

ANANSI TO JOHN HENRY

About the Show

This show is a celebration of African American folktales, oral traditions & literature. Today you will learn about the Anansi Tales which can be traced back to the African continent. Anansi is a very important character in many African Folktales. He takes the shape of a spider and is considered to have knowledge of all stories. You will also hear about the Southern Gullah Geechee people who live in the Islands off the coast of the Carolina's, Georgia, and Florida. They love the trickster rabbit and Brer animal stories. We also showcase tall tales like John Henry which became especially popular during the Civil Rights Movement. Be ready for this interactive production because it's an exciting and enthusiastic exploration into this wonderful literary world!



What are Folktales?

Folktales are stories that are passed down by word of mouth, which is also known as oral tradition. Many of the popular folktales are passed down from generation to generation and much later written down. However, most folktales are told rather than read. Folktales usually speak to everyone and are not just enjoyable for a certain time period. They often

include supernatural elements, like talking animals or giants! Some tales teach lessons or just explain the origin or something. Some familiar folktales you might have heard before are Johnny Appleseed, Davey Crocket and the Frozen Dawn, Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, & Daniel Boone's Dear. So the next time you find yourself in need of a great story, reach for any of the wonderful folktales you know and carry on the tradition!

Cartoon of John Henry



Anansi the Spider and Storyteller



Drawing of Brer Bear



ACTIVITIES!

- **The Telephone Game:** Take one of the folktales you heard today and grab a group of friends or students. One person whispers the short story to another person, this story will be passed through a line of people until the last play announces the story to the entire group. See how similar or how different the story ends up after being told by various people.
- **MAMBA Game:** A Mamba is a South African Snake. Mark off an area on the playground to play inside. Everyone must stay within the marked off area, if you leave the playing area, you must sit down outside the game and watch. One person is chosen to be the MAMBA. At the signal the game begins. The MAMBA tries to catch the players. When a player is caught that player joins the MAMBA by placing his/hers hands on the MAMBA's shoulders or around the waist. Each new "catch" becomes another part of the MAMBA's body, always adding to the tail. Only the MAMBA or head of the snake can catch new players. The MAMBA can use it's "body" to capture other players because player may not pass between the snake's body parts. The game ends when all but one of the players has been caught. The last person caught becomes the next MAMBA!
- **Safari Time:** Put the students in groups, some will be on the safari and others will be the animals. Have the students make binoculars out of toilet paper tubes and yarn or construction paper and tape and the other students will make animal masks out of paper plates and yarn. Set up 4 chairs like a car and have them roam about talk about the plants and animals they see. Other characters could make camera and pretend to take photos.
- **An African Party:** Student should dress up like their favorite African animal or wear native African clothing. Add traditional African music and assign each student to bring one food dish to share.

