



THE BOX OF STORIES IN THE SKY

**A play for two actors
from Roustabout Theatre Home Delivery**

This play is written for you to practise and put on at home.

You could perform it for the people in your household, or why not try filming it on a video call to others in your family, or friends!

There are ideas and hints to help you. The only rule is to **HAVE FUN!**



Did you know?

This play is based on a story from **Ghana**, and stars one of the most important characters of West African, African American, and Caribbean folklore - **Anansi the Spider**. Anansi is a cunning trickster who has many adventures. Perhaps you could find out some more.

The script uses a framing device. This means that the Storyteller and the Child also perform all the other parts in the play, but can talk also about their characters. This is sometimes called a **'play-within-a-play.'** One of the most famous examples of this is in Shakespeare's Hamlet.

The Characters

This play needs **two actors**. One actor plays the **CHILD** and **ANANSI**. The second actor plays the **STORYTELLER** and **ALL THE OTHER CHARACTERS THAT ANANSI MEETS**. This is called **multi-roling**. How will you make each of these characters different? Perhaps they could talk in different voices, or walk in different ways?

Decide who you would like to pretend to be!

◆ **CHILD** and **ANANSI**

▶ **STORYTELLER** and **ALL THE CHARACTERS THAT ANANSI MEETS**

Costumes

The actors in this play have to change very quickly from one costume to another. Think about choosing costumes that are easy to put on and take off, like hats, shawls, and masks.



Props

The things that actors use in a play are called props. They don't have to be real! You can make-believe. For this play, you will need:

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A box | <input type="checkbox"/> | A bag | <input type="checkbox"/> | A cup |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A doll | <input type="checkbox"/> | A big leaf | | |

Tick them off to make sure you have everything!

How to Put on the Play

The words next to the characters' names are what they say.

The words in **green boxes** are called stage directions, and tell you what the characters do.

When you see the word **[Aside.]** that means that the character is talking to the audience, and the other characters can't hear them.

A Suggestion!

For your costumes, you could look at images of **Ghanaian fabrics** to give you ideas for colours and shapes.



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Checklist:

Have you decided which character you will be?

Have you got your costume?

Have you collected your props?

You are ready to go! Here is the script. Let's play!



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**Here you will find what you need to say!
Read the words in black.**



CHILD

I love your stories, and I love listening to you tell them.
But where did all those stories come from?

STORYTELLER

Have you heard of Anansi the Spider?

CHILD

Of course! Everyone's heard of Anansi the Spider.

STORYTELLER

Well, it was Anansi who brought all the stories to this world.
Would you like to hear how?

CHILD

Is it a good story?

STORYTELLER

The best. But you are going to have to help me.
You are going to have to be Anansi.

**Here you'll find what
you need to do!**



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◆ CHILD

Hooray!

▶ STORYTELLER

Go and put your costume on, whilst I tell everyone else the start of the tale.

◆ CHILD

Everyone else?

▶ STORYTELLER

The audience!

The CHILD exits to put on their ANANSI costume.

▶ STORYTELLER

[To the audience.] A long, long time ago, when this world was very new, there were no stories, or tales, or myths, or legends. Imagine that! Anansi wanted to hear and tell stories, to taste them in his ears and mouth, and so he wove a web right up to the heavens, until he reached the home of the Sky God.

The STORYTELLER puts on their SKY GOD costume.

ANANSI enters.

◆ ANANSI

I want to buy your box of stories.
How much is it?



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▶ SKY GOD

You couldn't afford it. Many people have tried to buy it - kings and queens, sorcerers and witches, tycoons and millionaires - but none of them can pay the price.

◆ ANANSI

What is the price?

▶ SKY GOD

The spots of a leopard, a handful of hornets, and a fairy. Bring me all of these and the box of stories is yours. But that's impossible!

◆ ANANSI

Leave it to me! I am Anansi the Spider, and nothing is impossible!

The STORYTELLER takes off their SKY GOD costume.

▶ STORYTELLER

And so Anansi slid down his web and thought about how to get the spots of a leopard.

◆ CHILD

How did he do that?

▶ STORYTELLER

All he needed was a bottle of wine and a spade.

◆ ANANSI

[Aside.] Aha! I know what to do.



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I will dig a deep, deep hole with the spade, invite Leopard over for a drink, and make sure he doesn't leave until after dark.

The STORYTELLER puts on their LEOPARD costume.

