



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom/Jammin' in Jamaica* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of spiders and trickster stories, gods, wisdom, sharing, coconut trees, and listening to others.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Spiders and Trickster Stories: *What are spiders known for? What is a trickster character?* Discuss that spiders are known for making webs (traps) and being resourceful. Share with the students that Anansi spider is a well-known character in stories from West Africa and Jamaica. Anansi is a small and vulnerable creature (spider) who, like other trickster characters, uses cunning and trickery to get what he wants. Anansi stories always contain a message or lesson.

Gods: *Why are there often gods in folk tales?* Discuss with the students that folk tales come from specific cultures so often gods or other important beings from that culture are features of the story, particularly when the story seeks to explain how something came to be. Remind the students that it is important to be respectful of stories and beliefs from other cultures.

Wisdom: *What is wisdom?* Discuss that wisdom can be defined as experience, knowledge, and good judgement. *Is wisdom possessed by only some people, such as elders within a community, or is wisdom possessed by everyone?*

Sharing: *Why is sharing a good thing to do?* Discuss that when something is shared more people get to benefit from it.

Coconut Trees: *What do coconut trees look like? Are they easy to climb?* Share with the students that coconut trees can grow very tall (up to 30 metres) and that, as a member of the palm family, they have palm fronds that grow at the top of the tree rather than branches lower down. This makes climbing a coconut tree a difficult task.

Listening to Others: *Why is it important to listen to others?* Discuss that everyone has different experiences and realities so it is important to listen to others so that we can learn from them. Listening to others is a sign of respect.

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover: Look at the cover and read the title. *What kind of creature is Anansi? What is he trying to do? Does it look like this is an easy task? Why/why not?*

PP. 2–3: Revisit the text and ask, *What kind of character is Anansi?* (a know-it-all and a show-off)

PP. 4–5: Revisit the text and point out that Anansi, who is famous for being skilled at speaking and storytelling, has used flattery to get Nyame to give him what he wants: *"Oh, mighty Nyame. You see everything. You know everything. Please share your wisdom with me."*

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Teacher's Notes continued

Ask the students to predict whether or not Anansi is being sincere when he says: *"I will use it to spin stories for everyone"* and when he promises to share the wisdom. Encourage them to justify their predictions.

PP. 6–7: Review the first paragraph and ask, *How do you think Anansi is feeling?* (excited and perhaps a little smug for getting his own way) Review the second paragraph and ask, *What do you think would be inside a pot containing all the wisdom in the world? What would it look like?* Review the third paragraph and brainstorm the *whispers of good advice* that Anansi might be hearing. Review the final paragraph and ask the students to predict what wisdom might smell like.

PP. 8–9: Review the first paragraph and compare it with the earlier predictions of the students. Ask, *Why would Anansi want to keep all the wisdom for himself?* (because he is a know-it-all and a show-off) Review the rest of the text and ask, *Is Anansi being wise by wanting to hide the pot of wisdom? Why/why not?* Look at the illustration and ask, *Is Anansi choosing the best place to hide the pot of wisdom? Why/why not?*

PP. 10–11: Review the text and illustration and ask, *Is there a better way that Anansi could use to get the clay pot to the top of the coconut tree?*

PP. 12–13: Review the first sentence and ask, *What is the author telling us about the task?* (that it is very difficult) Continue reading to the end of paragraph two and ask, *When we think of wise people, do we usually think of old people or young people?* Discuss that different people are good at different things and some people, such as Anansi's daughter, are good at problem solving whereas some people are not practically minded. Complete the reading and ask the students to predict what will happen to the wisdom.

PP. 14–15: Review the text and compare it to the students' predictions. Ask the students to locate the lesson or message in the text: *That is why we have to listen to one another. Every person has their own piece of wisdom.*

P. 16: Review the text and discuss the lesson that wisdom is for sharing. Ask, *Why is it important that people share their wisdom?* Explore some of the ways in which knowledge and wisdom are shared e.g. through schools, universities, and other training institutions; through books and libraries; by families; through after school activities such as music lessons and sports training; through the media and the Internet; through the Arts; through museums; by health professionals; through craftspeople and experts.

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Encourage the students to share their wisdom. They could write down instructions for how to play a game or teach a skill to classmates or younger students.

Enable the class to make a mural of wisdom spreading around the world. What does wisdom look like? Encourage the students to use words in their artwork.

Invite the students to learn about spiders and make a poster to show what they have learned.

Share-read other folk tales about Anansi, such as *Why Anansi Has Long Legs*; *Anansi and the Turtle*; *Anansi, Firefly, and Tiger*.

