

Anansi and Turtle

An Ashanti Tale



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Illustrated by Joe Weissmann

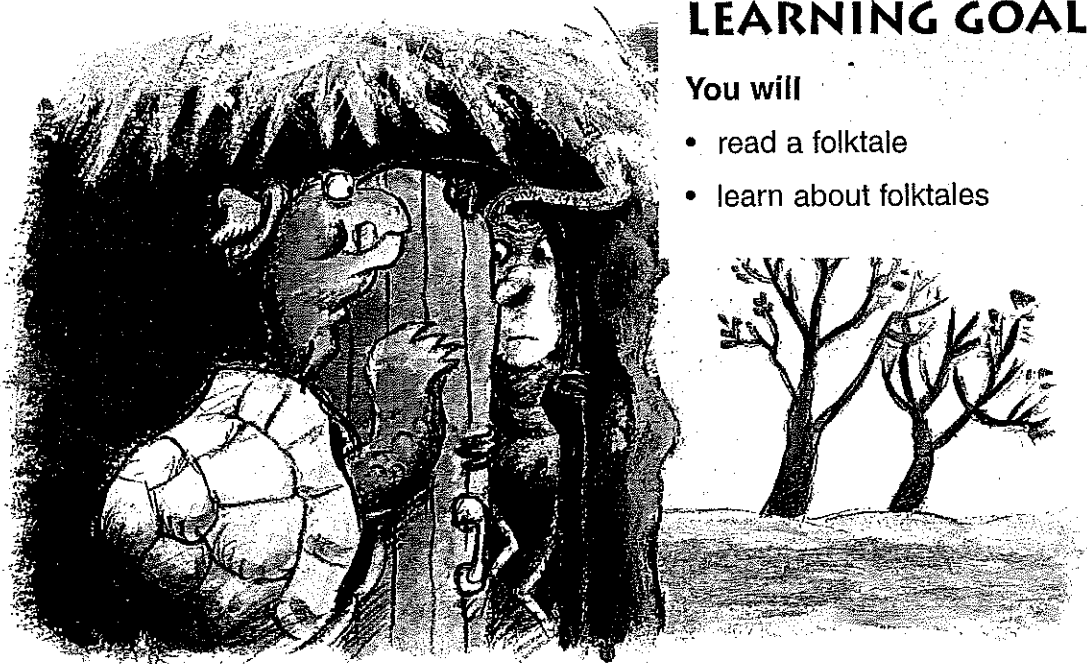
READING TIP

Find out about folktales

A folktale is a story that has been told over and over for many years. What do you already know about folktales? What messages do they have? As you read, find out the message of this folktale.

Anansi the Spider was a greedy fellow. Everybody in the village knew about his great appetite.

One day, Anansi cooked a fine meal of fish and yams for his dinner. Oh! It smelled so delicious! It made Anansi's mouth water. He could not wait to enjoy his tasty meal.



LEARNING GOALS

You will

- read a folktale
- learn about folktales

Just as Anansi was getting ready to eat, there was a knock on his door. A stranger was standing there. His name was Turtle. The appetizing aroma had drawn him to Anansi's house.

"I come from far away. I have been travelling all day in the heat and the dust, and am tired and hungry. Would you share your meal with me?"

Greedy Anansi wanted to eat his food all by himself, but in his country, there was a rule that strangers must be treated with kindness, and shown hospitality. He had to invite Turtle into his house and share his meal with him.

Even though he didn't want to, Anansi smiled and said, "Come in, Turtle. I would be happy to share my dinner with you."

But Anansi had a plan.

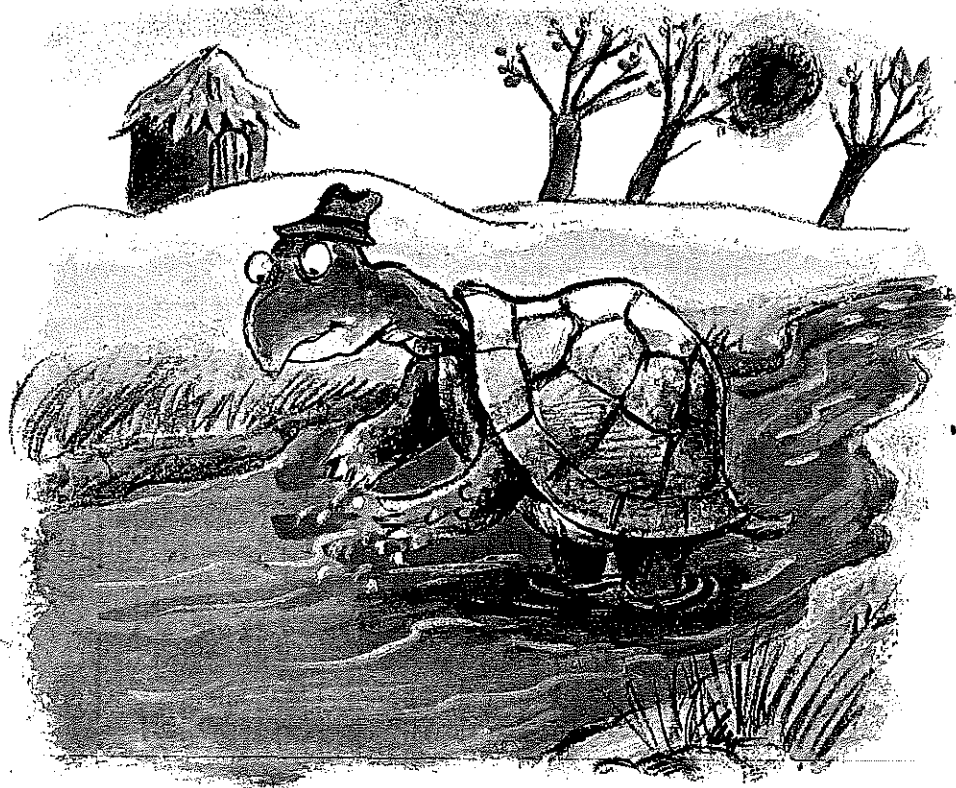
Turtle went up to the table. As he reached hungrily to help himself from the dishes, Anansi said to him, "Your hands are awfully dirty. It is not good manners to come to the table without first washing your hands. Please go to the stream at the bottom of the hill and wash yourself."

