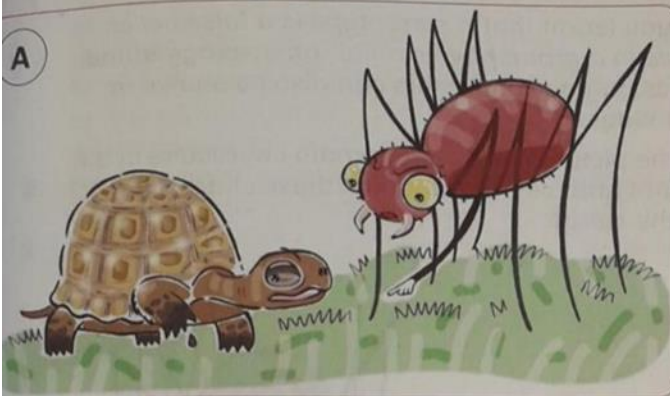


Gr 6 Text book Week 4 pp91-96 + Listening passage

8

Anansi the tricky spider

**In this theme:**

Listen and speak: listen to a fable. Discuss animal stereotypes in fables.

Read: read fables. Identify the characteristics of a fable.

Write: write your own fable.

Language: practise using idioms; auxiliary verbs; the present perfect tense.

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.

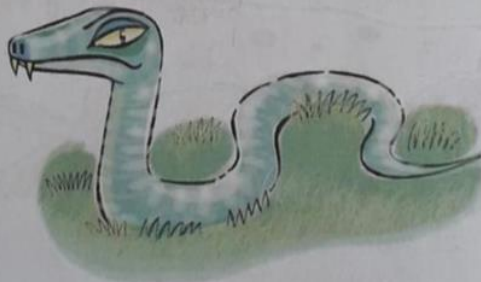
1. Do you know any of the stories illustrated here?
2. Tell the stories to the class.
3. What message does each story teach?

Listen and speak

Before you listen

In Theme 2, you learnt that a *stereotype* is a false belief that all people in a group have similar, often **exaggerated** characteristics. Animal characters 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?



Word list

exaggerated – to enlarge the truth

cunning – sly, crafty

vanity – too much self admiration

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 in stereotypical ways?

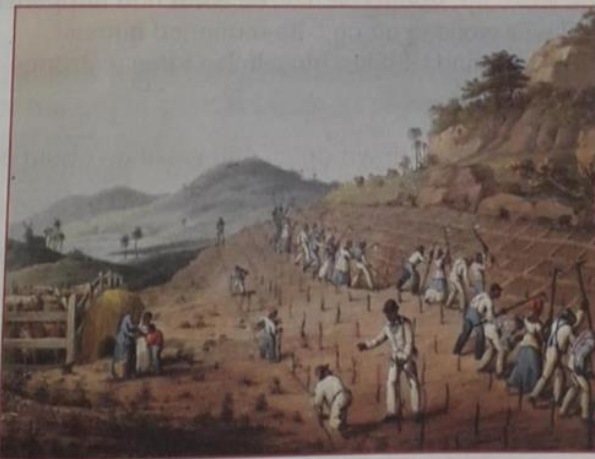
After you listen

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 wits.
 - 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 take 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 enjoy 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

Look at the pictures and decide what kind of Anansi story this one will be.



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 I 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 this a strange hmm-hmmmmhmmmm?', down they go. I know just how to use magic like this!"

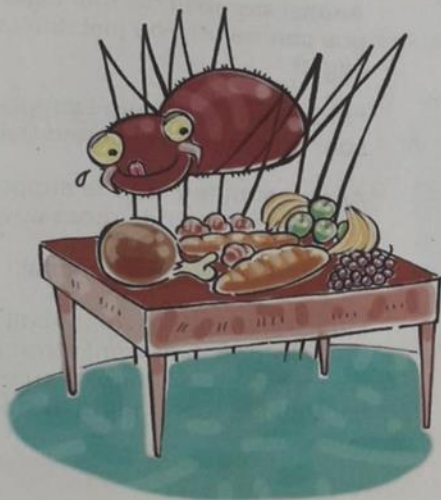
So Anansi went on walking until he came to Tiger's house. Tiger was just about to sit down to eat. He had all his food out on the table. Anansi was hungry, but was too lazy to go and find his own food, so he said to Tiger, "Tiger, I'm just going for a walk in the lovely cool jungle. Don't you want to 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 what?" said Little Spotted Deer.

