

“Anansi’s Feast”
A West African Trickster Tale
Adapted for Reader’s Theater by Glenn McCarty

Roles:

NARRATOR 1 & 2

ANANSI THE SPIDER

TURTLE

*Note – the role of Narrator can be divided among more than two actors, depending on the number of readers.

NARRATOR 1: This is a story about how selfishness got the better of that old trickster Anansi the Spider.

NARRATOR 2: One sunny summer afternoon, Anansi the spider picked some fat, tasty yams from his garden.

ANANSI (smacking his lips): Yummy! These yams smell delicious. I can’t wait to sit down and eat them *all by myself*.

NARRATOR 1: Just as Anansi was sitting down to enjoy the delicious feast ...

NARRATOR 2: All by himself ...

NARRATOR 1: He heard a knock at his door.

ANANSI (*sighs*): Oh no, no, no. Who could that be? And at suppertime, no less?

NARRATOR 1: Anansi opened the door to find none other than his friend Turtle standing just outside, licking his lips excitedly.

TURTLE: Hello, Anansi, my good friend! How nice to see you. What a delicious smell! Could that be yams? They smell so sweet and buttery.

NARRATOR 2: Now Anansi did not like to share anything ...

NARRATOR 1: With anyone ...

NARRATOR 2: Ever.

NARRATOR 1: But it is a custom in his land not to refuse a meal to a visitor.

ANANSI (*sighs again*): Yes, they are yams. And I suppose I must share them with you, Turtle my friend.

NARRATOR 2: Turtle licked his lips again and scuttled to the table, where a big, steaming bowl of yams sat waiting. He reached a stubby arm toward one.

NARRATOR 1: As Turtle opened his mouth to eat, Anansi's eyes lit up with an idea.

ANANSI: Oh, Turtle. Don't you know better than to eat a meal without washing your hands first?

NARRATOR 2: Turtle blushed and dropped the yam. He looked down at his hands.

TURTLE: Oh, my. I have been crawling all day, and my hands are filthy! I will wash them right away.

NARRATOR 1: So, Turtle got up and crawled slowly down the long, dusty hill to the river to wash his hands.

NARRATOR 2: All four of them.

NARRATOR 1: Then, he crawled slowly back up the long, dusty hill to Anansi's house.

NARRATOR 2: By the time he got back to the house, Anansi had already begun to eat. Turtle reached hungrily for a yam.

TURTLE: Okay, Anansi. I'm ready to dig in!

ANANSI: Turtle! Look at your hands. They're a mess! Go wash them this instant!

NARRATOR 1: Again, Turtle looked down at his hands.

TURTLE: Oh, no. They're filthy again from crawling up the long, dusty hill from the river.

ANANSI: Yes, they are.

NARRATOR 1: So, Turtle turned and again began the long, slow crawl down the road to the river to wash his hands.

NARRATOR 2: All four of them.

TURTLE: This time, I'll walk only on the grass to keep my hands clean on the way back up the hill.

NARRATOR 1: By the time, Turtle reached Anansi's house a second time, he found Anansi sitting at the table, popping the last morsel of yam into his mouth.

ANANSI: Oh, Turtle. I'm sorry, but you took far too long washing your filthy hands. I am finished with my meal. Too bad.

NARRATOR 2: Turtle's stomach rumbled with hunger, but he respectfully bowed his head.

TURTLE: Thank you for offering to share your meal with me. Someday you must come by my house to let me return the favor.

NARRATOR 1: A few days later ...

NARRATOR 2: Anansi woke to a growling in his stomach.

ANANSI: I certainly don't feel like cooking this morning. I think I'll take Turtle up on his offer of a free meal.

NARRATOR 1: He arrived at Turtle's house just in time for breakfast, and found him sitting happily in a patch of sunshine next to the gurgling river.

TURTLE: Anansi! How good to see you! Have you come to join me for a meal?

ANANSI: You bet! I can't wait!

TURTLE: Follow me! The table is all ready for us.

NARRATOR 2: Turtle immediately dove into the water and swam to the bottom of the river, where his table was set.

ANANSI: Oh boy!

NARRATOR 1: Anansi jumped right in, but instead of sinking like he had hoped, he popped to the surface.

ANANSI: Grrr... Blub ...

NARRATOR 2: He dove into the water again.

ANANSI: Grr... Blub...

NARRATOR 1: And a third time.

ANANSI: Grr... Blub ...

NARRATOR 2: Anansi tried everything. Running starts. Back flips. Belly flops. Nothing worked.

ANANSI: Argh! This is so frustrating!

NARRATOR 1: In the meantime, far below the water, Turtle was enjoying a tasty breakfast.

NARRATOR 2: Suddenly, Anansi had a brilliant idea.

ANANSI: I have a brilliant idea!

NARRATOR 1: He raced down the riverbank, grabbing stones and rocks, and stuffed them into the pockets of his handsome jacket.

NARRATOR 2: Soon, his pockets bulged with pebbles.

ANANSI: This time, I am sure to sink like a stone!

NARRATOR 1: Sure enough, Anansi dove into the water and fell quickly to the bottom, where he swam over to Turtle.

NARRATOR 2: The table was loaded with the most delicious, mouth-watering treats imaginable.

ANANSI: Pecan pie? Peach cobbler? Pot roast and potatoes? Yum, yum! Pass me some, Turtle.

TURTLE: Oh, Anansi. I'm sorry to tell you this, but in my country, we would never dream of wearing our jackets to the dinner table.

NARRATOR 1: Anansi looked up and noticed that Turtle had taken off his jacket before eating.

ANANSI (*sighs*): Ah, manners.

NARRATOR 2: Reluctantly, Anansi removed his jacket.

NARRATOR 1: As soon as it was off his shoulders, he floated back up to the surface, and popped out of the water onto the riverbank.

ANANSI: Whoops!

NARRATOR 2: He started to dive into the water again, when he remembered how hard that had been before.

ANANSI: No way I'm trying that again.

NARRATOR 1: So there Anansi floated, frustrated and hungry, as he watched Turtle devour the delicious supper.

NARRATOR 2: All by himself.

ANANSI: Wait a minute, I've been tricked! Me – Anansi, the greatest trickster in the whole world!