Turtle went to the stream, washed his hands and feet, and climbed back up the hill to Anansi's house. He was hungrier than ever.

Anansi had already eaten half of the meal, when Turtle went up to the table again and reached for the food once more. But his hands and feet were covered with dirt from the walk up the hill.

"Turtle," said Anansi angrily, "your hands are still dirty. Please respect my table, and go and wash them again."





Turtle was ashamed. "Oh," he replied. "It is the dust from my journey up the hill."

Disappointed and weak with hunger, Turtle returned to the stream, washed his hands and feet again, and returned to the house. This time he was careful to walk on the grass at the side of the hill.

Turtle hurried to the table, only to find that the dishes were empty. Anansi had eaten up all the food.

"What a tasty meal that was!" said Anansi, licking his lips. "Wasn't it, Turtle?"

Sad as he was, Turtle smiled. "Yes, Anansi. Thank you for your kindness. If you ever come to my village, be sure to visit me and share a meal with me." Turtle said goodbye and went on his way.

Many months later, Anansi travelled to Turtle's village. After awhile, he found Turtle resting on the riverbank, soaking up the sun.

Seeing Anansi, Turtle greeted him cheerfully. "Ah, Anansi! Welcome to my village. You have come a long way. I am sure that you are tired and hungry. Would you like to join me for dinner?"

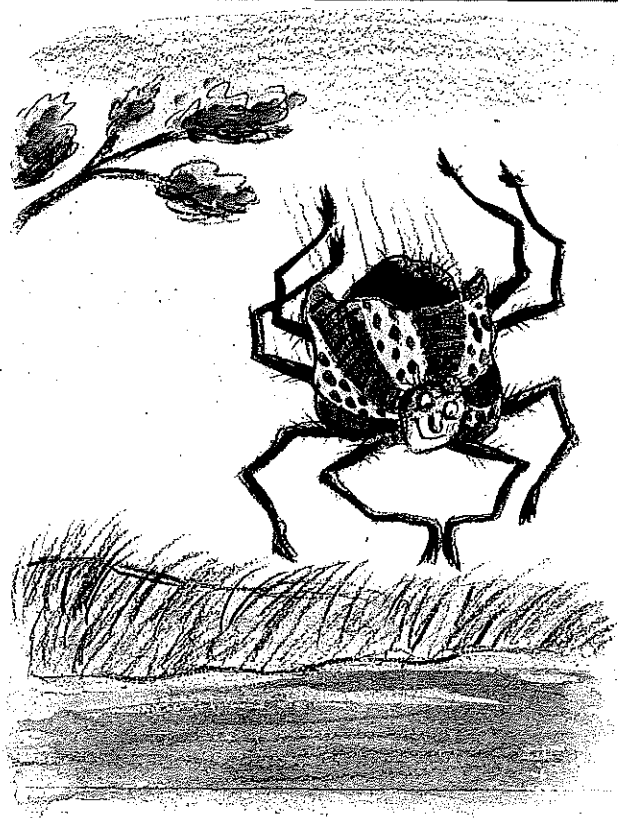
"Oh yes, I would," replied Anansi eagerly. "I have been looking forward to your hospitality."

"Good," said Turtle. "I'll go and prepare our meal."

Turtle slipped into the water, and dived to his home at the bottom of the river. He set out the food. It looked and smelled delicious.

Anansi was growing hungrier and hungrier, and was pleased when Turtle reappeared and announced, "Dinner is ready. Please join me, Anansi."





Anansi followed Turtle into the water, but because his body was so light, he floated to the top again and again. He dived, he splashed, he kicked, he jumped. Try as he would, he could not reach the bottom of the river where Turtle was, sitting at his table enjoying his dinner.

Anansi's stomach hurt. He must have some of Turtle's delicious food. He thought and thought. Then he had an idea. From the riverbank he gathered pebbles. He filled the pockets of his jacket with them.

Then he dived into the river. Success! The pebbles made him heavy enough to sink to the bottom.

There was Turtle enjoying the delicious spread that he had prepared. He had already eaten half of it.

The sight and smell of the food made Anansi lick his lips. He sat at Turtle's table and reached for the delicious food.

Just as Anansi was about to eat, Turtle said to him, "I must tell you, my friend, that in my country it is not polite to wear our jackets to the table. Please remove yours."



Turtle took another mouthful while Anansi removed his jacket and reached for the food once more. But, without the weight of the pebbles, Anansi could not stay on the river bottom, and floated up to the top of the water.



Meanwhile, Turtle finished eating all the food, then paddled up to the riverbank where a hungry Anansi sat, looking very sad.

“Anansi, my friend,” said Turtle. “Wasn’t that a wonderful dinner? It was a pleasure to have you as my guest. Please come again soon.”

AFTER YOU READ

Write the message of the story

In your own words, write the message of this folktale.