

Anansi tries to steal all the wisdom in the world

An African trickster story



ANANSI

Anansi the spider knew that he was not wise. He was clever, and could outwit many different people, but he knew that he did not have very much wisdom.

Then one day he had a clever thought. "I know," he said to himself, "if I can get all of the wisdom in the village and put it in a hollow gourd, I will be very wise indeed. In fact, I would be the wisest of all!"

So he found a suitable gourd and then began his plan, going from door to door to collect the village's wisdom.

The people chuckled at poor Anansi, for they knew that of all the creatures, it was he that needed some wisdom the most. So each put a bit in his gourd and wished him well on his search.

Soon the gourd was overflowing with wisdom and could hold no more. So Anansi needed to find a place to store it. "I am certainly the wisest person in the world now, but if I don't find a good hiding place for my wisdom I may surely lose it."

He looked around and spotted a tall, tall tree. "Ah," he said to himself, "if I could hide my wisdom high in that tree, I would never have to worry about someone stealing it from me!"

So Anansi set out to climb the towering tree with the heavy gourd tied to the front of his belly where it would be safe. As he began to climb, however, the gourd full of wisdom kept getting in the way. He tried and tried, but he could not make climb any higher.

Just then Anansi's youngest son walked by. "What are you doing Father?" asked the little spider. "I am climbing this tree with my gourd full of wisdom," Anansi replied.

"But Father," said the son, "wouldn't it be much easier if you tied the gourd behind you instead of in front?" Anansi sat there quietly for a very long time before saying, "Shouldn't you be going home now?"

After his son had left, Anansi moved the gourd so that it was behind him and proceeded up the tree with no problems at all. When he had reached the top, he cried out, "I walked all over and collected so much wisdom that I am the wisest person ever, but still my baby son is wiser than me. Take back your wisdom!"

He lifted the gourd high over his head and spilled its contents into the wind. The wisdom blew far and wide and settled across the land.

And this is how wisdom came to the whole world.