



Katie Adams' Make Believe Theater Presents
an Educator's guide for
Anansi and the Tree of Life

Welcome to the show!

Anansi and the Tree of Life is a collection of African tales told with puppetry, shadow puppets, storytelling, and audience participation in an animated set.

The great Baobab tree spreads its limbs giving food and shelter to all the animals. There in its branches lives Anansi the Spider, full of mischief and schemes. Always quick to steal and cheat, Anansi never learns his lesson. He perpetually comes back for more, providing humor and positive life lessons for us all.

Katie uses colorful puppets, a large-sized Baobab tree with shadow puppets, and African music to bring these stories to life. Stories include ***Anansi and the Hat Shaking Dance***, ***The Secret Heart of the Tree***, and ***The Red and Green Hat***.

This program is presented as part of the Artists-in-the-Schools Program, which is funded and jointly sponsored by the Hillsborough County Public Schools and the Arts Council of Hillsborough County.

Before the Show

(For grades K thru 2 Read through the show synopsis and describe the show to your class.
For grades 3 to 5 Read the show synopsis out loud with your class)

Synopsis of the Stories

In the first story: Anansi and the Hat Shaking Dance, Anansi tries to be good and help Granny Spider but he is tempted to steal from Granny's delicious pot of bean soup. He puts the bean soup in his hat and uses it like a bowl. When Granny comes home early and discovers him, he puts his hat on quickly and the heat from the soup burns him. In pain, Anansi dances around claiming to be doing the hat shaking dance. Finally he rips the hat off his head revealing that the soup has burned all his hair off. And that is why to this day spiders are bald.

The second story, The Secret Heart of the Tree, involves a very respectful Rabbit who politely asks the Baobab tree for shade, for fruit, and finally to scratch his back against the bark of the tree. The Baobab tree is so impressed with the Rabbit's politeness that it invites the Rabbit inside to see the tree's secret heart. Rabbit must first promise not to take anything he sees, and then the tree splits down the middle, opens up and reveals a magic world inside, full of wonders, and riches. The next day when Anansi hears the story, he is determined to have the riches for himself. He goes to the Baobab tree and rudely demands to be let into the tree. Once inside, he begins stealing everything in site, until the tree begins to close unexpectedly. Anansi must run for his life and only by leaving the stolen jewels behind can he escape with his life. Since that time the trees have never opened their secret heart to anyone again.

The Red and Green Hat is the story of two birds who talk together all the time because they are best friends. They live on branches next to each other. Anansi is tired of their talking and decides to break up their friendship by walking between their nests wearing a hat that is green on one side and red on the other. Each bird sees the hat as a different color and they begin arguing. The fight gets worse and spreads to other animals who start fighting over whether the hat is red or green. Finally Granny Spider steps in and makes Anansi show the birds what he has done. The birds realize they need to see things from the other's perspective, and that nothing is as important as their friendship.

What to look for with the puppet theater

Solo puppeteer Katie Adams uses a variety of puppet styles to animate the various puppets presented in this show, including table-top puppets, rod puppets, and shadow puppets. A large-size Baobab tree is the setting for Katie to bring to life the characters. Dramatic theatrical lighting sets the mood, especially during a shadow puppet sequence when the tree opens up. Ask you students to look for these features of puppet theater.

Colorful tree scenery that has a few surprises. The face of the tree is a rod puppet.

Shadow puppets in a lighted shadow screen.

Theatrical lighting that is used for special effects.

Table-top puppets operated on "playboards" surfaces.

African music that sets the mood from light-hearted to suspenseful.

Standards connected to the Performance

Language Arts: LAFS.K12.SL.1.2 – Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Theater: TH.2.C.1.2 – Respond to a play by drawing and/or writing about a favorite aspect of it.

Music: MU.3.H.1.1 – Compare indigenous instruments of specified cultures

Theater Etiquette

(This is a reflective exercise for your students. You could read this section to them with discussion or, for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, copy this section and pass it out for their review.)

- You are the audience - an important part of the performance. You help the performers by pretending and participating with them.
- Seeing a live show is not like watching TV or a movie. The performers are in the same room with you, and can hear and see the audience, and interact! What are some other differences? (no commercials, no eating, no lying down or running around...)
- Enter the performance space quietly and listen. Who might be giving instructions?
- The performers need you to watch and listen quietly. Talking to friends disturbs the performers and other members of the audience.
- Your job is to pretend along with the performers. They like it when you laugh if something is funny. They also like to hear you clap at the end of a performance when they bow.
- After the bows the audience stays seated. Who might give instructions on how to leave?

