _____ noticed that the rock was magic.
- g) They _____ surprised to see Snake tied to a pole.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the sentences and underline the correct auxiliary verb in each:

- a) What (has, have) you done?
- b) They (does, do) want to play outside.
- c) The lesson (have, has) not started.
- d) (Do, Does) she know that you are here?

LANGUAGE

Present perfect tense

The present perfect tense is used to talk about an action that happened some time in the past but has importance in the present.

Example: *I have read that fable many times.*

It is formed by putting **have** or **has** in front of the past participle.

The past participle usually ends in **-ed, -d, -t, -en.**

Examples:

- *'moved, heard, learnt, chosen, taken*

I learn my poem.

I **have** learnt my poem.

Exercise 1

Rewrite these sentences in the present perfect tense. Change the verb in brackets:

- The train to Durban _____ already (leave).
- Alan _____ (be) to the Kruger Park twice.
- Great news! My dog _____ (have) puppies.
- I _____ (break) my leg once.
- We _____ (live) here for a long time.

Exercise 2

Rewrite these sentences by completing them correctly in the present perfect tense:

- I think I _____ them before.
- People _____ to the Moon.
- Nobody _____ ever _____ that mountain.
- Amber _____ three times.

Exercise 3

Rewrite these sentences in the present perfect tense:

- Jabu ate all the sweets.
- We took the books to the library.
- They did not buy the tickets.
- She chose a colourful dress for the party.
- I forgot my pencil case at home.