

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: Why Anansi Has Eight Thin Legs: A West African Folk Tale

Ideas, Values: Animal, Temperance, Desire, Justice, Knowledge

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Talk with your family about which characters from books, shows, and movies use trickery to get what they want. How do these stories end? Is there a lesson involved?

1st Read:

Read aloud the text while family and/or friends listen.

Vocabulary:

Check to see if there are any words that need to be talked about before the discussion begins. Listeners or readers can use context clues to help figure out possible definitions or use a dictionary or device to get a formal definition.

2nd Read:

Have another participant in the discussion to read the text aloud. Have listeners think about the idea of how much is enough.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
  + What would be a good alternative title to this story? Have younger kids share first if they feel comfortable, and go around by age.

(Don’t share why until everyone has had a chance to answer.)

* + What about the story made you choose that answer? (anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
  + Why did Anansi decide not to wait at Rabbit's house until the greens were done cooking? (Anyone can share)
  + What might be the moral this story is trying to teach? How do you know?
  + If you can get someone to do something for you, should you? Is this always taking advantage of someone, or is this being “smart” about what you focus on?
* How did Anansi save himself from being pulled into pieces?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
  + How have you been alike or different from Anansi in this story? Did you learn a lesson or did your trick go unnoticed?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Review and discuss key ideas that you heard, said, and thought during the family seminar.

Writing:

Divide the story into equal parts and have each family member make a cartoon or graphic version of that section of the story. Combine each section so that you have a full graphic version of *Why Anansi Has Eight Thin Legs.* Have someone make a cover for the story using the original title or one of the alternative titles from the opening question.

Share your story with us on Twitter or Facebook. @PaideiaCenter

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\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

Why Anansi Has Eight Thin Legs

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there lived a spider named Anansi. Anansi's wife was a very good cook. But always, Anansi loved to taste the food that others in the village made for themselves and for their families.

One day, he stopped by Rabbit's house. Rabbit was his good friend.

"There are greens in your pot," cried Anansi excitedly. Anansi loved greens.

"They are not quite done," said Rabbit. "But they will be soon. Stay and eat with me."

"I would love to, Rabbit, but I have some things to do," Anansi said hurriedly. If he waited at Rabbit's house, Rabbit would certainly give him jobs to do. "I know," said Anansi. "I'll spin a web. I'll tie one end around my leg and one end to your pot. When the greens are done, tug on the web, and I'll come running!"

Rabbit thought that was a great idea. And so it was done.

"I smell beans," Anansi sniffed excitedly as he ambled along. "Delicious beans, cooking in a pot."

"Come eat our beans with us," cried the monkeys. "They are almost done."

"I would love to Father Monkey," said Anansi. And again, Anansi suggested he spin a web, with one end tied around his leg, and one end tied to the big bean pot.

Father Monkey thought that was a great idea. All his children thought so, too. And so it was done.

"I smell sweet potatoes," Anansi sniffed happily as he ambled along. "Sweet potatoes and honey, I do believe!"

"Anansi," called his friend Hog. "My pot is full of sweet potatoes and honey! Come share my food with me."

"I would love to," said Anansi. And again, Anansi suggested he spin a web, with one end tied around his leg, and one end tied to the sweet potato pot.

His friend Hog thought that was a great idea. And so it was done.

By the time Anansi arrived at the river, he had one web tied to each of his eight legs.

"This was a wonderful idea," Anansi told himself proudly. "I wonder whose pot will be ready first?"

Just then, Anansi felt a tug at his leg. "Ah," said Anansi. "That is the web string tied to Rabbit's greens." He felt another. And another. Anansi was pulled three ways at once.

"Oh dear," said Anansi as he felt the fourth web string pull.

Just then, he felt the fifth web string tug. And the sixth. And the seventh. And the eighth. Anansi was pulled this way and that way, as everyone pulled on the web strings at once. His legs were pulled thinner and thinner. Anansi rolled and tugged himself into the river. When all the webs had washed away, Anansi pulled himself painfully up on shore.

"Oh my, oh my," sighed Anansi. "Perhaps that was not such a good idea after all."

To this day, Anansi the Spider has eight very thin legs. And he never got any food that day at all.