▶ LEOPARD

Thank you so much for the wine, Anansi, but I really have to go.
It's long past my bedtime, my head is spinning, and there is no moon to light my way.

◆ ANANSI

Good night, Leopard. Careful how you go...

LEOPARD walks offstage.

◆ ANANSI

... make sure you don't fall down that deep, deep hole.

▶ LEOPARD

Aargh!

◆ ANANSI

Oops. I did warn you.

The STORYTELLER walks back onstage.



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▶ **STORYTELLER**

Leopard fell with such a thud that all his spots flew off. Anansi got a ladder to help him out, but the spots stayed behind in the bottom of the deep, deep hole. Anansi picked them up and put them in his bag.

◆ **CHILD**

Now Anansi has to get a handful of hornets. How did he do that?

▶ **STORYTELLER**

All he needed was his bag, a big leaf from a banana tree, and a cup of water.

◆ **ANANSI**

[Aside.] Aha! I know what to do. I'll put the leaf on my head, and tip the water over me.

▶ **STORYTELLER**

But you won't really tip the water over yourself.

◆ **CHILD**

No, because there's no water in the cup. It's acting. It's pretend.

▶ **STORYTELLER**

Phew! I will be the hornets.

*The **STORYTELLER** puts on their **HORNETS** costume.*

***ANANSI** puts the leaf on his head and tips the empty cup over it.*



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▶ **HORNETS**

Why have you got that banana leaf on your head?

◆ **ANANSI**

Can't you see how wet it is? The rains have come early.
Quick, find somewhere to shelter.

▶ **HORNETS**

There isn't anywhere! There isn't anywhere!

◆ **ANANSI**

You can hide in my bag if you like.

▶ **HORNETS**

Thank you, Anansi. You are so kind.

◆ **ANANSI**

The pleasure is all mine.

*The **STORYTELLER** takes off their **HORNETS** costume.*

▶ **STORYTELLER**

And so Anansi had the spots of a leopard and a handful of hornets in his bag.

◆ **CHILD**

Now all he had to get was a fairy. How did he do that?



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▶ STORYTELLER

All he needed was his bag, a wooden dolly, some gum from the gum tree and a mashed banana.

The STORYTELLER puts on their FAIRY costume.

◆ ANANSI

[Aside.] Aha! I know what to do. I will cover the doll with gum so that it's all sticky, and put the mashed banana in its hand. Then I will lean it against the Tree of Life where the fairies play, and wait for one to turn up.

ANANSI leans the doll against a tree.

▶ FAIRY

Hello there, young girl. That mashed banana smells delicious. Can I have some, please?

Of course, the doll says nothing.

▶ FAIRY

[Louder.] I said, can I have some please?

Again, the doll says nothing.

▶ FAIRY

[Even louder.] Give me some mashed banana!





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The doll still says nothing.

▶ FAIRY

[Even louder still.] If you don't give me mashed banana, I'm going to shake you and shake you until your teeth fall out of your head!

The doll stays silent.

▶ FAIRY

Right! That's it! Prepare for the biggest shaking of your life!

The FAIRY shakes the doll and gets stuck to it.

▶ FAIRY

Aargh! I'm stuck. Set me free! Somebody set me free!

◆ ANANSI

If you get inside my bag, I can take you to the Sky God, who will set you free.

The STORYTELLER takes off their FAIRY costume.

▶ STORYTELLER

And so Anansi had the spots of a leopard, a handful of hornets, and a fairy in his bag.



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He climbed back up the web right up to the heavens, until he reached the home of the Sky God again.

The STORYTELLER puts on their SKY GOD costume.

◆ ANANSI

In this bag I have the spots of a leopard, a handful of hornets, and a fairy.
I have paid the price.

▶ SKY GOD

And in this box I have all the stories in the world.
You have paid the price, trickster Anansi.
The box is yours. What are you going to do with it?

◆ ANANSI

I'm going to open it, and let all them all free: the stories, the tales, the myths, and the legends.

▶ SKY GOD

You aren't going to keep that treasure for yourself?

◆ ANANSI

No, stories are for everyone to enjoy.

The STORYTELLER takes off their SKY GOD costume.





- ▶ **STORYTELLER** And that's exactly what Anansi did, and that's where stories come from. The End.
- ◆ **CHILD** Wait! No! That can't be the end. I have a question.
- ▶ **STORYTELLER** Yes?
- ◆ **CHILD** If there were no stories before Anansi opened, where did you get this story from?
- ▶ **STORYTELLER** That, I guess, is a mystery...

The End.

