

UNICORN
ONLINE



ANANSI THE SPIDER RE-SPUN

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH PUPILS IN YEARS 1 & 2



A Unicorn and Illuminations Production

ANANSI THE SPIDER RE-SPUN

Created and directed by Justin Audibert

FOR PUPILS IN YEARS 1 & 2

People say that a time long, long ago, animals walked on two feet and spoke with words, like we do. And back then it was known by everyone that the cleverest of all the animals in the kingdom was a spider – the infamous Anansi – the original trickster and the master spinner of yarns.

But sometimes, Anansi could be a little too clever for his own good...

Anansi the Spider Re-spun is an enormously popular digital theatre experience for ages 3 - 8. As part of Unicorn Online, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are offering a range of free online theatrical experiences that we hope will be enjoyed by children across London, the UK and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

This is the resource for the Unicorn Theatre's Anansi Learning Programme. This resource accompanies our online digital theatre experience, *Anansi the Spider Re-spun*, which is available to watch for free on our **YouTube channel**.

Anansi is one of the great folk heroes of the world. He is as clever as he is lazy, and he loves to prove how smart he is by tricking the people in his village and the animals in the bush. But sometimes he can be too clever for his own good. Drawn from the rich vein of traditional African and Caribbean stories, the legendary spider tricks, sings and dances his way out of trouble, and often right back into it.

The Anansi legend originated in Ghana, with the Ashanti tribe. The stories are part of a vibrant oral tradition, recounted from generation to generation, all featuring the central character of Anansi – both human and spider. These stories were carried to the Caribbean via the transatlantic slave trade, and so Anansi's ability to outwit and defeat those more powerful than himself became both a symbol of hope and rebellion. These myths of resistance and subversion have endured and evolved into one of folklore's most popular characters who, although small, can outsmart those bigger than himself.

'I think he is very relatable to young children, because they're growing and learning and working the world out and, as they do, they're pushing at and exploring boundaries, and that is what Anansi does all the time.' **Justin Audibert, director**

This resource pack has been designed to facilitate and explore:

- Anansi as trickster archetype and as a conduit to be with universal themes held within African and Caribbean stories.
- The movement of Anansi stories via the African and Caribbean diaspora and the transatlantic slave trade.
- Experiential activities and processes for every child to share their real and imagined stories.
- Creative practices to meet with anxieties present in the wider world in pandemic and racism.

The activities provide a mixture of ways to explore and interact with the stories and include short films from storyteller Sam Adams, and one of the actors from the online stories, as well teacher-led drama activities and task for you to follow in the classroom or adapt for home learning, and to send to children and parents at home.

Whilst Sam will introduce herself to pupils on screen as a storyteller, she is also a practicing dramatherapist, working in primary education with children who have complex needs and experiences of trauma. This programme draws on Sam's clinical training as a therapist in regard to the impact of racism and her background in theatre and storytelling.

Your skills and experience as teachers also inform how this work unfolds with your pupils. The creative processes and activities within and around the stories will support you to respond to the gems pupils may bring in the moment.

This will also be an opportunity to celebrate the richness of these stories and their origins in West Africa and the Caribbean, which may be particularly resonant for some children, and to share the history and culture with all children, exploring the universal themes and our interconnected history.

Below are keywords and concepts that we suggest are integral to the work:

1. **Narrating** – an opportunity for teachers to draw on existing transferable skills with narrating scripted short extracts of journeys and story moments.
2. **Embodying** – activities that will support pupils to experience the work through movement, acting, active storytelling and play.
3. **Containing** – the ability for metaphor, character and stories to hold challenging universal themes as well as the collective and personal experience in a boundaried way.
4. **Noticing** – deep listening to the material pupils bring from their own understanding and imagination.
5. **Modelling** – ensuring pupils remain engaged through the delight of seeing their teacher play alongside them.
6. **Therapeutic creative practice** – privileging the innate value that engagement with creativity can bring to nurturing individual confidence, to learning, and to the collective classroom community.

The activities in this pack have been designed to be used before and after viewing the stories online. They offer accessible and engaging ways to pick up on and explore the themes and characters before and after watching the stories. The activities use drama, storytelling, drawing and writing tasks which support the KS1 curriculum.

There are five sequences of activities in this pack. Some are longer than others, the first laying the foundations for the work thereafter. Activities are designed to be run in sequence as they build on each other and deepen the children's engagement in the work. However, they are also designed to be flexible so teachers can map onto their own curriculum and classroom priorities and can be adapted for home learning.

Sequence One: Setting off on our journey

The activities in this sequence are designed to give children the opportunity to think about the importance of stories in their lives and to meet Anansi – the keeper of all stories.

The sequence also establishes the idea of going on a sea journey together; activities will allow the children to imagine, embody and map the journey that the Anansi stories made from West Africa, to the Caribbean, to Britain. The narrative of the sea journey represents colonialism, notions of home, and travelling to the unknown, through an exploration of the inherent universal themes attached to them. These themes are held and contained within the metaphor of the sea journey as well as the stories about Anansi.

Children will watch the first story episode ‘How Anansi Became the Keeper of Stories’ and establish a story box in which they will gather stories throughout the following sequences:

Sequence Two: Rough seas coming up ahead

This sequence continues the metaphor of the sea journey, this time going into rough seas to allow children to engage with themes of moving from one part of the world to another, not having said goodbye to family and friends, and the importance of home, as well as how we carry something of home with us through the stories we know and share.

Children will watch the second story ‘Brother Anansi and Brother Snake’ and meet one of the actors from the Unicorn Online Anansi stories, who will teach them a song and actions from the story as a way to explore the idea of working together or going it alone.

Sequence Three: Carrying our stories of family and friends

This sequence focuses on celebrating the stories we share that connect us to family and friends. Children will watch the episode ‘Anansi and the Two Dinners’ and respond to the story by creating invitations to their party, choosing food, music, dance and their favourite family traditions.

Sequence Four: Catching our wisdom on the wind

This sequence introduces the wisdom of children, allowing pupils to explore the wisdom inside and outside of themselves. After watching ‘Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom’, the children will explore what wisdom means to them. They will act out their own version of the story in a Story Whoosh and then write the story from the perspective of one of the characters in the story: Anansi, the wise girl, the tree, or the pot of wisdom.

Sequence Five: Homeward bound

This sequence completes the final sea journey and is about returning home and capturing the children’s memories and feelings about their whole story experience. Anansi is a trickster, but he also acquires wisdom, and his stories have survived for hundreds of years; new Anansi stories are created all the time, and he is acknowledged as being the keeper of stories from all over the world.

THE STORIES

‘How Anansi Became the Keeper of Stories’ (video linked in pack)

Anansi the spider as an archetypal trickster originated in Ghana, with the Ashanti tribe. The stories were part of a vibrant oral storytelling tradition, recounted through the generations, all featuring the central character of Anansi. These stories were carried to the Caribbean with the transatlantic slave trade and it is understood that it was at this time that Anansi also became a shapeshifter, moving between spider form, as he is seen in Ghana, and human form, as he is seen in the Caribbean. This story explains how Anansi’s trickster ability enabled him to outwit the other animals and bargain with Nyame, the sky-god, to be given a box that contained all the stories of the world. This is said to be when all stories first came into existence and speaks of the importance of storytelling as an oral tradition to hold and carry forward essential knowledge inherent within the culture and its people.

‘Brother Anansi and Brother Snake’ (Episode 1 on the Unicorn’s YouTube channel)

When Anansi and all the other animals hear the news that famine is coming to the land, the others decide to work together, but Anansi decides to go it alone. Historically, this story probably has its roots in the slave trade, on plantations in the West Indies, where those growing the food did not receive enough for themselves, and were forced to think about alternative ways to nourish themselves. Brother Snake could be seen to represent the archetypal master or plantation owner, and the other animals, including Anansi, those who were enslaved. For pupils, the historical connections of this story may not be apparent and they needn’t be highlighted, but where direct references or questions arise you might choose to share the historical roots with them. Otherwise, engaging with the universal theme of when we choose to work together and when we decide to go it alone will suffice. While Anansi as trickster makes the ‘wrong’ choice in this instance, the story allows the listener to experience the nuance of human nature and the difficult choices required when harsh times are present.

