



# Trickster Tales

## Footnotes Learning Guide

Dear Educator,

Thank you for choosing our production of *Trickster Tales!* as a teaching resource for your classroom. We are excited about performing for you! This Learning Guide is designed to supplement your students' experience both before and after the performance. In it you will find background information, as well as additional reading and suggested learning activities for after the show.

### Curriculum Connections

Language Arts, Visual Art, African History, Culture, and Folklore.

#### **This performance supports the following Virginia Standards of Learning:**

Language Arts: K.1, K.2, K.3, 1.1, 1.2, 1.11, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.6, 4.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.5, 6.4  
Visual Arts: K.12, 1.12, 2.12, 3.12, 4.12, 5.12, 6.12.

Our *Footnotes Learning Guides'* lesson plans provide additional curriculum connections in Math, Social Studies, Geography, Science, and P.E. in addition to Language and Visual Arts.

### Program Description

*Trickster Tales!* is a 45-minute puppet performance which presents contemporary adaptations of two traditional folktales from West Africa. The two stories, from the Ashanti and Beluba peoples, feature the trickster character Anansi the spider. Anansi stories have spread throughout Africa and are told by many different groups of people as part of their rich oral tradition.

In the first story, *Tug-of-War*, Anansi defeats both a hippopotamus and an elephant in a battle of Tug-of-War...or is it a battle of wits? The second, *A Story, A Story*, retells the mythic origin of the West African oral tradition of storytelling. In this tale, Anansi must complete a series of seemingly impossible tasks in order to win a box of stories from the powerful Sky-God. Once again, Anansi uses his quick wits to devise a series of clever plans that enable him to capture Namibi the python, Osebo the leopard, and a nest of angry hornets, forcing the Sky-god to relinquish his coveted box of stories. Anansi then shares the stories with people all over the world!

### Theater Etiquette

Audience participation is an important part of children's theatre. Our shows create a rhythm that balances the action, words, and music of the production with the laughter and spontaneity of the children. In our programs, children often interact with our performers and puppets and may even be invited to join them on the stage to become a part of the show! However, the audience should remain seated throughout the performance unless instructed. Students should also refrain from asking questions *during the performance*. Time permitting, we love to do questions and answer at the end of the show. We can even show how some puppets work!



## **Recommended Reading for Students**

Aardema, Verna. Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain. New York: Dial Books, 1974. *Told in upbeat rhyming verse, this story emphasizes the relationship between people and nature as Ki-Pat tries to bring rainfall to the drought stricken African plain. Recommended K-4.*

Greaves, Nick. When Hippo was Hairy and other Tales from Africa. New York: Barron's, 1988. *This book is full of many stories with wonderful illustrations.*

Hamilton, Virginia. A Ring of Tricksters. New York: Blue Sky Press, 1997. *Twelve trickster tales that show the migration of African culture to America via the West Indies. Older elementary.*

Musgrove, Margaret. The Spider Weaver: A Legend of Kente Cloth. New York: Blue Sky Press, 2001. *A wonderful retelling of a legend from Ghana, this book is full of beautiful illustrations and lots of information about the Ashanti. An afterward provides background on Kente Cloth.*

Oram, Hiawyn. Counting Leopard's Spots and Other Animal Stories. Waukesha, WI: Little Tiger Press, 1998. *A beautifully illustrated picture book.*

Winther, Barbara. Plays from African Tales: One-Act, Royalty-Free Dramatizations For Young People. Boston: Plays, Inc., 1992. *Just what the title says.*

*Your local library should have additional titles.*

### **Puppetry Information and Resources for Teachers**

[www.barefootpuppets.com](http://www.barefootpuppets.com) is our own website and has additional information on all of our programs. You may also e-mail us from the website if you have any questions.

[www.puppeteers.org](http://www.puppeteers.org) is the official website of the Puppeteers of America, this is a great resource for information about puppetry. Many books and audio-visual materials are available through the puppetry store.

