

Anansi and the Talking Melon

by Eric A. Kimmel

illustrated by Janet Stevens

Summary

Anansi the Spider uses a thorn to bore a hole in one of Elephant's delicious looking melons. He crawls inside and eats until he can eat no more. Imagine Anansi's predicament when he discovers he's eaten so much that he is stuck inside the melon! But being true to his trickster nature, Anansi finds a way to trick Elephant into believing that his melon (the one that contains Anansi himself) can talk! Imagine Elephant and his animal friends surprise as they marvel at the one-of-a-kind talking melon!

Ideas for Classroom Use

Discussion Questions

Encourage the children to find examples from the story to document their answers.

- > *How did Anansi get himself into a predicament this time?*
- > *How did Anansi make the most of the predicament?*
- > *What part of the story did you find the most humorous?*

Responding to the Text

Writing

That's ridiculous as...

What else might the animals find ridiculous? Have children gather in groups to brainstorm a list of other outrageous ideas that Elephant's animal friends might find impossible to believe. Remind them of the "moss-covered rock" in *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* as well as the talking melon and bananas in this story.

When they've created a list, encourage children to decide on one outrageous idea to create a short story about. They could create the story by writing it out, typing it into the computer or sharing the story through drawn or painted pictures. Remind them to include Elephant and his friends and of course, Anansi.

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Art

Speaking/Thinking bubbles

Teach children to use speaking and thinking bubbles to reinforce their comprehension and understanding of the story.



- Draw a speaking bubble on the board (at left above), reminding children that these are used frequently in comic strips to show what each character/person is saying or their “outside” voice.

- Draw a thinking bubble (at left below) stating that this is how a cartoonist shares what a person might be thinking, their “inside” voice.



- Discuss that sometimes characters say one thing but are thinking something else.

Give each child an 8-1/2 X 11 piece of paper and instruct them to fold it into four equal parts. Tell them that you will reread Anansi and the Talking Melon and stop at 4 different places in the story. When you stop, they are to sketch the characters in the story, what the characters are thinking and what they are saying. Remind the children that these drawings don't have to be their best — the goal is to focus on the characters — their speech and their thoughts. Later, if time, they can return to add details in the pictures.

Two possible places to stop in your reading and encourage children to sketch might be:

- Anansi has just “talked” to Elephant from inside the melon for the first time. Draw what each animal said and what they are thinking now as they head to see the king.
- The animals have presented the melon to the king who is beginning to prod the melon as it won't talk. What is he saying and thinking? What do you think Anansi is thinking?

This strategy is shared in the book entitled: Tomorrow's Classroom Today by Brownlie, Close and Wingren — a Heinemann Publication.

Cooking/Tasting

Taste testing melons

This would be a great opportunity to bring in a variety of different melons for children to sample and taste. You might try to find cantaloupe, honeydew melon, casaba melon and any other melons native to your part of the country. Children can share and graph their favorites on a simple classroom graph.