‘Anansi and the Two Dinners’ (Episode 2 on the Unicorn’s YouTube channel)

When Anansi is invited to two parties that are being held at the same time, he can’t choose which one to go to and he ends up not getting any of the delicious food and party experience he so enjoys. Historically, this story speaks of food being central to all cultural and ritual celebrations. In this modern retelling the story also highlights the importance of family and how everyone has a role to play. Crucially, here Anansi is not as clever as he thinks he is, and it is his two sons that provide the plan that sees them eating well, rather than Anansi who has to rely on his wife to feed him. The story allows the listener to experience the nuances of family roles and dynamics. It also reinforces the importance of storytelling more widely, when Anansi’s sons request a bedtime story that has been told many times over hundreds of years in different ways, but also remains the same in its essence.

‘Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom’ (Episode 3 on the Unicorn’s YouTube channel)

Anansi has collected wisdom from all around and put it in a pot to have for himself. When he decides that the safest place to keep it is at the top of a tree, he is not clever enough to work out how to carry it. He lacks common sense, and instead it is a little girl who comes up with a successful plan. Anansi is not immediately willing to admit this, but he does in the end come to understand he has been outwitted by a child and cannot keep all of the wisdom for himself. Historically, this story reminds us that wisdom is an essential quality in humans, and though we may not always use it, we all have wisdom within us. The story also speaks to wisdom being found in children, and allows the listener to engage with the idea that adults can and do also learn from them.

SEQUENCE ONE

SETTING OFF ON OUR JOURNEY

AIMS

To introduce the character of Anansi the Spider and set the scene for our stories.

To invite the children's experience of stories and the importance of stories in their lives.

To work collaboratively, drawing on children's lived experiences, and the connections and differences within the class.

To introduce the metaphor of the sea journey which will hold the narrative of the history and journey of Anansi stories.

RESOURCES

How to make a boat video (**resource one**), self-portrait template (**resource two**), audio recording 1 (**resource three**), paper and pens/crayons, a globe or map (**resource four**), 'How Anansi Became the Keeper of Stories' video, a story box.

STRATEGIES

Listening to and watching stories, still image and acting out, working in role, group discussion.

INTRODUCTION

This sequence introduces the children to the world of Anansi stories and goes back to a time before stories existed.

Activities will allow children to think about the place of stories in our lives; connect to their favourite stories; think about their favourite animal characters in stories, and why they appeal to them.

This sequence also establishes the story frame and key metaphor of going on a sea journey to discover the Anansi stories and experience how they travelled around the world.

ACTIVITY ONE: ANIMALS IN STORIES

Explain to the class that you are going to be exploring some stories together and that there are lots of different animals in these stories: *'We are going to start by thinking about the animals we really like'*.

Ask the children *'If you could be an animal, what animal would you be?'*

On the spot, ask them to make a still image (like a statue) of the animal they would choose.

- Can they show us what the animal looks like?
- Can they bring their image to life and move like their animal, on the spot? They may need to do this in slow motion.
- Now can they add the sound their animal would make?

Find out what the children's different animals are:

- What do they like about their animal?
- Why did they choose them?
- What do they know about their animal?

Contrast the animals the children have chosen and draw out why; is it because they like the way they look, because they're strong or fast, live in families or groups or are lone creatures, because they can fly or live in the sea, etc?

- Is there anything they don't like about their animals?
- Are there any animals or creatures that frighten us?

ACTIVITY TWO: INTRODUCING ANANSI

Explain that you are going to be exploring Anansi stories together and ask if anyone knows anything about Anansi - some children may know a lot, others may know nothing at all, which is fine, because you are now all going to find out about Anansi together.

Tell the class that Sam is a storyteller from the Unicorn Theatre, and she has made a short film to introduce you to Anansi Spider.

Now play the first film with Sam, which introduces us to Anansi Spider and a time before stories existed.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbUVNsZKys>

ACTIVITY THREE: WHY STORIES MATTER

Stage one: Discuss a world without stories

Remind the children that in the video, Sam said that this story began in a time before stories existed.

Discuss with the children:

- Can you imagine a world without, or time before, stories?
- What would that mean, if there were no stories in the world at all?
- What do we love about stories?
- Where do we hear, or see, stories in our lives?
- What is the best thing about stories?

Stage Two: How we enjoy stories

Draw out the discussion about the way in which stories are everywhere in our world. Ask the children to think about all the different ways they can think of in which they enjoy having stories - ask them:

- Who tells you stories?
- Where and how do you have stories?
- Do you read, watch, listen, or act stories out?

First take the ideas from your class, but you may wish to suggest some of the following if they haven't thought of them:

- Story time at school
- Watching stories on TV or iPad
- Someone reading you a story, or someone making up a story to tell you
- Reading a story on your own or looking at picture-books
- Going to the theatre or cinema
- Hearing a story, or reading, in a library
- Listening to an audio story
- Making up stories with your friends or family
- People telling you stories that are real - things that happened to them
- Acting out stories

Teacher note: This activity will allow children to draw on their own preferences when having stories - some will like the solitary activity of reading alone, others may enjoy sharing stories with others.

- Explain that in your work around Anansi, you will be watching the stories acted out on film, listening and watching Sam tell stories on film, and acting out some of the stories together as you go along.

Stage Three: Acting our favourite ways to have a story

Ask for one of the class to volunteer showing the class how they enjoy having a story: reading, listening, acting out, etc. Ask them to take up a still image which shows the other children how they are enjoying their story. You could also show the class your favourite way that you enjoy experiencing stories.

Now ask everyone to do the same thing and show the way they best like having a story in a still image, like a statue.

Look at different children around the room and hear from different children in the class, asking them:

- Where are you enjoying your story?
- Who are the characters in your story?
- Where does your story take place?
- What is happening in your story?

ACTIVITY FOUR: PREPARING FOR THE SEA JOURNEY

Stage One: Making the boat

Explain to the children that through stories, we are going to find out more about Anansi and how stories began. But in order to do that we need to go on a journey - the stories were first told far away across the sea in West Africa, in a place now called Ghana. The stories were then taken all over the world to places like the Caribbean by the people who knew and loved them.

Explain that we're going to imagine we are going on a journey across the sea together to discover some of Anansi's stories. First, we are going to make a paper boat to help us imagine going on the journey.

Using a large piece of sugar paper or flipchart paper, fold up a paper boat in front of the class (**resource one**).

Now give the children the self-portrait template (**resource two**) and ask them to draw themselves - they can draw their face, their hair, and the clothes they want to add.

Explain that you want a drawing of everyone to help us imagine getting onto the boat and setting out to sea.

Make sure you draw yourself to that you can go on the journey with your class!

Now you have your boat and self-portraits ready, find out whether anyone has been on a boat or ship before - this could be a small boat in a park, a dinghy or a huge ship. Hear the children's experiences, asking what it was like, where they were going, and who or what they were going to see. Discuss what it is like being on board a boat or ship.

Teacher note: This may be a place where a child chooses to share a difficult story of a family journey, having to move from one place to another, and in doing so they have their personal story witnessed and validated within the metaphor of our sea journey.

Stage Two: Stepping onboard

Now explain that we are to imagine getting on board by placing your drawing in the boat and saying '*I'm onboard.*' Start with your own portrait.

Now take the boat to each child and ask each of them to place their portrait in the boat and also say '*I'm onboard.*'

Tell the class that we are now ready to set sail and that we are going to travel to Ghana, where our stories begin. Find somewhere to place the paper boat while you listen to the next part of the story.

