LESSON PLAN: THE STORY OF ANANSI AND HIS SONS

This audiobook and lesson plan have been co-produced by Fairtrade Schools and Trading Visions for Fairtrade Fortnight 2020. This lesson will introduce learners to a traditional West African folk story, The Story of Anansi and his Sons. It is designed for KS2 and KS3 students, and can be used to celebrate World Book Day, which takes place during Fairtrade Fortnight.

The supporting audiobook is read by Jankuba, who is the older brother of Beshey (Guardians of the Rainforest) and son of Lucia (Lucia’s Story). Jankuba enjoys telling Beshey stories in the evening and some of their favourites are those of Anansi the Spider.

OBJECTIVES

- Learners learn about traditional oral storytelling
- Learners can identify the characters in the story
- Learners can draw out, and reflect on, the moral of the story

PREPARATION

You will need:
- A print out of the full text of Anansi and his Sons, included in this lesson plan (Alternatively, you could use the book Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti by Gerald McDermott)
- The audiobook of Anansi and his Sons, ready to play
- The accompanying PowerPoint presentation displayed on the whiteboard

STARTER ACTIVITY

This starter activity will get students thinking about the purpose of stories.

Start by asking the class: What are stories for? Elicit responses from the children e.g.
- Entertainment, to pass the time
- To pass on learning or wisdom
- To help create a sense of shared identity, e.g. in a family or in a community
- To help resolve personal or social problems, a story might present the same situation and suggest a solution
- To learn about history or heroes or gods

Now ask the class: How are stories told? e.g.
- Reading books
- Audiobooks
- Cinema
- Television
- Computer games
- Face to face
Explain to the students that in this lesson, the focus is on oral storytelling, listening to someone telling you a story directly. In places like Sierra Leone in West Africa, and in many other parts of the world, people would tell stories in the evening, sitting around the fire. These would usually be folk stories, traditional tales of heroes, gods, monsters and magic. Ask the class to think of traditional folk stories that they already know.

**ACTIVITY 1: LISTEN TO THE STORY OF ANANSI THE SPIDER**
This activity will introduce learners to a traditional West African folk story.

- Explain that today the class will be learning about a particular folk story hero from West Africa, called Anansi the Spider. The Anansi stories originally came from Ghana, but now can be found all over West Africa, and around the world.
- Show West Africa and Ghana using online mapping software or the map in the Anansi the Spider PowerPoint presentation.
- If you have already watched *Guardians of the Rainforest*, explain that Beshey has an older brother called Jankuba. Jankuba often tells Beshey stories in the evening. We are going to listen to one of his stories: Anansi and his Sons.
- Play the audio recording of *Anansi and his Sons* to the whole class. Before listening, ask the children to listen out for the son’s names. How many sons does Anansi have?

**ACTIVITY 2: PREPARING TO RE-TELL THE STORY**
This activity will develop students listening skills through a call and response activity.

- Explain that you are going to re-tell the story, with support from the whole class. Imagine that you are the people of a small village living in a remote location near a great rainforest in West Africa. You have gathered together in the evening to hear a story from your teacher. If the room permits it, you could have everyone sit in a big circle around you.
- A theme in traditional storytelling is ‘call and response’: the storyteller says something, and the audience replies with a response. We are going to do this, but with actions. As you tell the story to the class, they will provide actions to illustrate what is happening.
- Show the class the PowerPoint presentation and look at the pictures of each of the six sons of Anansi in turn. Did the class manage to identify all six on the first listening?
  1. **See Trouble** can ‘see trouble’ coming a way off. Perhaps he has good eyesight, or some sort of mystical ability.
  2. **Road Builder** is good at building paths and roads.
  3. **River Drinker** is good at drinking water.
  4. **Game Skinner** is good at cutting off the skin and butchering an animal they have hunted.
  5. **Stone Thrower** is good at throwing stones.
  6. **Cushion** is very soft.
Next, go round the class and give each of the children the names of one of the six sons. Ask them to repeat it back so they remember who they are.

Divide the class into groups based on which son they are, and have the group spend five minutes deciding together on a good action to do that represents that characters.

Ask each group to perform their action for the whole class, as you call out the names of Anansi’s sons one by one.

**ACTIVITY 3: INTERACTIVE STORY TELLING**

This interactive story telling offers opportunities for careful listening, reflection and discussion. Start with everyone sitting down whilst you read the story.

- Explain to the children that when they hear the name of each of the six sons, the group of children with that name should stand up and perform their action.
- When you get to the line about Anansi “falling into trouble”, stop and ask the class what they think this trouble was. *What might have happened to Anansi that he needed helping?*
- Proceed with the story, with each group of children performing their action as each of Anansi’s sons is centre stage. You may want to use the pictures of the fish and falcon that are in the PowerPoint to help visualise those characters.
- When you read the line “Anansi and his sons tried to decide which son deserved the prize”, stop and ask each group of children to discuss amongst themselves for two minutes why their son should get the prize.
- Then have the groups nominate someone to present back to the whole class for two minutes each on why their son should receive the prize. You should play the role of Anansi, considering each son’s response and its merits, but in the end unable to decide which son is more deserving.
- Finally, finish the story.

**PLENARY**

Afterwards, ask the class what they thought was the lesson or moral of the story. Elicit the importance of working together. If students have an understanding of the Fairtrade Premium, this is an invaluable opportunity to discuss the commonalities between this story and the benefits of Fairtrade. Use the following questions to prompt reflection:

Did the class work well in a team? How does it feel when you work together? What are the benefits of working together?

How might the moon benefit the whole spider family?

In what way might this story remind you of the Fairtrade Premium?


**FULL TEXT: ANANSI AND HIS SONS**

The telling of the story is based on the version told in the book *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti* by Gerald McDermott.

Time was, Anansi the Spider had six sons...
The first son was called ‘See Trouble’. He had the gift of seeing trouble a long way off.
Second son was ‘Road Builder’.
Third son was ‘River Drinker’.
The next son was ‘Game Skinner’.
Another son was ‘Stone Thrower’.
And the last of his sons was ‘Cushion’. He was very soft.

One time, Anansi the Spider went a long way from home. He got lost. He fell into trouble.
Back home was son ‘See Trouble’. “Father is in danger!” he cried.
He knew it quickly and he told his brothers.
Road Builder son said, “Follow me!”
Off he went making a road.
They went fast to help Anansi, those six spider-brothers.
“Where is father now?”
“Fish has swallowed him!”
So River Drinker took a big drink. No more river.
Then Game Skinner split open Fish and helped Anansi out.
More trouble came, right then.
Falcon took Anansi up into the sky.
“Quick now, Stone Thrower!”
Stone Thrower threw a stone. It hit Falcon. Anansi fell from the sky.
Now Cushion ran to help his spider-father. Very soft, Anansi came down on top of Cushion.
They were very happy again, that spider family.

All home again that night, Anansi found a thing in the forest. A great globe of silver light.
“O mysterious and beautiful! I shall give this to my son,” said Anansi. “To the son who rescued me!”
But which of his six sons deserves the prize?
“God, can you help me? O God!” called Anansi.
Anansi asked God: “Please hold the beautiful globe of light until I know which son should have it for his own.”
And so Anansi and his sons tried to decide which son deserved the prize. But they could not decide.
So God took the beautiful white light up into the sky and kept it there for all to see.
It is the moon. It is still there. It will always be there. It is there tonight.