Standards for Theater Etiquette

TH.K.S.1.1-Demonstrate appropriate audience behavior at a live performance.

TH.1.S.1.1-Exhibit appropriate audience etiquette and response.

TH.2.S.1.1-Exhibit the behavior necessary to establish audience etiquette, response, and constructive criticism.

TH.3.S.1.1-Demonstrate effective audience etiquette and constructive criticism for a live performance.

TH.4.S.1.1.-Exhibit proper audience etiquette, give constructive criticism, and defend personal responses.

TH.5.S.1.1-Describe the difference in responsibilities between being an audience member at live or recorded performances.

Additional Pre-show activities

Curriculum connections: Geography, Character education, Visual arts, Music, Theater arts

1. These stories come from the county of Ghana in Africa. **Ask your students to locate this country on a world map.**
2. In Ghana the storytellers are called Griots and are very respected. Their stories are entertainment and they also teach lessons about how to live life. **Ask your students to listen for the moral of the stories when they watch the show, so you may discuss them later.**
3. The puppets in the show are made from the same materials used to make puppets in Africa; wood, fabric, bright colors, and decorative elements such as beads and feathers. **Ask your students to watch for those materials during the show and, to guess what type of container all the puppets are made from..**
4. African music is used during the show. **Ask you students to listen for the different instruments used, so they can list them after the show, and talk about how the music makes them feel.**

After the show

Curriculum connections: Theater arts, Language arts, Visual arts, Character education
(Go over the following theater definitions with your class. Then try some of the activities.)

The puppeteer and audience agree to “suspend disbelief”, to pretend together that the action of the play is real and is happening for the first time. This agreement means the audience members accept the use of theater conventions such as:

- Storytelling - the puppeteer talks and interacts with the audience.
- The puppeteer plays multiple characters and uses many voices and puppets.
- The puppeteer uses music to provide information, move the action forward and set a mood.

The puppets in this show are table-top puppets. This is a relatively new style of puppetry that is defined by the fact that the puppets are operated on an elevated “table-top” or what we puppeteers call a playboard. Other features of the style are: the smaller size of the puppets, their ability to stand on their own if the puppeteer lets go of them, and a minimum of rods (handles) or strings attached to the puppets.

The Puppeteer frequently uses black curtains and a black costume to minimize their appearance and help the audience focus on the full colored puppets and scenery. Theatrical lighting also helps the audience to focus on important visual elements or helps create mood as when the lights dim (become darker or brighter) for the tree opening scene.

The pre-recorded sound track for Anansi and the Tree of Life is traditional and modern African music.

Activities

Puppets

Make your own shadow puppets and use them to put on a play.

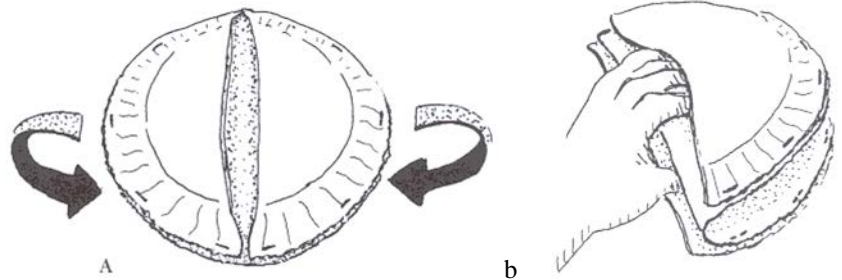
- You need a 75watt (or higher) light bulb in a clamp-on light socket. When you get ready to do the shadow puppets you need to be able to darken the room as much as possible.
- For the shadow screen you can use a white sheet or shower curtain liner stretched in a door way or between two chairs. (Or in a picture frame.) Use masking tape or duct tape to attach. (Duct tape leaves more of a residue.)
- For the shadows use black posterboard or black construction paper, or spray-painted cardboard. (That way you can recycle your cereal boxes.)
- Draw the shapes you want and then cut them out with small sharp scissors. Hole punches of various shapes can help to cut out interior shapes.
- For puppets that have moving parts, use a hole punch in both parts right where they will attach and fasten with paper fasteners.
- To add colors you can tape in cellophane candy wrappers, colored plastic wrap, or tracing paper colored with colored pencils or crayons
- Make rods with straws, bamboo skewers, or other thin sticks. Tape them on with masking tape
- For preschool and kindergarten, use manila folders, draw with a heavy black outline and color in with crayons. Use one rod, the puppet will not need to have moving parts. The black outline will help define the shape of the puppet no matter how the puppet is cut out. The colors on the manila folder will show up when the shadow is pressed to the screen.

