

The Pot Of Wisdom: Ananse Stories



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Synopsis

One of the major figures in African folklore is the round-bellied trickster-spider Ananse, who outwits enemies large and small. With *The Pot of Wisdom*, a wider audience can enjoy these delightful tales. Adwoa Badoe's witty retellings and Baba Wague Diakite's colorful images bring Ananse and his amusing and instructive adventures to life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 2-5-Badoe relates 10 tales featuring the trickster Ananse. As usual, he is sometimes successful in his clever schemes, and at other times he meets with disaster. Whatever the outcome, he is always ready for more. Readers meet him as he becomes the owner of stories through his cleverness, as well as the thief who is stealing from his own three sons and climbs in a corner of his house to hide his shame. According to an author's note, Badoe's primary source for the material was her own recollections of the tales she heard as a child in Ghana. Her versions are both witty and have the ring of authenticity. Diakite creates stunning, glazed earthenware tiles in rich, vibrant tones. One full-page reproduction of a tile is used to introduce each story and each one is a delightful enticement for delving into the narrative. This is an entertaining read from start to finish and a first purchase for most collections. Grace Oliff, Ann Blanche Smith School, Hillsdale, NJ
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Gr. 4-8. Badoe remembers hearing these trickster stories in her youth in Ghana, and she retells them with the freshness and verve of the spoken word. In the 10 stories, which range in length from three to six pages, readers learn why Ananse the spider lives on the ceiling (he's hiding in shame) and how he came to be the owner of stories (he captures by trickery a hive of honeybees, a forest dwarf, and a python for the Great One). Ananse the wise judge makes one foolish choice for himself in "Ananse the Even-handed Judge" and another in the title story. Each tale is illustrated with a brilliantly colored polychrome tile by Diakite, the Mali-born illustrator. The tiles employ strong black linear motifs and sun-and-earth colors: gold, orange, brown, blue, lemon. GraceAnne DeCandidoCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This little book contains a fantastic, fun collection of Ananse stories that are as delightful as they are thought-provoking. The trickster tales are definitely worth sharing with any class that is studying African culture, folklore, storytelling, universal themes, etc. Black & White as well as color illustrations compliment the stories and add some unique cultural flavor. Here's the list of included stories and my brief comment on each:

Why Ananse Lives On The Ceiling: This story reminds me of the Tar Baby tale! Ananse's sons try to outwit a thief and receive a surprise...guess who!

Ananse and the Feeding Pot: This is my favorite story. Greedy, jealous Ananse tries to grab some glory for himself after his son's successful adventure in acquiring food for the village.

Ananse Becomes the Owner of Stories: Ananse wants to be remembered and sung as one of the culture's great heroes. To do this, he sets out to possess all the best stories. (This story is very similar to "Anansi Does the Impossible: An Ashanti Tale" by Verna Aardema.)

Ananse, the Even-handed Judge: Ananse receives two invitations to two important life events. How can he fulfill both appointments? (This story is similar to "Anansi Goes to Lunch" by Bobby & Sherry Norfolk.)

Ananse, the Forgetful Guest: The wily spider must wriggle his way out of his own web of lies in order to save face and not offend his royal host.

The Mat Confidences: Ananse wins a prized wife through cleverness. Can he keep her when she learns the truth?

Ananse and the Pot of Wisdom: The Prideful spider learns a valuable lesson about bragging and self-importance.

Ananse and the Singing Cloak: Chameleon seeks to teach the greedy spider a lesson after Ananse lays designs on and captures his farm.

Why Pig Has A Short Snout: Ananse wriggles out of his debt to Pig.

Ananse and the Birds: The spider decides to learn to fly, but the surprised birds are so thrilled about him!

A great collection of some of the most well known Anansi stories (and a couple new ones for me). If this is to be used with younger grades/children, be prepared that the language is more academic

than other storybooks, and the picture to text ratio is about one main cover picture for every 3 pages (it's one per story and each story is about that long). I used this in my third grade classroom and while we had to discuss the definitions of a couple words, they LOVED the stories! The length of text is about right for their attention span if not accompanied by more pictures, but what I loved best is that the author is actually from Ghana so it makes for a great compare/contrast piece!

This is an amazing collection of stories! Each story only has one picture at the beginning, so it's good for students/children to practice visualization skills as well as listening skills. I was surprised by the academic word choices, which allowed for me to introduce many new words (with body movements) to my students. My students (and I) were hooked after the first story, "Why Ananse Lives On The Ceiling." All throughout the week my students were re-enacting scenes from the story, and asking me questions, "Remember when Ananse was bad and got stuck in the tar?" I'm also using the story, "Ananse and the Feeding Pot" with a group of 6th grade students to create a puppet show for my kindergarteners. It's wonderful to see older students' excitement as they read the stories and prepare their own version for the kindergartners. I highly recommend this book as a read-aloud for children to develop academic vocabulary, learn cultural tales (and about cultural differences and similarities), and to develop a love for reading trickster tales.

Of all the stories of Anansi, this collection is my favorite. The writing is excellent and engaging, the illustrations are beautiful and fun. I used this book as the basis of a series of stories that I told to a 2nd grade Waldorf class and they were absolutely taken with them. The fact that it is offering this collection in hardback at such a great price makes this a definite MUST BUY!

Often time we give our children stories that do not relate to them and we try to make our children relate to the stories. Here the stories relate us back and tie us back to one of our cultural practices in Afrika. Very good book!!! My son's enjoy the stories.

In *The Pot Of Wisdom: Ananse Stories*, Ghanaian author Adwoa Badoe draws upon the African Ananse folktale tradition to retell ten lively, witty, and entertaining stories about a trickster spider. Enhanced with the wonderfully illustrations of Malian artist Baba Wague Diakite, these Ananse folktales deal with issues of justice, money, food, marriage, vanity, and self-respect. Very highly recommended for young readers ages 7 and older, *The Pot Of Wisdom* will quickly become a favorite addition to any school or community library folklore/folktale collection!

This is a must read for children that love Ananse tales. Children will love to read the stories over and over again.

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