ACTIVITY FIVE: BEGINNING OUR JOURNEY

Teacher note: This activity introduces pupils to the idea of the movement of people across the seas from one part of the world to another, providing a metaphor and container to explore the themes.

Listening to one part of our journey

Explain to the pupils that having made our boat, we are going to listen to and imagine the journey before acting it out ourselves.

Ask the children to get comfortable, ready to listen to Sam as she describes the first part of the sea journey (below and **resource three**). Closing their eyes will help the children to listen and imagine.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c521jeOFXr4>

ACTIVITY SIX: EMBODYING THE BOAT JOURNEY

Stage One: Stepping into the drama

Teacher note: Stepping into the world of the journey will allow children to invest in the story in a gentle way to imagine the journey out to sea. Using open questions will allow the children to begin to create the world for themselves.

First ask everyone to put on their life jackets, and explain that these will keep us safe.

Ask the children to imagine they are stepping onto the boat and sitting down. Now ask everyone to imagine the boat has set sail and that as we are moving off, the sea is gently rocking us back and forth. *'All together, let's hoist the sails - one, two, three. Let's take a breath in and a gentle breath out.'*

Now you are out at sea, ask the children some of the following:

*‘Who do you see when you look back to the shore, waving at you?
 What are you thinking, what are you feeling, as you look back?
 What does the sea look like all around you? What can you see?
 What do you feel when the land disappears and all around is sea?
 What adventures do you imagine are ahead?
 What are you looking forward to on your journey?
 Is there anything worrying you?
 We are almost there, Ghana - we can see land straight ahead. Has anyone been to Ghana?
 What do we know about Ghana?
 We can see Anansi waving from the shore. What do we hope to find out about Anansi?’*

Finish the journey by asking the children to take off their lifejackets, step out of the boat and sit back down. Discuss with the children how they found this journey.

Stage Two: Mapping the journey

Find a way to show how you have travelled across the sea from Britain to Ghana, West Africa, where the Anansi stories began. There are different ways you could do this:

- Use a globe or a map of the world (such as **resource four**) and create a tiny boat out of paper. Show the sea journey from Britain to West Africa, moving the boat and blue-tacking it onto Ghana on the map.
- Create a map together as a class; draw an outline of a map of Africa, the West Indies and Britain on large paper and ask the children to help paint the sea and the land. When you’ve completed the map together, add a small paper boat or toy boat to track the journey we’ve taken in our drama work.
- Or you could give each child their own map to paint and trace the journey from Britain to Ghana, and draw a boat on each destination as they arrive.

Extension: This could be an opportunity to make links to geography; researching the climate, wildlife and vegetation in Britain and Ghana.

ACTIVITY SEVEN: HOW ANANSI BECAME THE KEEPER OF STORIES

Explain that now we are in Ghana, where the Anansi stories were first told, we are going to watch the video of the story 'How Anansi Became the Keeper of Stories' together.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v6lOCzSrZw>

ACTIVITY EIGHT: GATHERING STORIES

Stage One: Finding your story

Explain to the children that in the story we have just heard, Anansi has released stories throughout the world and now they can be found everywhere - inside ourselves and outside ourselves.

Show the children that you have found a story (for example, floating in the air or in your bag), and hold onto it. Ask the children to show you, by acting out with a simple action, where they find a story: is it under their bed? Plucked from their memory? Under a rock in the middle of a forest? In a hole in a tree, or in the fridge? Encourage the children to be as imaginative as possible.

Now that they have found their story, ask them:

- Where did you find your story?
- Who is in your story? Can you show what they look like?
- Where does your story take place?
- What happens in your story?

Try and hear from everyone and begin to bring some characters or moments to life. The pupils may offer well-known stories, or their own imagined stories. The aim is to give the children the opportunity to demonstrate the kind of stories they like, and to have every story embraced.

Reflect on all the different kinds of stories the children have shared.

Stage Two: Placing your story into the box

You will need a simple box where you can keep the stories that you will be gathering from the children. Find a box to represent Anansi's wooden box in the story, one that will be big enough to hold all the stories created throughout the scheme of work.

Explain to the children that we are going to imagine that this box is Anansi's box, and by adding our own stories, Anansi will look after them.

Ask each child, one by one, to place their story into the box and say something about who, or what, their story is about. You can demonstrate first before asking all the children to add their stories.

Finish this activity by saying *'Now, we've just added our first stories to the story box. Let's have a quick dance to celebrate.'*

Put some music on and ask everyone to do a celebratory dance on the spot where they are.

SEQUENCE TWO

ROUGH SEAS COMING UP AHEAD

AIMS

To explore the concept of leaving home to journey into the unknown.

To explore the idea of 'working together or going it alone'.

To gather stories to add to the story box.

RESOURCES

Audio recording 2 (**resource three**), 'Brother Anansi and Brother Snake' episode, video of actor Afia, pencils, paper and crayons, story box.

STRATEGIES

Group improvisation, learning a song and actions from the story, mapping the journey, writing and drawing.

INTRODUCTION

This sequence develops the metaphor of the journey by sea, as an opportunity to develop the idea of having to leave home and travel into an unknown future.

ACTIVITY ONE: CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

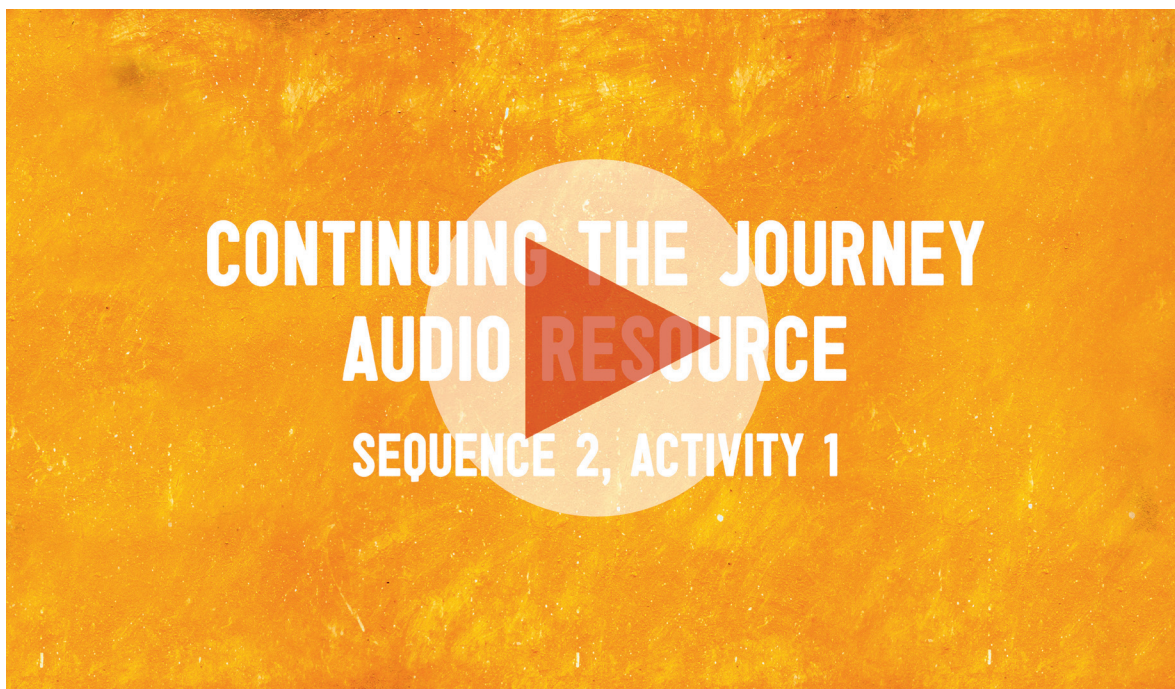
Teacher note: The narrative and metaphor of the journey will hold the history of British colonialism in this part of the world in a safe way through the exploration of the idea of home and travelling into the unknown.