Great resource for shadow puppets:

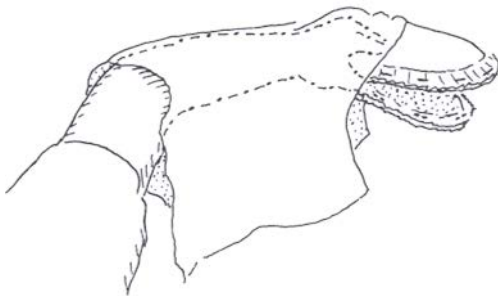
Worlds of Shadow; Teaching with Shadow Puppetry. David Wisniewski and Donna Wisniewski, 1997, Teacher Ideas Press, Englewood, CO

Make your own moving mouth puppet.

Supplies: two plain white paper plates, scissors, stapler, piece of lightweight cloth, felt-tip markers, construction or tissue paper in various colors, children's scissors, clear plastic tape, white household glue



Place the paper plate halves on top of the uncut plate, staple together around the edges and fold.



Attach a square of cloth to the top plate half with staples or tape. If there are any staple prickles on the inside of the finger slot, cover them with tape for the safety and comfort of the puppeteer.

Puppet making activity from the book Puppets and Masks, Stagecraft and Storytelling by Nan Rump. (See bibliography)

- TH.1.F.1.1 - Pretend to be an animal or person living in an imagined place.
- TH.2.H.1.1 - Read and dramatize stories with similar themes to show developing knowledge of, and respect for, cultural differences.
- TH.3.F.1.1 - Create and/or collect appropriate props and costumes and use them to help tell a story.
- TH.4.F.1.2 - Create sound and lighting effects to suggest the mood of a story.
- TH.5.H.3.4 - Act out a character learned about in another content area.

The art style of the puppets includes the bright African color palette. Each animal is colored according to the natural elements it lives in. This style of coloration for the puppets comes from Mali.

Earth - These animals are colored in earth tones: orange, yellow, brown

Sky - These animals are colored in blue tones: blue, purple, aqua

Fire - These animals are colored in fiery tones: red, orange, fuchsia, gold

Water - These animals are colored in cool tones: green, blue, silver

Ask your students to think back to the different puppets. Choose students to pick a puppet, name it's color, and the natural element it belongs to.

VA.3.H.1.3 - Identify and be respectful of ideas important to individuals, groups, or cultures that are reflected in their artworks.

Language Arts

1. Folk tales have been handed down, usually by word of mouth, for generations. Discuss what can happen to a story passed down in this way. **Activity: The game “telephone” or “gossip” in which a whispered phrase is passed down a line of students and the beginning and ending phrases are compared to see how different they are. Do the students know of a story handed down through their own family or friends this way?**
2. Folk tales contain elements unique to the culture they come from. **Ask the students to describe something unique from each story, i.e. “What makes this an African story?”** Folk tales also contain elements universal to all people. **Ask the students to describe something from each story that “all people do”.**
3. Folk tales always contain a message about how to live life. **Discuss the messages in the three stories - how are they similar and how are they different. In each of the stories, one or more of the characters helps another character. Ask the students to identify these characters and describe how they were helpful.**
4. In Ghana people love to tell stories about Anansi the spider and many versions have been written down. **Have your students look up other Anansi stories in the school media center. Read them out loud in class.**

LAFS.K.RL.1.2 - With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

LAFS.1.RL.1.2 - Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

LAFS.2.RL.1.2 - Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

LAFS.3.RL.1.2 - Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

About the Artist

Katie Adams is a puppeteer and storyteller who loves to perform for children and family audiences. In 1999,

Activity: Write a letter or email to Mrs. Adams at:

Katie Adams'
Make Believe

Katie started her own company, Make-Believe Theater dedicated to entertaining, inspiring and enlightening young audiences. Katie tours with the Artist-in-the-Schools program of Hillsborough County and does character education puppet shows for Learning for Life. Recent performance highlights include the National Festival of the Puppeteers of America, the Smithsonian Discovery Theater, the Great Arizona Puppet Theater, and the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center.

Bibliography

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