

Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning Tales From the Caribbean by Trish Cooke (Puffin)



1. Explore it

Read the extract from the story below:

Anansi Tricks Three Kings

This story is based on a folk tale from St Vincent

Once upon a time there was a king and in his kingdom there was a drought. In the king's garden there was a well, and this well provided all the fresh water for the village.

The people of the village needed permission from the king to get water from the well, and they all relied on the fresh water to live. Without it, they would all die. This made the king very powerful indeed.

Brer Anansi was very jealous of the king. You see, Brer Anansi didn't like the fact that the king had all the power. Brer Anansi wanted to be the all-powerful one instead. Now everyone knows how Brer Anansi is a trickster and, since days gone by, Brer Anansi has been known to outsmart the mightiest of people. So Brer Anansi thought for a long time about how he could outsmart the king.

Then Brer Anansi had an idea. Every night when the king was sleeping, Brer Anansi decided he would sneak into the king's

garden and drain some of the water away from the well. Since the water in the well was what made the king powerful, he would get rid of it so that the king would lose his power over the people.

And that's exactly what he did. Night after night, little by little, Brer Anansi emptied the water in the well until there was hardly any left. When the king went to the well and saw that nearly all the water had gone, he was very suspicious.

'Somebody is emptying my well,' he said. 'I will find the culprit and make him pay!'

The king decided to set a trap for the thief. He made a man out of tar and put the man next to the well. He put a piece of bread in one hand and a fish in the other to make the tar man look like he was a real man, taking a meal. The king was sure that the thief would stop and try to talk to the tar man, and eventually he would think he was being ignored and would start a fight with the tar man. That was the plan.

Take some time to think about what you read. What do you think is happening in this extract? Does it remind you of anything you know from stories or real life? Who are the central characters? Where do you think the story is happening? What makes you think this? Can you summarise what you've read in a couple of sentences?

Re-read the extract to yourself. What kind of text do you think this is? What makes you think this? Do you know any other stories like this? Which ones? Think about the character of Brer Anansi. Have you heard of this character before? Do you know anything about him or any other stories he features in? What do you learn about him as a character from this extract? Now think about the king. What do you learn about him as a character? You can read more about Anansi here: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ananse>

Think about the king's plan to make **a man out of tar**. Do you know what **tar** is? If you don't, look it up in a dictionary or online dictionary. What are the properties of tar? Why might this make it a good material for the king's plan? What do you think he has in mind? Do you think the king's plan is a good one? Do you think it will work? Why or why not?

2. Illustrate it

Re-read the passage, or ask someone to read it to you, or maybe record yourself reading it, so you can play it over again. After you have read the extract a few times, think about what you can see in your imagination, whatever stood out most to you. Then take a pen or pencil and a bit of scrap paper. You can use the back of an old envelope, letter or cereal packet; whatever is to hand if you don't have paper.

Draw what you see in your mind's eye; anything that stood out significantly for you from the events that you heard about. Include as much detail as possible, thinking about what the words on the page help you to visualise. Did you draw something specific, like Brer Anansi stealing the water or the king making the tar man? Did you draw one of these characters thinking about how to trick the other?

3. Talk about it

- In the extract, we are told that Brer Anansi is a **trickster**. What does this word mean? What does this tell us about him? What characteristics do you think a trickster must have? What words might you use to describe a trickster?
- Think about the struggle for power that you see in this extract. Brer Anansi **didn't like the fact that the king had all the power**. Yet, his plan was designed to make him **the all powerful one** instead. Do you think it's right that one person should hold all the power in a group or community? What are the potential benefits or disadvantages of having one person in power?

4. Imagine it

What do you think is going to happen the next night, when Brer Anansi goes back to steal more of the water? Do you think he will be fooled by the king's plan and fall into the trap he has set? Do you think he will outsmart the king? How? Map out your ideas for how this story might continue. You could do this by writing notes, drawing pictures or a combination of the two. What do you know about traditional tales, like this, that might help you think about how the events might play out? When you have a clear idea, either write this up or tell the rest of the story to someone else at home. Do they think the rest of your story fits with how it began?

5. Create it

Think about how power and democracy works in the UK. Who has the power to make decisions that improve the welfare of everyone? Is it the king, or queen, as in the story here? Think about the important role that the prime minister and their elected government have and the elected members of parliament for different places in the UK. You can find out more about this here:

<https://learning.parliament.uk/en/resources/introduction-to-parliament-primary-video/>

How do we as members of the public create opportunities to voice community issues to those in power? Think of a concern that you think would improve society for a significant amount of the local or wider community. This might be a local issue, like littering in your local area, or a wider issue like tackling the impact of climate change, improving school meals or how to support people who are living in poverty or who are homeless. Take some time to find out more about the issue that you are interested in and to find out who your local Member of Parliament is. You can do this here:

<https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons>. Think about how you could draft a letter to them to raise the issue you think is important. You will need to make sure you set out what your issue is, why you think it is important and any possible ideas you have about how to address this issue. Think about the level of formality and language you will need to use when writing to someone like this, and how you will use respectful language to raise an issue. When you've finished, share your letter with someone else at home. Do they think it is in the right style and voice for the recipient? Do they think there is anything else you need to include? When you are happy with your draft, either write it up in presentation handwriting or type it up on the computer and send it off.