Stage One: Mapping the journey

Use your model boat and map or globe to show the children that the next stage of the journey will take us from Ghana to the West Indies - the Caribbean.

Stage Two: The second sea journey

Ask the children to get comfortable ready to listen to Sam as she describes the next part of the sea journey (below and **resource three**). Closing eyes will help the children to listen and imagine.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1liNe-8YL5g>

Explain to the children that we are going to imagine you are on the next part of the journey together. This part is a little more dangerous; the seas become rough, and we don't know where we are going yet, but we are following Anansi and his stories.

First ask everyone to put on their lifejackets - explain that these will keep us safe on the sea.

Ask the children to imagine we are stepping onto the boat. The seas are a little rougher than earlier now. *'All together, let's hoist the sails - one, two, three. Let's take a breath in and a gentle breath out.'*

Now ask everyone to imagine the boat has set sail and we are moving off into the water.

*'We haven't been able to say goodbye to family and friends.
The sea is gentle at first, and rocks us back and forth. But then it gets a bit rougher.
What are you thinking and feeling as you look back to shore? What about the family and friends
you've left behind?
What do we wish we had been able to say to them before we left?
When we look forward we can only see the sea. What are you thinking at this moment?
What does the sea look like all around us? What can you see?
The winds are strong, the sea is rough and dark.
The waves are hitting the boat and throwing us back, but we must keep going.
What do you imagine might be ahead?
We're almost there; we can see the island.
We just need to sit up straight to check we are OK.
We're arriving in the Caribbean - islands in the West Indies. Has anyone been here before?
Does anyone know anything about the Caribbean?
We can see land and this time, Anansi is pacing up and down on the shore - what do you want to
find out about Anansi?'*

Finish the journey by asking the children to take off their lifejackets and step out of the boat, and sit back down. Discuss with the children how they found this journey.

Teacher note: Staying within the metaphor of the sea and the journey will contain the drama onboard the boat for the children and provide safety within the fictional context. However, if faced with a direct question from a child about the transatlantic slave trade, it is important to be able to answer it and to validate the pupil's enquiry and their potential lived experience in relation to what is present with Black Lives Matter and the COVID-19 pandemic, or ancestral history.

Then we would suggest you return to the metaphor - linking the question to the fictional boat journey. You could say something like:

'Anansi stories arrived in the Caribbean with the people from West Africa who were forced from their homes and into a life of terrible hardship, including a frightening journey on a ship. Then arriving miles and miles away from their home, to a new place, where life remained really difficult for them for a very long time.'

Trust what the pupils bring can be held within the activity and metaphor, as well as your knowledge and understanding of them.

ACTIVITY TWO: INTRODUCING A NEW STORYTELLER

Stage One: The Funky Chicken with Afia

Explain to the children that we've arrived on the shores of a Caribbean island and we're going to meet someone new who is going to get us ready to watch some new Anansi stories.

The actor, Afia, will teach the children the funky chicken game. This warmup activity will change the energy from the reflective drama work we have been doing about journey, and will move us into a different dynamic to watch the next stories.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGiwmFljOV0>

Stage Two: Play the video ‘Brother Anansi and Brother Snake’

Get everyone settled, ready to watch the story on the **Unicorn’s YouTube channel**. Explain that they are going to see Afia and the other actors, Juliet and Sapphire, act the story out.

Introduce the story, explaining that Anansi and all the animals heard the news that famine was coming to the land. All the other animals decide to work together, but Anansi decides to go it alone. Let’s see what Anansi does.

Stage Three: Working together or going it alone?

Play the second video with Afia. This short film will teach the children the song and actions ‘Want some, have some’, used when the animals in the story work together, planting and harvesting food ready for the famine.



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=n0m9X2LHuzs>

After learning the song its actions, discuss how the other animals worked together - while Anansi decided to go it alone and make his own plan.

Ask the children to show you, in a still image, what Anansi looked like when he decided he wanted to do this. Respond to the children’s images of Anansi and what this tells us about him.

Discuss why you think Anansi chose to go it alone, and what choice the children would have made. Would they have chosen to work with the other animals, or do their own thing, like Anansi did? This is an opportunity to dicuss the different sort of choices we sometimes have to make in life, without saying one way is necessarily right or wrong - although sometimes there are consequences.

Ask the children if there are times when they like doing things with others, and times when they like to do things on their own.

ACTIVITY THREE: ADDING THE STORY TO THE STORY BOX

Explain that we want to make sure that what we enjoyed about the story 'Brother Anansi and Brother Snake' is in Anansi's story box. Ask the children to draw their favourite moment from the story and add a line of writing that explains what is happening. Ideally, these will be small drawings - around A6 size or smaller would be best - we are going to be gathering precious fragments of all the stories as we go along.

Pick up the box and explain to the children that we are all going to put our moments from the story into the box, one by one, describing our moment as we do so.

Take the box to each child to add their individual story moment.

SEQUENCE THREE

CARRYING OUR STORIES OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

AIMS

To explore and celebrate family celebrations.

To think about commonalities and differences in the ways we celebrate by creating an invitation to a party.

To make connections between family celebrations and unique cultural identities.

RESOURCES

‘Anansi and the Two Dinners’ video, invitation template (**resource five**), story box.

STRATEGIES

Sit Down - Stand Up game, discussion, designing an invitation.

INTRODUCTION

This sequence focuses on sharing family stories of celebration. Responding to the story of the Two Dinners, the children will create invitations to their party, choosing food, music, dance and their family traditions.

ACTIVITY ONE: STORIES IN OUR FAMILIES

Stage One: Anansi and the Two Dinners

Explain to the class that in the next story, they are going to find out what happens when Anansi is invited to two parties on the same day, at the same time, but he can't choose which one to go to. Let's see what Anansi does.

Play the episode 'Anansi the the Two Dinners' on the Unicorn's **YouTube channel**.

Stage Two: Sit Down - Stand Up

Now that you have watched the story 'Anansi and the Two Dinners', play a game of Sit Down - Stand Up.

Explain that we are going to think about what we would do if we had to choose. Starting with everyone sitting down, say that you will call out the choices and the children should stand up if that is what they would choose. Let them know what each choice is between, and then ask everyone who would choose the first option to stand up first. Then, everyone who would choose the second option should stand up.

The options you can put to them could include:

- Chocolate cake or coconut cake
- Lobster or fried chicken
- Callaloo or plantain

There are some foods children might be unfamiliar with; discuss how the two dinners in the story are foods which are popular in the Caribbean. Children who know these foods can describe them to others, and children who haven't tried them can remember what they looked like in the story, and choose the one they think they would most like to try.

Stage Three: Our special foods and celebrating them

Now go on to discuss the different foods children in the class might have at special celebrations or family get-togethers that they experience.

Start by sharing what special foods you might have at a celebration or party with your family or friends. Is there a special dish, or way that the food is prepared, that you think is particular to your family?

Encourage the children to share all the different kinds of special celebration foods they might have. Try to broaden the discussion to include as many different kinds of foods children know and encourage them to describe the foods, what they like about them and whether they have them at particular celebrations, such as Ramadan, Passover, Christmas, Diwali, or birthdays for example. You could also include Notting Hill Carnival.

ACTIVITY TWO: INVITATION TO MY PARTY

Stage One: Design your invitation

Explain to the children that they are going to imagine the best party celebration they can think of, and create an invitation to invite everyone in the class along. We want all the parties to be different, where the guests can try new foods, dances, music and entertainment, and meet a special member of their family.

Give the children a piece of card which is going to be their invitation (**resource five**), and ask them to think of all the things they want to eat and do at their party to help them to decorate their invitation. Ask the children to consider:

- What will the title of your party be?
- What special foods or drinks will be served?
- What kind of things will happen at your party? Is there special music and dancing?
- Who will be a special guest? Is there someone in your family who's really good at stories, can tell good jokes, do magic or other party tricks?
- Does your party food, music, and entertainment connect us to another part of the world which is important to your family?

