



# ACTION!

A Guide and Script Adaptation for Presenting

## **Anansi the Spider** by Gerald McDermott

This following script is based on the book ***Anansi the Spider*** by Gerald McDermott. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the book. The script can be used for performing the story as a reading, often referred to as reader's theater. The script can also be used to prepare a performed retelling of the story.

**Characters/Reading Parts**

- *Narrator 1*
- *Narrator 2*
- *Narrator 3*
- *Narrator 4*
- *Anansi*
- *See Trouble*
- *Road Builder*
- *Fish*
- *River Drinker*
- *Game Skinner*
- *Falcon*
- *Stone Thrower*
- *Cushion*
- *Nyame*

**Set Suggestions**

- *Jungle (emphasize the geometric shapes used in the story)*
- *River*

**Prop Suggestions**

- *Oversized masks for each character.*
- *Moon*

## Preparing a Performed Reading

A prepared reading of a story using a few special techniques can create an interesting storytelling experience. The benefits of preparing a performed reading include increased reading fluency, increased reading comprehension, and enhanced oral language skills. To get the greatest benefits from performed readings, try following the steps below.

### Get Ready

- Give each student a copy of the script.
- Provide each student with a highlighter.
- Assign one or more students to each role.
- Ask students to write the name of his or her assigned role at the top of their script.
- Invite students to read through the script to highlight the words spoken by that character.
- Point out that stage directions appear in parentheses and remind students to avoid highlighting the stage directions.
- Students should also:
  - Make lines across the page to indicate where one scene stops and a new scene begins.
  - Underline any words or phrases that need to be performed.

### Get Set

- Give students time to read through their parts silently or read the script together as a group.
- Encourage students to use a pencil to lightly circle unfamiliar words.
- Invite students to discuss how their characters should talk and move.
- Encourage students to decide how their characters think and feel during each scene.
- Invite students to determine why characters say and do certain things.

### Final Preparation

- Arrange a set of chairs or stools (one per character) at the front of the room.
- Explain that stories usually happen in scenes.
- All the characters in a given scene should face forward.
- Characters not in the scene face away from the audience.
- When the scene changes, all readers should turn forwards or backwards depending on whether they are in the next scene.
- Remind students to follow along in their scripts because the key to effective performed reading is for each reader to be ready without being reminded.

### Go

- Audience members should follow along in their own scripts as the script is being read aloud.
- Readers should read using a loud, clear, and expressive voice and at a pace that fits the story.

## Preparing a Performed Retelling

A performed retelling is similar to a performed reading. The main difference is, rather than sitting in chairs, the actors perform the story and move around the stage. In addition, performed retellings might include technical features such as lighting, sound, sets, and props. Each of these can be improvised using available materials. The performance can be as involved or as simple as suits your situation. For example, the moon can be represented by a paper plate.

### Get Ready

- Give each student a copy of the script.
- Provide each student with a highlighter.
- Assign one or more students to each role.
- Ask students to write the name of his or her assigned role at the top of their script.
- Invite students to read through the script to highlight the words spoken by that character.
- Point out that stage directions appear in parentheses and remind students to avoid highlighting the stage directions.
- Students should also:
  - Make lines across the page to indicate where one scene stops and a new scene begins.
  - Underline any words or phrases that need to be performed.
- Determine the technical features you will add to the performance such as set pieces, lighting, sound, and props. Create a plan for each element.
- Create masks as needed.

### Get Set

- Give students time to read through their parts silently or read the script together as a group.
- Encourage students to use a pencil to lightly circle unfamiliar words.
- Invite students to discuss how their characters should talk and move.
- Encourage students to decide how their characters think and feel during each scene.
- Invite students to determine why characters say and do certain things.
- Develop the blocking (movements) and actions for each character.
- Finish building the technical elements such as sets, lighting, sound, and props.
- Finish creating the masks.

### Rehearsals

- Finalize the performance space.
- Practice memorizing lines. As needed the narrators and other character can use their scripts.
- Finalize character movement and actions for each scene.
- Begin working with masks during rehearsals.
- Plan all character entrances and exits.
- Develop a plan for what students will do when not on stage.
- Work out the key bits of action that are the most important parts of the story.
- Take additional rehearsal time for any rough areas.