NUMBERS

Africa's true size as a continent is **30 million square km**

Africa is home to approximately **1.1 billion people**

There are an estimated **1500-2000 different African languages**

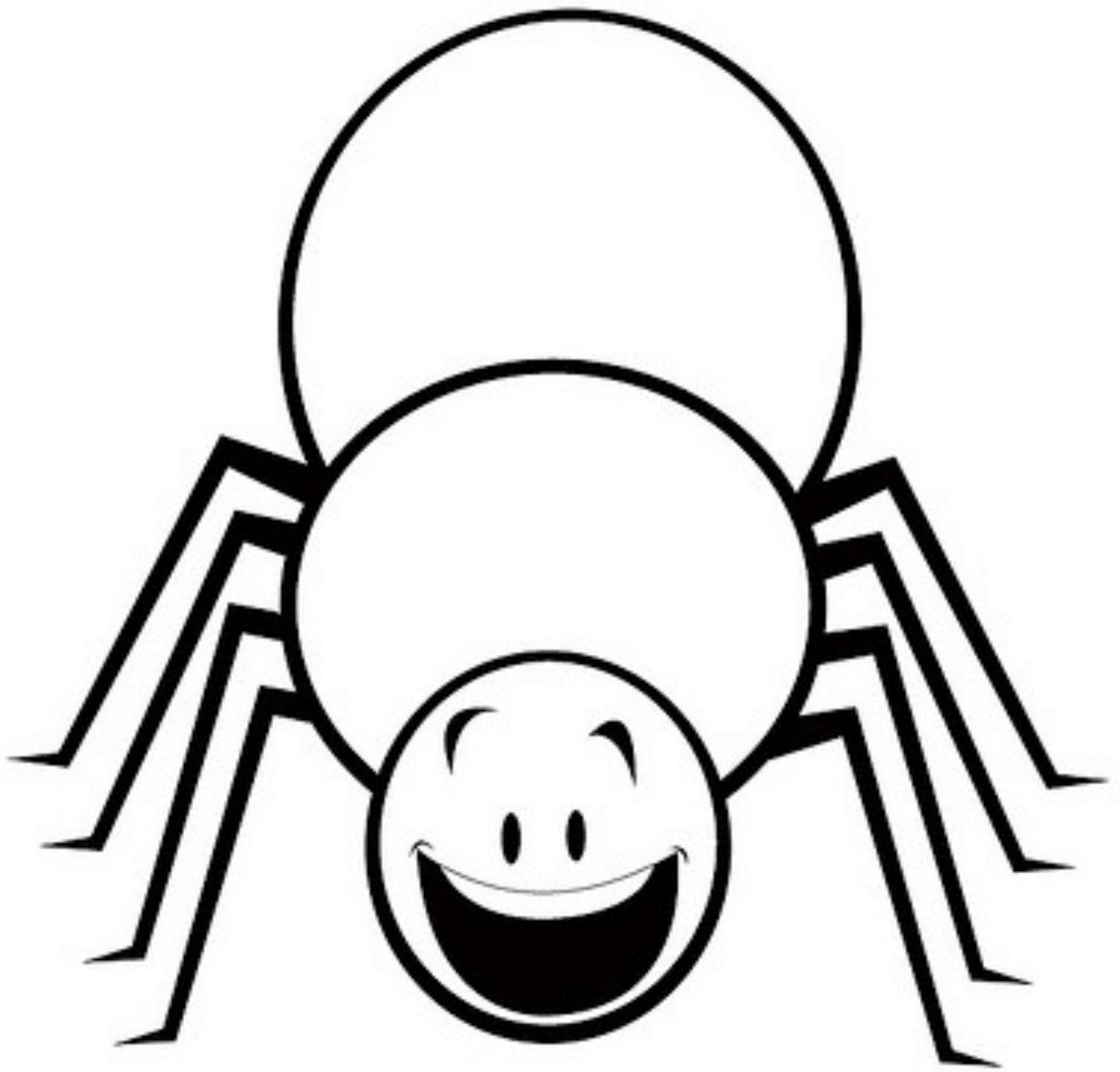
There is over **1,100 species of mammals and 2,600 species of birds living in Africa**

The Gullah Geechee call **12,818 square miles home all over the Southeastern Atlantic Coast.**

Discussion Questions?

- Many of these stories came with African Americans when they had to leave Africa as a way to keep their culture and traditions alive. If your family or friends had to move, what traditions would you keep or carry with you to your new home?
- Who was your favorite character in today's performance? What makes them your favorite character?
- Can you think of a time when you felt like one of the animals in the story? What did you learn?
- John Henry was a real person, but the stories people told about him were tall tales. Why do you think people exaggerated stories about him to make him seem larger than life?
- If you were going to create a play about the folktales you heard today, what things would you do differently and what things would you keep the same?

Anansi



Try this Anansi the Spider coloring page! Get creative by drawing designs on his back, giving him clothes to wear, or putting him in a location like the park or the kitchen. Then tell the class your own Anansi Story!



YOU CAN DO THIS TOO!

Where to start: All of our actors started out playing and telling stories when they were young -then they decided to study acting in school. Now they are pros! Here are some ways you can start doing theatre right away!

In School! Does your school have plays or musical performances? This is a great place to start.

In Your Community! Many towns have community theaters or local acting groups. See if you can try out!

Start Something! If your school doesn't have a drama club or a theatre club, talk to your favorite teacher about how you might be able to start one.

At Home! Get together with friends, cousins, brothers and sisters and make your own play. You can make up plays based on your favorite books and stories. Invite family and friends to see your performance.