What happened at the party?

On the other side of their invitation, ask the children to write a short story about what happened at their party, describing the best thing that happened, and how all the guests enjoyed it.

ACTIVITY THREE: ADDING PARTY STORIES TO THE BOX

Explain that we want to make sure we add all the party invitations and stories into Anansi's story box, so that they will be remembered and told again one day.

Pick up the box and explain to the children that they're going to put their invitation into the story box, one by one, saying the name of their party as they do so.

SEQUENCE FOUR

CATCHING OUR WISDOM ON THE WIND

AIMS

To explore the notion of wisdom: what it is, and where and how we experience it.

To act out the story as a whole class, taking on all the roles, to deepen understanding of wisdom.

To think and write from the perspective of a different character in the story, to explore how stories are reimagined and retold while also remaining the same.

RESOURCES

‘Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom’ video, Story Whoosh script, story box.

STRATEGIES

Improvisation, Story Whoosh, writing from a character’s perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Activities will explore the story and what wisdom means to the children. They will act out their own version of the story in a Story Whoosh, and then write the story from the perspective of one of the characters in the story; the wise girl, Anansi, the tree, or the pot of wisdom.

ACTIVITY ONE: ADDING TO THE POT OF WISDOM

Stage One: Watching the story

Explain to the class that in the next story, they are going to find out what happens when Anansi collects all of the wisdom from around the world, and puts it in a pot, wanting to keep it for himself. Let's see what Anansi does.

Watch the episode 'Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom' on the **Unicorn's YouTube channel**.

Stage Two: What is wisdom?

Remind the class that at the beginning of the story, Anansi has collected all the wisdom, from all around.

Find a pot or basket, and ask the children to imagine that it is Anansi's pot of wisdom.

While holding the pot, ask *'I wonder what wisdom is made of?'* Hear any first ideas the children might have.

Then ask *'I wonder what we need to make ourselves wise?'* Again, hear any thoughts the children have.

Now give a couple of examples of people in your life who you think are wise, and something they told or taught you, for example: *'My grandmother is very wise, and she would always tell me to be kind, so I'm going to put 'Be kind' into the pot.'*

Try to think of a couple more examples to help the children to think of the range of things people might say that you think are wise:

'My little brother is also very wise - when he cries, he always lets me know exactly what it is he's feeling, and why he's upset - I'm also going to put 'Say how you feel' into the pot.'

'When I am upset, I go to my sister for advice, and she tells me to take three deep breaths to try and calm down. I'm going to add 'When you're upset, take three deep breaths' into the pot.'

Now that you have modelled some examples, ask the children if they can add more wisdom into the pot.

'Can you think of someone in your life who is very wise, and tell us what they say to you as you put the wisdom into the pot?'

End this activity by placing the pot alongside the boat, the map, and the box, and saying that wisdom is there for everyone who needs it.

ACTIVITY TWO: ANANSI'S POT OF WISDOM RE-SPUN

Stage One: Story Whoosh

Explain to the pupils that having heard the story about the pot of wisdom, they are now going to act it out, and they will also act out moments they did not see or hear in the Unicorn's version.

Below is an example of how to facilitate the Story Whoosh technique which tells pupils when to stop acting and sit back down. Use the following script verbatim or to inform your own retelling of key moments to allow pupils to explore the themes in the story. Allow pupils to be in the moment and to respond with new ideas and characters if they arise. Add that this is how stories survive - when they are told again and again.

ANANSI AND THE POT OF WISDOM STORY WHOOSH

Anansi was always hatching a plan.

(Show us what Anansi looks like when he hatches a plan.)

Whoosh

One day he decided to collect up all the wisdom around, and put it in a pot.

(Show us Anansi collecting the wisdom, and you might also invite someone to be the pot.)

Whoosh

Anansi hid the pot from all the other animals.

(Show us Anansi sneaking around, trying to hide the pot.)

Whoosh

He tried to hide the pot in the caves, but the bears were there.

(Can you show us Anansi trying to hide the pot, and can we all be bears?)

Whoosh

He tried to hide it in the lake, but the crocodiles were there.

(Can we all be crocodiles?)

Whoosh

And up at the top of the mountain, but the eagles were there.

(Can we all be eagles?)

Whoosh

Because Anansi had collected so much wisdom, all the people around began arguing.

(Ask pupils what the people could be arguing about, then ask them in pairs to be those people.)

Take several suggestions from the class before letting everyone have a go at arguing. You may want to ask them to whisper their arguments, or act them out without words, and then stop them and ask them what their argument is about.)

Whoosh

Anansi decided to hide the pot at the top of a tree.

(Let's all be a tall prickly tree. Now let's all be Anansi trying to climb the tree. Now, let's all be Anansi, who is angry because he can't climb the tree with the pot tied around his stomach.)

Whoosh

When a little girl offered to help Anansi, he was really unkind.

(What did the little girl suggest Anansi try? How did Anansi respond? Then what did Anansi do when the little girl left?)

Let's all be the little girl saying hello to Anansi, and giving him advice about how to climb the tree. Now let's all be Anansi being unkind to her. Then, let's all be Anansi doing exactly what the little girl said he should do, and climbing to the top of the tree.)

Whoosh

When the little girl left, she thought about how unkind he'd been and how it made her feel.

(How did she feel? What did she think of Anansi? Let's all be the little girl thinking and saying those things out loud.)

Whoosh

Even though Anansi had reached the top of the tree, he felt sorry about what he'd done, and he thought about the people he could hear arguing. He came up with a new plan.

(Let's all be Anansi hatching a new plan.)

Whoosh

Anansi scattered the wisdom from the pot all around, and the wind carried it everywhere, and all were able to have wisdom when they needed it. In the end, Anansi, too, was wise!

Whoosh

Stage Two: Writing the story from one character's perspective

Explain to the children that you want them to write the story 'Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom' in their own words - they can add other parts into the story that weren't in the Unicorn version.

They can tell the story as the wise girl, or as Anansi, or even as the tree or the pot, describing what happened to them and what they saw in the story in the first person.

Stage Three: Adding the stories to the box

Explain that we want to make sure we add all the different story versions about the pot of wisdom into Anansi's story box, to remind ourselves that the story can be told in different ways.

Pick up the box and explain to the children that we're all going to put our stories into the box, one by one, saying the name of our story as we do.

SEQUENCE FIVE

HOMEWARD BOUND

AIMS

To complete the journey home, and deepen the experience that home can also be found within us.

To reflect on where the Anansi stories originated, and how they travelled around the world.

To share and make connections between the children's experiences of the stories and the journey they've made.

To celebrate the power and importance of stories from around the world, and that everyone has their own story.

RESOURCES

Audio recording 3 (**resource three**), story box, map (**resource four**) and boat (**resource one**).

STRATEGIES

Listening to a story, acting out the journey, mapping.