"This!" said Anansi pointing at the rock. "Can'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?" asked Little Spotted Deer.

Anansi shouted "You're supposed to say: 'Isn't this a strange moss-covered rock!'"

KABOOM! Down fell Anansi.

Little Spotted Deer ran 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.

Word list

hero – the one who behaves in a positive way

villain – the one who behaves badly in a story

After you read

1. Who is the **hero** of this story?
2. Who is the **villain**?
3. What values does this story teach? Choose the best answer.
 - a) It's 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 this 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) The main characters are usually animals.
 - d) At least one character has bad or weak qualities. These qualities cause the character's downfall.
 - e) The moral lesson of the fable is linked to the bad character's downfall.

Anansi and the snake (Passage use for p.92 on Tuesday)

(Audio CD track 6)

There was a time when Tiger was the king of the forest.

Tiger lilies were named after him, Tiger moths were named after him and stories of the forest were called Tiger stories.

Anansi, the spider was a nobody. When the animals got together they used to ask each other: "Who is the strongest animal?" And all the animals would shout "Tiger!"

Then they would ask "Who is the weakest?" And everyone would shout "Anansi!" and laugh.

Anansi got sick and tired of this. One day he met Tiger in the forest. Now Tiger was much too important to bother talking to a speck of a spider, but Anansi spoke up bravely and said: "Tiger, I wonder if you would mind letting me have just one thing named after me?"

"What is it you want?" asked the Tiger, looking down his nose.

"I want the stories," replied Anansi. "I want them to be called Anansi stories."

"Alright," said the Tiger with a haughty flick of his tail. "If you capture Snake .and bring him to me, all the stories will be called Anansi stories from now on."

Anansi, who, as you know, was very small but very cunning, had no idea how he would capture Snake, who was very big. But he agreed to do it.

First, he made a noose out of strong vine and laid a trap in the forest which he baited with berries. But when Snake came to eat the berries, Anansi found he was too small and weak to pull the noose closed, so Snake escaped.

Every day that week Anansi persisted with various traps: he dug pits and he made cages out of sticks. He tempted Snake with ripe bananas, mangoes and a fat piglet, but nothing worked. Snake knew that Anansi was trying to trap him and he always managed to escape.

Anansi was starting to get desperate, but at last he had a plan. He went and sat right in the middle of Snake's yard.

"Look at you!" said Snake, who was very surprised to see him sitting there. "All week long you were trying to catch me, and now you sit here barefaced in my yard?"

"It's true," said Anansi. "I was trying to catch you, but for your own good. Now all the animals in the forest will continue to talk about you behind your back."

"What are you talking about, Anansi?" asked Snake.

"Well, I should not be telling you this, but all the animals are saying that you believe you are the longest animal around, that you think you are God's gift to longness. They are saying that even the shortest bamboo is longer than you!"

"Well, measure me, man!" shouted Snake. "Cut down the longest bamboo and I will teach 'em about long!"

So Anansi cut down a long bamboo and Snake lay his body along its length. Anansi tied Snake's tail to one end with strong vine .

"Stretch, Snake, stretch!" called Anansi. And Snake sweated and stretched till his eyes were squeezed shut. Quick as a flash, Anansi tied Snake to the bamboo in his middle and at his head. When Snake opened his eyes, he realised what had happened.

And this is how Anansi captured Snake and why, from that day to this, the stories have been called Anansi stories.