Share-read other stories from Jamaica, such as *River Mumma and the Golden Table*.

Share-read other folk tales about trickster characters, such as *Carlos and Diego* (StoryWorld), *Nanabozho and the Maple Trees* (StoryWorld), *Hungry Tiger and Clever Rabbit* (StoryWorld), or stories about Maui, Loki, Br'er Rabbit, or Coyote.

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Teacher's Notes continued

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *Jammin' in Jamaica*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of Jamaica and Jamaican culture, sports stars, reggae, slavery, indigenous peoples, and native plants and animals.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Jamaican (Patois) Greeting: *Does anyone know how to greet someone in Jamaica? You could say ello or whata gwaan?*

Cover and Contents Page: Look at the cover of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and the image on the contents page and ask, *What kind of country do you think Jamaica might be?* (a relaxed island nation with warm, tropical weather) Tell the students that in Jamaican Patois, the word *jammin'* means to be singing, dancing, and having a good time.

Location of Jamaica/Geography: Look at the map on P. 1 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and note the location of Jamaica off the coast of the Americas. Tell the students that Jamaica is located in the Northern Hemisphere and its land area would fit into New Zealand around 24 times. The geography of Jamaica is made up of mountains, rainforests, and beaches. Share with the students that Jamaica has a population of around 2.8 million people and its capital and largest city is Kingston. If any of the children come from Jamaica or have visited it, invite them to share their experiences.

Jamican Culture: Ask, *What is a multicultural society?* Discuss that a multicultural society is a society where people with different nationalities, languages, religions, and ethnicities live together. A multicultural society values the traditions and lifestyles of its different peoples. Discuss Jamaica's motto "*Out of Many, One People*" (P. 1) in relation to multiculturalism. Reread the short fact on jerk chicken on P. 3 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and ask, *Is food an important feature of national culture? Why/why not?* Discuss that people often enjoy trying foods from other cultures.

Ask, *Do you think an interest in ethnic foods helps improve cultural understanding? Why/why not?*

Sports Stars: Reread the short fact on P. 2 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and ask, *What kinds of sports stars are New Zealand and Australia famous for?* Discuss that countries often have particular sports that they excel in on the world stage, and that track/athletics is a sport Jamaica is well known for.

Reggae: Reread the short fact on P. 3 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and ask, *Who has heard of Bob Marley? Who has listened to reggae music?*

Slavery: Reread PP. 4–5 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and ask, *What was the slave trade?* Define the slave trade as the process of acquiring African people by force and then transporting them to another place and selling them as slaves, or unpaid workers. Ensure the students understand that slavery was a disgraceful practice that is now illegal. Ask, *What is a plantation?* Discuss that a plantation is a large farm on which crops such as coffee, sugar cane, or cotton are grown and that most of the plantations in Jamaica grew sugar cane. Point out the word *indigenous* and define it as originating or occurring naturally in a particular place.

Native Plants and Animals: Ask, *What does the word native mean?* Share with the students that *indigenous* and *native* are synonyms, which means that they have the same definition. Reread PP. 6–7 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* and ask, *Do you think that all the plants and animals of the Blue Mountains are native to Jamaica or may some have been introduced?* Discuss with the students that coffee originally came from Ethiopia, and it was introduced to Jamaica and other parts of the world. The Jamaican giant swallowtail butterfly is not only native to Jamaica it is endemic, meaning that it is found only in Jamaica. It is also endangered. Jamaican bamboo is native to Jamaica and the Jamaican boa is endemic. Ask, *Why is it important to look after endemic native plants and animals?*

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Teacher's Notes continued

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Challenge the students to research the achievements of the individuals who feature on NZ or Australian money. Invite them to select their own national hero and present a case, either written or verbally, for their hero to feature on the national currency.

Using PP. 6–7 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* as a model, invite the students to research other plants and animals of Jamaica. Are they introduced, native, or endemic? Encourage the students to produce a photo essay of their findings.

Challenge the students to research Jamaican track stars. Who is currently the fastest man in the world? Who is the fastest woman? Are they Jamaican?

As a class, listen to some reggae music from Jamaica e.g. “One Love”, “Three Little Birds”, “Redemption Song” – Bob Marley.

Using PP. 4–5 of *Jammin' in Jamaica* as a model, invite the students to write a biography of Bob Marley, Usain Bolt, Elaine Thompson or another famous Jamaican.

New Zealand and Australia do not have official national fruits or national dishes. Invite the students to choose a national fruit or national dish to represent their country. Why did they choose that fruit/dish? Invite them to draw their chosen food and describe what it tastes like.