INTRODUCTION

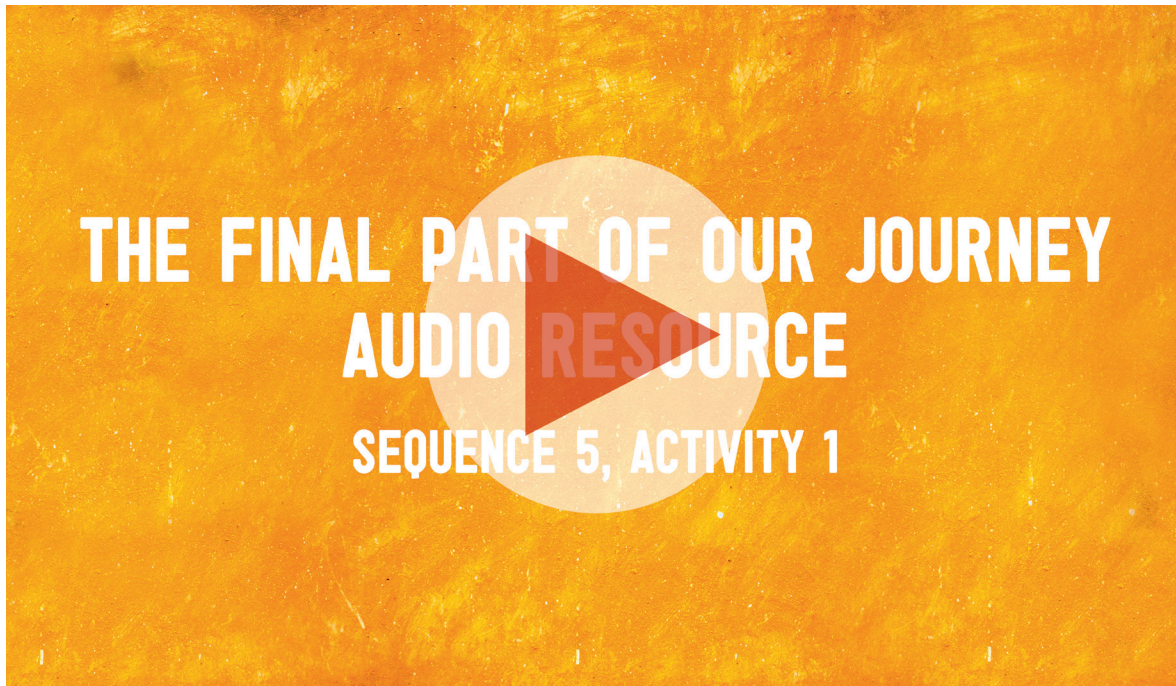
This final journey is about returning home and capturing the pupil's memories and feelings about the whole story experience, as well as allowing them to identify their own wisdom and those qualities that they might share with Anansi and the little wise girl in the wisdom story. Anansi is a trickster, but he also acquires wisdom, and his stories have survived for hundreds of years, with new ones being created all the time. Anansi is the keeper of stories from all over the world!

ACTIVITY ONE: GOING HOME

Stage One: The final part of our journey

Explain that we are now going to imagine we are coming home, across the sea, after our adventures discovering the Anansi stories.

Get the class settled, and listen to the last part of the story narrated by Sam (below and **resource three**).



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=od1tuKGHSL4>

Stage Two: Finding a souvenir

Explain that before they step back on board the boat, we find something we want to take home with us from the island. Ask them what they might look for, and where they might find a souvenir to take with them.

Ask them to act out, on the spot, finding their souvenir and putting it somewhere safe to take home with them on the final part of the journey.

Now they are ready to get back onboard with their souvenir.

Stage Three: Bringing the sea journey narrative to life

First, ask everyone to put on their lifejackets, reminding them that these will keep us safe.

Ask the children to imagine they are stepping onto the boat and sitting down. Now ask everyone to imagine the boat has set sail, and as we are moving off, the sea is gently rocking us back and forth.

'All together, let's hoist the sails.

Let's take a breath in, and a gentle breath out.

The weather forecast is good for our journey home.

Now you are out at sea, ask the children some of the following:

'What are you thinking and feeling as you look back at the island you've left behind?

How did we say goodbye to Anansi when we left?

What does the sea look like all around us?

What are you looking forward to as we return home?

Is there anything worrying you?

We are almost there, we're almost home.

Have you got your souvenir safe?

Oh, look, there's wisdom being carried on the wind - can you catch some? What have you caught?

Who can see you waiting for you on the shore?

What will you remember the most about Anansi?

We're home.

Let's take off our lifejackets and step out of the boat and back onto land. How are you feeling, now that we've returned home?'

ACTIVITY TWO: HOME

Explain that now that we have heard all of the stories, and created some of our own, we can look at where the stories have travelled. Move the small model boat on your map or globe, from the Caribbean to Britain.

This is an opportunity to widen the conversation about colonialism and to explain what it was. Include the very long relationships the places we visited (West Africa and the Caribbean) have had with Britain.

Ask children in the class where else on the map or globe they have family. Can they point out where members of their family live, or used to live before they travelled to Britain?

You may also wish to reference the Windrush generation, and say something about the notion of home often meaning that many of us have connections to many places.

Encourage them to think about how the Anansi stories have travelled all over the world and about all the exciting other stories we haven't yet heard, as well as being able to carry the story of their journey home with them!

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER AND DIRECTOR JUSTIN AUDIBERT

Why did you decide to create an online version of the Anansi stories?

Because they were made in a storytelling tradition, it felt like they would really work being remade for film in lockdown. They already asked the audience to use their imaginations to conjure up the different characters in the theatre show, and so I thought it would translate really well to do that onscreen. They allow for a really direct response with the viewer. Plus they were full of singing, music and movement, and I realised that these could provide the dynamism in the visual storytelling. I also loved the idea of taking these very, very old stories and reimagining them in the most contemporary medium possible. There was something really exciting about that. In addition to that I also had a GREAT time making them in the first place, so was very excited to collaborate with all the existing cast and creative team, and also to bring on board Todd and John from Illuminations too. It has been such a pleasure to revisit the source material.

What are the challenges in adapting the stories for an online audience?

The pace of things on screen is so much quicker than in the theatre. I miss some of the quiet and control of atmosphere and tempo that you can get from the live stage performance. Film is just a much faster medium. It has been great to try and work that quicker tempo out. I have been really well guided by Todd who is the DOP and editor. Obviously, we have had the additional challenge of only being able to film on camera phones and in the actors accommodation whilst under lockdown. In some ways though, those limitations have made us more inventive, and got us thinking about shots - such as how Snake whacks Anansi - in ways we would never have come up with if the actors had been in the same room together to film it. So much of the storytelling is in how and when you cut away from things. We have had lots of fun with this.

I suppose I also miss the sense of relationship with an audience you have at the Unicorn. We have tried to keep that in the adaptation but won't know if we have succeeded until we watch the final cut.

Did you want to direct the Anansi stories for this age range?

I've always been fascinated since I was a little boy by the character of Anansi. He's inquisitive, he's confident and he's smart, but he knows he's smart and sometimes gets his comeuppance because of that. I guess I think he is very relatable to young children, because they're growing and learning and working the world out and as they do. They're pushing at and exploring boundaries, and that is what Anansi does all the time.

What do you personally connect with in the stories?

These stories were told to me at relatives' houses when I was a small boy, and I remember my friends also really enjoying being told them when they were recounted. Somehow, the character of Anansi just remained really vivid to me. I think it's something to do with the fact that he's morally ambiguous; sometimes he does the right thing and sometimes he doesn't, and I suppose that level of complexity is, in many ways, more interesting than simple fairytale morality.

Do you think the stories teach a lesson or a moral, or are they just good stories?

I would say that there's a thread of a kind of wry scepticism running through the stories. Anansi is always looking to take shortcuts to either more knowledge, like in 'Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom', more praise, like in 'Anansi and the Three Kings', or more food, like in 'Anansi and the Two Dinners'. And I suppose the bottom line is that these schemes don't tend to pay off. At the same time, when something really dangerous or harmful is about to happen, somehow he finds a way of using his wits to come out unscathed; so his quick wit is seen as beneficial sometimes. I think it's interesting that the stories show how character traits can be useful in one context, but problematic in another.

Why are the stories relevant for children in 2020?

I think that there will be children with West African or Caribbean heritage who will be really engaged to see stories from their homes come to life in front of them, and there will be children who will be introduced for the first time to an exciting new character and world. We at the Unicorn want to reflect the different cultures that are found in London and the UK, and this feels like a really exciting way of doing that.

Do you feel a responsibility to remain true to the origin of the stories?

We are retelling stories that are part of an oral tradition. They have changed and evolved with each generation which discovers and tells them. There is no such thing as authorship or the writer's intent, so that leaves us free as artists to reinterpret them so that they speak to today, and to today's audience. At the same time, we want to make sure we are representing the heritage of these stories culturally, with the world of our sound and design.

