

Good Golly, It's Mali

By **Melanie Lewis** for Blue Ridge Public Television (WBRA, WMSY, WSBN)
Madison Heights Elementary School, Madison Heights, VA

Grade Level: 3

Time Allotment: 2-3, 45 minute class periods

Overview:

Through the use of video and internet students will understand that most of what we know about Mali's history comes from oral accounts that were handed down from Mali storytellers. Students will watch a video clip from United Streaming entitled, "How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories". Anansi, the spider, will lead the student on an Internet treasure hunt to find the pieces of a broken calabash, which is a hard-shelled gourd often used as a utensil. The students will learn important facts about Africa as they put the calabash back together. They are then asked to solve a problem based on the facts they have learned.

Subject Matter: Language Arts/Social Studies

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- ◆ Identify why storytellers were so important to the empire of Mali.
- ◆ Be introduced to traditional stories from the African empire of Mali
- ◆ Locate Mali on a map

Standards:

- ◆ This lesson addresses the Virginia Standards of Learning which can be found at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml>

* Social Studies 3.2 The student will study the early West African empire of Mali by describing its oral tradition (storytelling).

Media Components:

Video

- ◆ *African & African American Folktales*, "How Anansi Obtained the Sky God's Stories"
<http://www.unitedstreaming.com>

(To fully utilize this site, you must obtain a membership to United Streaming.) You must also have installed one of the following free media players:

*QuickTime

<http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>

*Windows Media Player

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/download/default.asp>

Internet

- ◆ *Explore Africa with Anansi!*
<http://www.pbs.org/wonders/Kids/kids.htm>

Software

- ◆ *Kidspiration*
<http://www.inspiration.com/home.cfm>

Materials:

- ◆ Small styrofoam egg cup, 1 per student.
- ◆ Felt tip markers
- ◆ Pipe cleaners
- ◆ Odds and ends for collage materials (ribbons, stickers, buttons, colored toothpicks, paper clips, plastic “kiddy” barrettes, etc.)
- ◆ Butcher paper or plastic to cover desks or tables for easy cleanup
- ◆ One classroom computer hooked to a projection device
- ◆ One computer for each pair of students
- ◆ Map of Africa (emphasize Mali)
- ◆ One worksheet per child
- ◆ Script of story “How Anansi Obtained the Sky God’s Stories”, one per child (May be downloaded from United Streaming. This is part of the teacher’s guide.)
- ◆ Computer lab loaded with Kidspiration Software (optional)

Prep for Teachers:

- ◆ Cue clip to where narrator says, “Long ago, the sky god, Nyami was keeper of all the stories,” and you see the sky god dropping his stories into a bag.
- ◆ Assign students to groups of 2-3 for Learning Activity.
- ◆ Place a variety of the collage materials into lunch bags--one bag per group of 3-4 students.
- ◆ Bookmark web site, “Explore Africa with Anansi!”
- ◆ Preload the Anansi website onto a computer and use a computer projection device to demonstrate how the game is played.
- ◆ Copy worksheets, one per student
- ◆ Copy scripts, one per student

Introductory Activity:

Step 1

Ask, “How many of you think that you are really good at telling stories?” **Say**, “Today we are going to do something that will show if you are truly a good story teller.” Divide your class in half. Ask half of the students to put their head down on their desks and close their eyes. While the students have their heads down on their desks tell the other half of the class to pay very close attention to what you are doing but caution them not to say anything until you are

finished. Quickly draw a picture on the chalkboard. The picture does not have to be elaborate; it can be a simple house, a stick figure family or a simply drawn animal. After you have finished drawing the picture, erase it and then break the chalk in half. Lay aside the chalk and ask the children to pick up their heads.

Step 2

Pair up the students who watched what you did with the children who had their heads down on their desks. **Say**, “Those of you who kept your heads up and saw what I did are to explain to your classmates who weren’t looking, what actions you saw performed.” While the storytellers are describing what took place the students who are listening should write down what the storytellers told them. Give the students time to complete this task. After the students are through, allow several students to share what they have written. Have the class decide together if the stories are accurate.

Learning Activity:

Step 1

Say, “Storytelling is one way that we learn about our history. In fact, much of what you know about your family has been told to you by your parents or grandparents. Just as you know about your family’s history because it was told to you, sometimes the only reason we know about an entire country is because a storyteller has passed down that country’s history or stories to others.”