Try new things and do your best at them! There are lots of jobs in the theatre besides acting. There are people who paint the sets, make costumes, write plays and more. Get the most out of your art, music and English classes. You can use all of these things to be a live theatre pro!

Before, During and After the Play...



BEFORE YOU SEE THE PLAY...

Attending the theatre is very different from watching TV or going to the movies. For one thing, the actors are real people who are performing right then and there. They can see and hear everything that happens in the audience. Because of this, YOU are an important part of the play and its important to do your job as an audience member well. Here are some tips before you see the play.

1. Please be quiet and respectful so everyone else around you can hear what's happening and so the actors can do their job.
2. If something is funny, it is okay to laugh!
3. The actors may ask you to participate. Don't be afraid to respond, ask a question or volunteer!
4. Keep your hands to yourself and your eyes up front.
5. If you like the play, be sure to clap at the end.
6. Have fun! Enjoy yourself!



After seeing the Play...

Write your own review of the play! A review is a way of telling your thoughts about a play, movie or book. Consider the following when you are writing your review.

What was your favorite part? Who was your favorite character? Can you summarize the play in your own words? If you had written this play, would you have done anything different? Would you recommend this play to a friend? Name one new thing you learned from watching this play!

FUN FACTS ABOUT THEATRE!

After a play is over and everyone goes home, there is always a light left on backstage. It's called a ghost light!

The oldest play that is still around was written by an Ancient Greek named Aeschylus. It's almost 2500 years old!

The longest performance on stage ever was over 23 hours long! It happened in New Jersey in 2010.

William Shakespeare is a famous play writer. He wrote 37 plays and is still quoted by many people. There are 157 million google pages that mention him--the most of any famous person ever!

In theatre, it's considered bad luck to tell an actor, "Good luck" before a performance. Instead, you're supposed to say, "Break a leg!"

In Ancient Greece, audiences stamped their feet rather than clapping their hands to applaud.



A mini-van is our hip and favored mode of transportation for touring the country!

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THEATRE VOCABULARY!

Actor: The people on-stage performing the play.

Backdrop: The background for the play.

Props: Anything that an actor holds while on-stage--a cane, book or rubber chicken.

Downstage: the area closest to the audience a long time ago stage were built at angles.



Upstage: The area away from the audience, like the back wall of the a stage.

Director: The person who told the actors where to go while they were on-stage and helped them create the characters they played.

Everything about the Theatre!

Facts about us!

1. Did you know we're owned by an Emmy winning actor?
2. Our actors average 1,000 miles a week traveling the country to entertain young audiences.
3. Our programs have been seen in almost every corner of the country and even around the world.
4. We watch over 1200 actors audition before we cast our season.
5. We offer dozens of different shows a season from Black History to anti-bullying and literary classics.
6. We toured Moscow with performances of our Aesop's Fables.
7. We're based in Asheville, NC.

Costumes: The wigs, clothing and glasses that the actors wore to help flush out their characters.



Auditions: How an actor gets a role is by auditioning. They may have to interview, pretend to be a character from the play or read something from it.

Set Designer: The person who decided what should be on the background and who painted or created it.

The Process of a Play:

1. Actors audition
2. Directors cast the show (that means they choose actors)
3. The directors and actors rehearse the play (that means they practice it).
4. A team of people works on building the set, costumes and props.
5. The play opens (that means it is performed for the first time)!

Were there other terms that came from the experience of seeing the live play that you'd like to learn more about? What did you like about being involved in a live performance?

ABOUT US!

Founded in 2003, Bright Star Theatre tours the nation offering high quality, affordable programs to every imaginable venue. We've had countless engagements at the National Theatre, toured to Moscow and are so grateful to be in your very school today!

BRIGHT STAR THEATRE

Bright Star Touring Theatre performs across the country from Boston to Burbank and many schools, museums, theaters and community events in between. Each season our shows run the gamut from Black History to anti-bullying, from literary classics to biographical shows. Our shows are available throughout the year for any event in any part of the world.

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Learn more about this show, this company & our whole Season:

www.brightstartheatre.com

We want every show to be special and remarkable for our audience. Please feel free to connect with us at anytime to tell us about your experience:

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