Which stories have you included and why?

I've included 'Anansi and the Pot of Wisdom', which is where he tries to gather all the common sense and wisdom in the world so that he can keep it just for himself. I love the idea of someone understanding how important knowledge is, and then attempting such an epic task in order to gain an advantage over others. Needless to say, Anansi gets his comeuppance and I think learns something from it. I've also included 'Anansi and the Two Dinners' (or 'Two Parties', as it's sometimes called), which is when Anansi is invited to two parties and doesn't want to miss out on either, to show everyone how he's the best dancer of all the guests and how he can enjoy two really delicious meals, and somehow he comes away with neither food nor fun.

I love how his speed of thought and quickness often count against him, but also how they invariably get him out of any real trouble in the end. I just think he is such a compelling character.

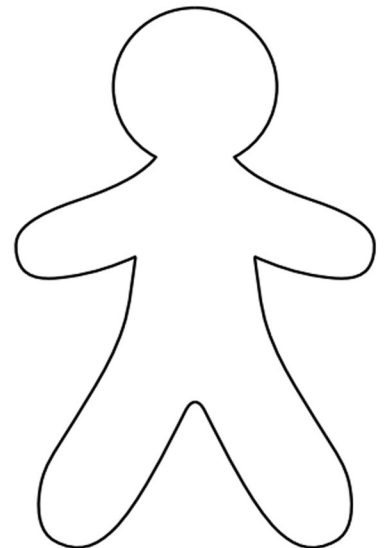
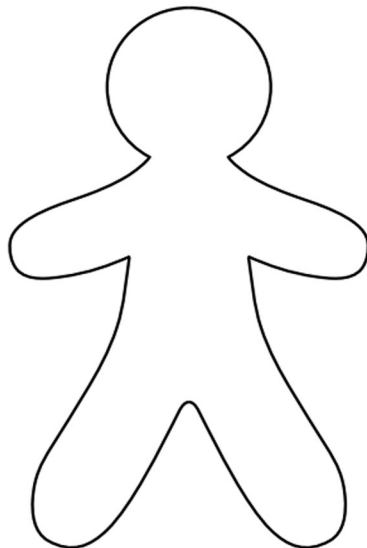
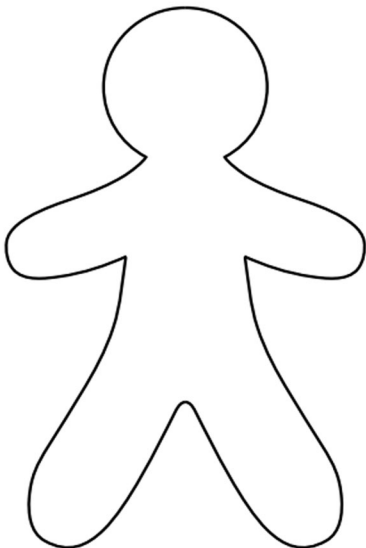
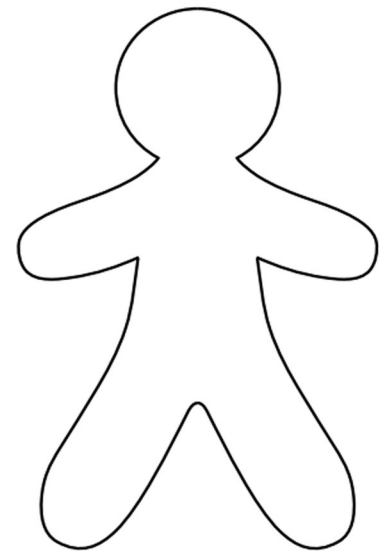
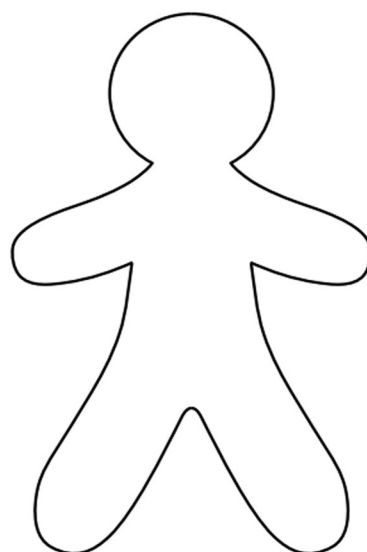
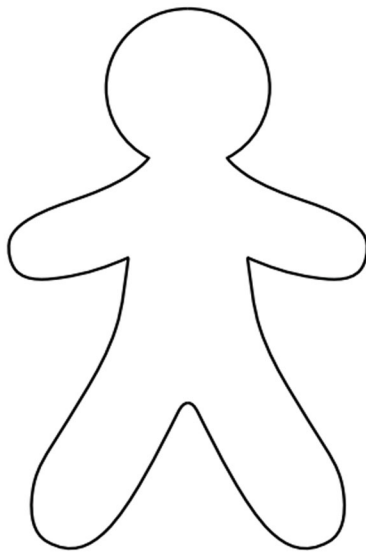
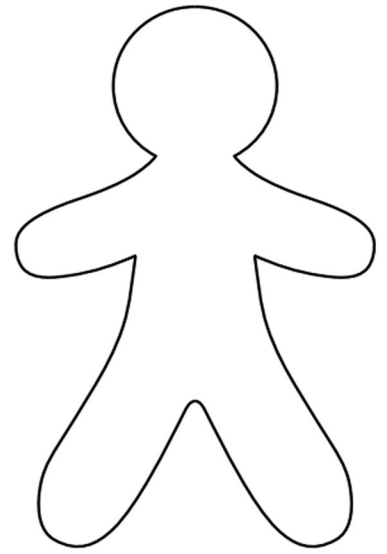
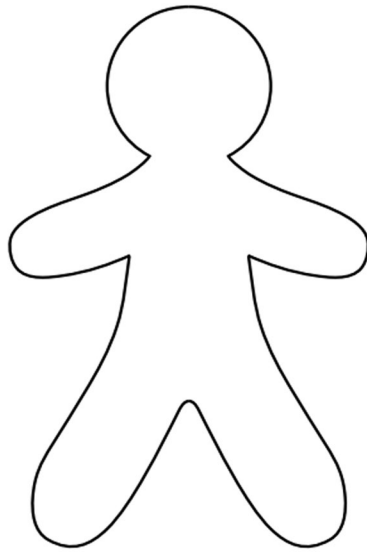
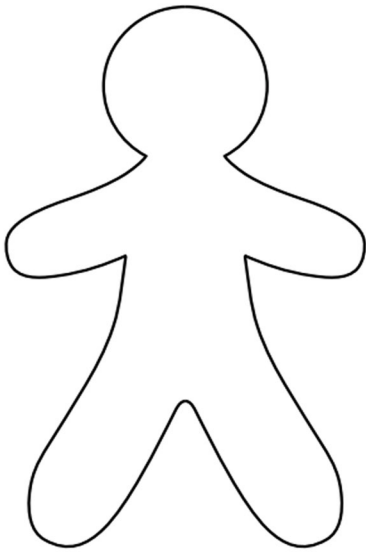
RESOURCE ONE

'How to Make a Paper Boat (Origami Instructions)' by EzOrigami (duration 3 mins 39 sec secs)

<https://youtu.be/vNba3jbBSOw>



RESOURCE TWO



RESOURCE THREE

Beginning Our Journey audio recording (duration 2 mins 54 secs) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=c521jeOFXr4