**Final Preparation**

- Arrange the audience seating.
- Conduct full run-throughs with all costumes, props and masks.
- Add any music and lighting effects.
- Following the full run through provide notes for any final changes or enhancements.
- If time permits do a final run-through incorporating the notes.

**Perform!**

- Give the audience time to get seated.
- Meet with the students backstage to offer assurance and ease any anxiety.
- Introduce the performance to the audience.
- Return to backstage to help students make exits and entrances during the performance.
- After the performance, thank the audience for coming.
- Consider conducting a question and answer session with the audience and performers.

# Anansi the Spider

This script belongs to:

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My part is:

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**Narrator 1:** Anansi. He is spider to the Ashanti people.

*(Anansi enters and does an action.)*

**Narrator 2:** In Ashanti land, people love this story of Kwaku Anansi.

**Narrator 3:** Time was, Anansi had six sons...

**Narrator 4:** First son was called See Trouble.

*(See Trouble enters and does an action.)*

He had the gift of seeing trouble a long way off.

**Narrator 1:** Second son was Road Builder.

*(Road Builder enters and does an action.)*

**Narrator 2:** Thirsty son was River Drinker.

*(River Drinker enters and does an action.)*

**Narrator 3:** Next son was Game Skinner.

*(Game Skinner enters and does an action.)*

**Narrator 4:** Another son was Stone Thrower.

*(Stone Thrower enters and does an action.)*

**Narrator 1:** And the last of the sons was Cushion. He was very soft.

*(Cushion enters and does an action.)*

**Narrator 2:** All were good sons of Anansi.

**Narrator 3:** One time Anansi went a long way from home.

*(Anansi moves to another area of the stage)*

**Narrator 4:** Far from home.

**Narrator 1:** He got lost.

**Narrator 2:** He fell into trouble.

**See Trouble:** Father is in danger!

**Narrator 3:** He knew it quickly and he told those other sons.

**Road Builder:** Follow me!

**Narrator 4:** Off he went making a road.

**Narrator 1:** They went fast, those six brothers, gone to help Anansi.

*(The spiders move to where Anansi has gone.)*

**Narrator 2:** Where is father now?

**Narrator 3:** Fish has swallowed him!

**Narrator 4:** Anansi is inside Fish.

**Narrator 1:** River Drinker took a big drink.

*(River Drinker takes a large drink of river water.)*

**Narrator 2:** No more river.



**Narrator 3:** Then Game Skinner helped father Anansi. He split open Fish.

*(Game Skinner cuts open fish.)*

**Narrator 4:** More trouble came right then.

*(Falcon flies in and grabs Anansi and flies off.)*

**Narrator 1:** It was Falcon. Falcon took Anansi up in the sky.

**Narrator 2:** Quick now, Stone Thrower!

*(Stone Thrower throws a stone.)*

**Narrator 3:** The stone hit Falcon. Anansi fell through the sky.

*(Anansi waves arms and slowly falls through the sky.)*

**Narrator 4:** Now Cushion ran to help father.

*(Cushion runs over to Anansi.)*

**Narrator 1:** Very soft, Anansi came down.

*(Anansi lands on Cushion.)*

**Narrator 2:** They were very happy, that spider family.

**Narrator 3:** All home again that night, Kwaku Anansi found a thing in the forest.

*(Anansi finds a round object such as a paper plate. )*

**Anansi** What is this? A great globe of light? O, mysterious and beautiful! I shall give this to my son. To the son who rescued me! But which son of six... Which deserves the prize? Nyame, can you help me? O Nyame!

**Narrator 1:** For Ashanti people, Nyame is The God of All Things.

**Anansi:** Please hold the beautiful globe of light until I know which son should have it for his own.

*(Anansi gives the light to Nyame.)*

**Narrator 2:** And so they tried to decide which son deserved the prize.

**Narrator 3:** They tried, but they could not decide.

**Narrator 4:** They argued all night.

*(The spiders argue by giving reasons why they deserve the prize.)*

**Narrator 1:** Nyame saw this.

**Narrator 2:** The God of All Things, he took the beautiful white light up into the sky.

*(Nyame holds the light above his head.)*

**Narrator 3:** He keeps it there for all to see.

**Narrator 4:** It is still there.

**Narrator 1:** It will always be there.

**Narrator 2:** It is there tonight.

**The End**