Hunt, Tamara and Nancy Renfro. Puppetry in Early Childhood Education. Austin: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1979. *A treasure for the classroom teacher who wants to incorporate puppets into the learning experience.*

Renfro, Nancy. Puppetry and the Art of Story Creation. Austin: Nancy Renfro Studios, 1979. *Provides step-by-step instruction to guide students as they create their own puppet plays.*

Wisniewski, David and Donna. Worlds of Shadow. Englewood: Teacher Ideas Press, 1997. *The best book on shadow puppetry in the classroom with wonderful information for all elementary grade levels.*



**Vocabulary**

**Anansi:** Trickster character from African folklore. Anansi is a spider or a spider-man, who originated with the Ashanti people of West Africa.

**Ashanti:** One of the major ethnic groups from West Africa, known for their weavings, carvings and Anansi stories.

**Gourd:** Inedible fruit related to pumpkins. Gourds are often used to make musical instruments.

**Rod Puppet:** Puppet operated by a stick control

**Trickster:** One who plays tricks or pranks.

**Oral Tradition:** Passing on history verbally, usually in the form of stories, from one generation to the next.

**Kente Cloth:**

**A West African Tradition**

The **Ashanti**, one of the largest ethnic groups of West Africa, are well known for their weaving and carving as well as their stories. Their elaborate **Kente cloths** are colorful and intricately designed woven fabric made from silk yarn. Kente cloth is the national dress for Ghana (a country in West Africa). Many pieces of this unique cloth are very valuable and only worn on special occasions. In Kente design purple and gold are only worn by royalty.

*Do you remember what color the Sky-God was wearing?*

**Writer's Block**

My favorite part of the show was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My least favorite part was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I wonder what would have happened if

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If I were writing this story, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Suggested Follow-Up Activities K-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**

*(Detailed lesson plans for these activities including reproducible handouts and specific SOL connections are available as digital files or in hard copy upon request.)*

**Favorite Animals Bar Graph** (Math, Science) Using the provided handout, have students choose, color, and cut out their favorite of Anansi's friends from the puppet show. Construct a bar graph that shows which animal was most popular. Discuss possible reasons for different types of wildlife in Africa. (HANDOUT)

**Kente Cloth** (English, Visual Arts) Read The Spider Weaver: A Legend of Kente Cloth. Discuss the significance of Kente patterns and colors, and have students create their own Kente pattern.

**Comparing Versions of a Story** (English, Written and Oral Communication) Read a different version of one of the Anansi stories that were depicted in the show. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the two stories.

**Tug of War** (P.E.) Play a game of tug of war during P.E. class. (A school in Martinsville, VA gave us this idea--they had a lot of fun!)

## **Suggested Follow up Activities 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

*(Detailed lesson plans for these activities including printable handouts and specific SOL connections are available as digital files or in hard copy upon request.)*

**Create a Story Box** (English, Written and Oral Communication, Art) Discuss folktales and have students write their own original folktales displaying traditional characteristics associated with folktales, fairytales, or fables. Construct a story box like Anansi's to hold the students' stories.

**Map Skills Activity** (Geography) Have students identify and label the seven continents on a World map, as well as individual countries and geographical features on a map of Africa. Discuss the difference between a country and a continent. Assign individual students a country to research and report on to the class.

**Tug of War** (P.E.) Play a game of tug of war during P.E. class. (A school in Martinsville, VA gave us this idea--they had a lot of fun!)

## Did You Know? *Fun Facts About Africa*

- **Africa is *really* BIG.** In fact, Africa is the second largest continent in the World covering about 1/5 of the globe's land area. Only Asia is bigger.
- The entire United States can fit inside Africa three times with space left over!



- Africa is made up of 53 different countries.
- More than 1,000 different languages are spoken in Africa.
- The largest desert in the World is in Africa. It is called the Sahara desert.
- The longest river in the World is in Africa. It is called the Nile river.
- Elephant tusks grow throughout an elephant's life and can weigh more than 200 pounds. Both male and female African elephants have tusks.
- No two spider webs are the same. Some spider webs, if straightened out, would be more than 300 miles long. That's long enough to stretch from Richmond, VA to New York City.