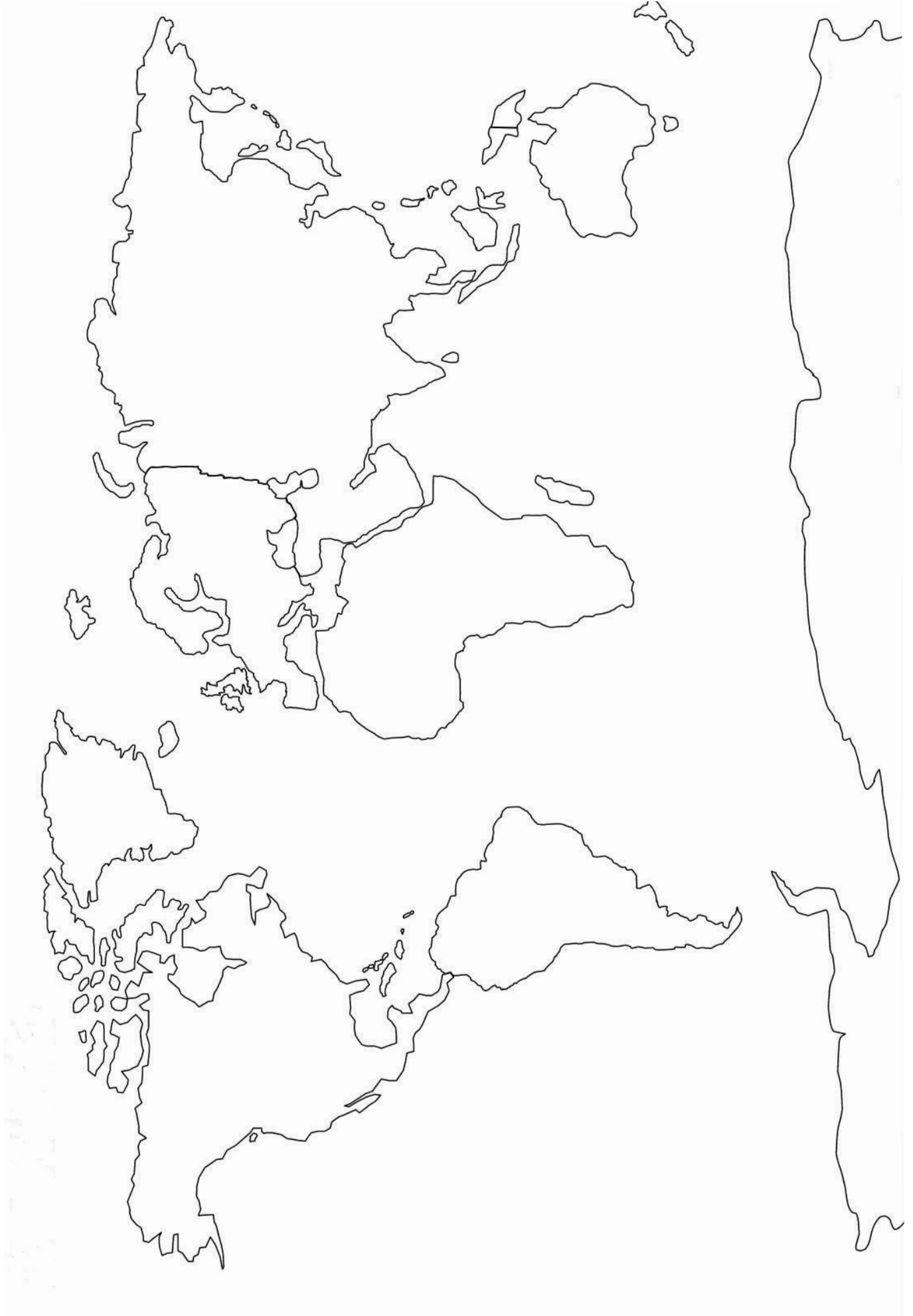
Continuing the Journey audio recording (duration 3 mins 38 secs) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1liNe-8YL5g

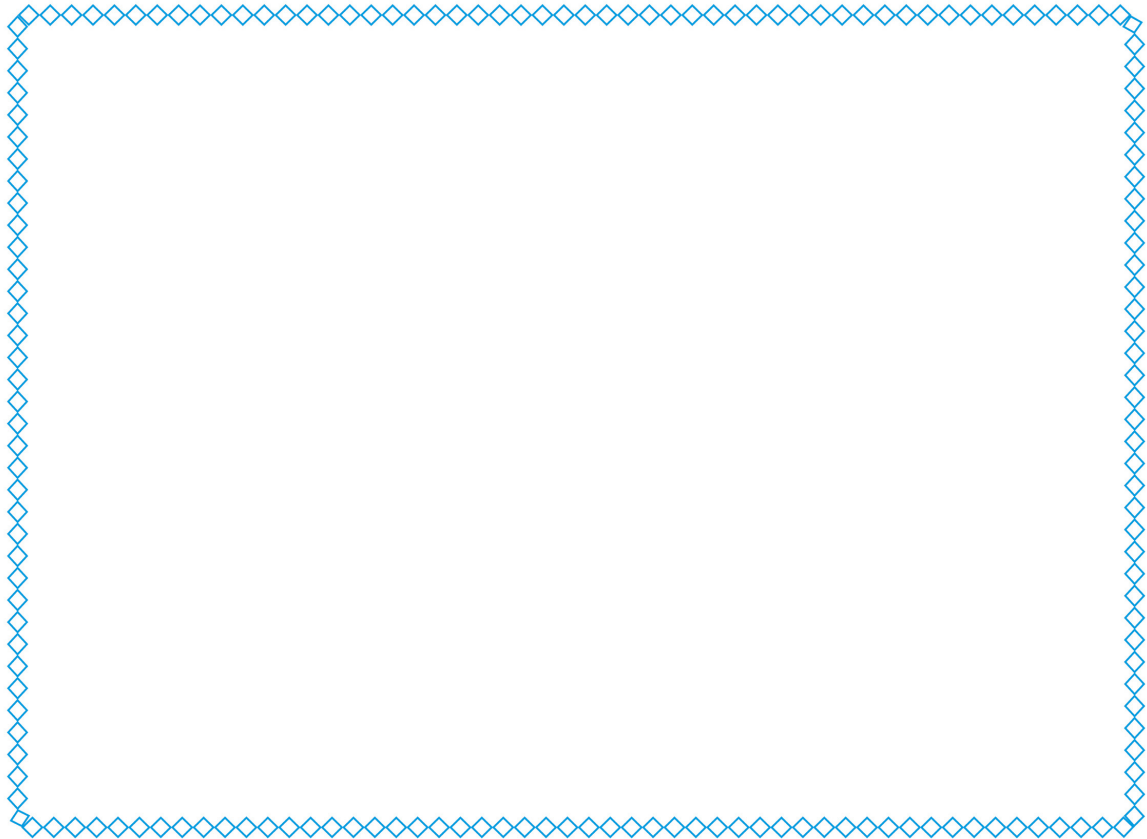
The Final Part Of Our Journey audio recording (duration 3 mins 1 sec) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=od1tuKDHSL4

RESOURCE FOUR



RESOURCE FIVE



VIDEO LINKS

Unicorn Theatre's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/UnicornTheatre

Resource pack videos

The Time Before Stories - Introducing Anansi video (duration 3 mins 23 secs) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbUVNszZKys

'How Anansi Became the Keeper of Stories' video (duration 7 mins 3 secs) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v6lOCzSrZw

The Funky Chicken with Afia video (duration 2 mins 22 secs) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGlwMFljOV0

Sequence 2, activity 2 (stage three): Want Some, Have Some (duration 2 mins 52 secs) -

www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0m9X2LHuzs



THE UK'S THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

ANANSI THE SPIDER RE-SPUN

A Unicorn Production

Created and directed by Justin Audibert

Filming and editing by Will Monks

'The Funky Chicken' video resource created by Afia Abusham

Resource pack written by Sam Adams and Catherine Greenwood

UNICORN THEATRE, 147 TOOLEY STREET, LONDON SE1 2HZ  LONDON BRIDGE
020 7645 0560 · UNICORNTHEATRE.COM



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