Step 2

Display the map and point out Mali. **Say**, “This country is Mali. It is found on the continent of Africa. Much of what we know about Mali has come down through their griots. A griot is a learned storyteller, entertainer, and historian.” Write *griot* on the board. **Say**, “Many times a griot will memorize the entire genealogy, or family history of everyone in a village going back many centuries. Through its griots we have come to learn that Mali was once a very powerful and rich nation. They were big traders of salt and gold. Merchants and traders would have to go through Mali to get to the sea. Later, trade routes changed and Mali was not as well known as it once had been. In fact, Mali’s capital was a city called Timbuktu. Today when we want to say that we are in an unknown and seemingly deserted place we say that we have travelled to Timbuktu.”

Step 3

Say, “One of the most popular characters in African stories is Anansi the spider. Anansi is a prankster who is always getting into trouble. People in Africa told stories about Anansi in an effort to explain the world around them. When a story is used to explain natural occurrences we call this a *myth*.” Write *myth* on the board. “One of the myths of Africa is the story of how Anansi was responsible for bringing stories from Nyami, the sky god, to earth. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction**. **Say**, “Today we are going to watch a short video to find out how Anansi, the trickster spider brought stories to earth.” **Start** video at the place cued to when the sky god is putting his stories into a bag and you hear, “Long, long ago, Nyami was keeper of all the stories.” **Pause** the video after Anansi drops back down to the African continent and you hear, “Then he dropped back down to earth on his thread.”

Ask, “Do you think Anansi will be able to complete the tasks assigned to him by Nyami?” Allow the students to make predictions. Record the predictions on the board with a simple graph, indicating how many said “yes” and how many said “no” or “no opinion”.

Pass out the script for the story to each student. **Say**, “As we watch the video clip I will periodically stop and ask you to highlight parts of your script. This will help you to fill out your story map at the end. Right now I would like you to read and highlight the sentence that tells you what Nyami wants Anansi to do in order to get the stories. Right beside this sentence, use your highlighter to draw a smiley face if you think Anansi will be able to do these tasks. Draw a frowney face if you think he will not be able to succeed.” Observe to make sure that students highlight. “*Very well. If you bring me Momboro the hornet, Onini the snake, and Osebo the leopard the stories will be yours,*” and that they draw a face to record their prediction.

Step 4

Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction**, by saying, “Let’s listen to this next clip of video to hear if Anansi was able to trick Momboro, the hornet.” **Resume** video. **Pause** again when Anansi returns to Earth and you hear the narrator say, “...and so Anansi went back to Earth.” **Say**, “I want you to read and highlight in your script the sentence that explains Anansi’s trick on Momboro.” Observe to see that the students highlight the sentence that reads, “*Momboro, it's raining! Come into my gourd where it's nice and dry.*”

Ask, “Was Anansi successful in tricking Momboro?” (yes) **Ask**, “What did Anansi fill his gourd with?” (water) **Ask**, “How did he use the water in his gourd to trick Momboro?” (He poured it on Momboro and made the hornet think it was raining) **Say**, “Anansi made a suggestion to Momboro.” **Ask**, “What was the suggestion?” (That the hornet should come into the gourd to keep dry.) **Ask**, “What did Anansi do once he caught Momboro in the gourd?” (Anansi capped it with a cork and took him to Nyami.) **Ask**, “Did it appear in the story that Momboro saw the water coming out of Anansi’s gourd? (yes) **Ask**, “Why then do you think that Momboro believed Anansi when he was told that it was raining?” (He may have been a foolish insect) **Ask**, “Do you think Momboro’s character played a part in getting him tricked?” (accept all responses)

Say, “Look in your story and put a box around a word that tells you what Momboro thought of Anansi before he was captured.” Observe to see if the students put a box around the word *friend* in the sentence that reads, ‘*Why thank you, Friend Anansi.*’ **Ask**, “Do you feel that Anansi is really a friend of Momboro?” (accept responses) **Ask**, “What do you think Momboro thought of Anansi after he was tricked?” (discuss answers)

Step 5

Ask, “What is the next task Anansi is to do?” (Bring Onini the snake to Nyami) Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, “Let’s watch to find out if Anansi will be able to trick Onini the snake.” **Resume** video. **Pause** again when Anansi returns to Earth and you hear the narrator say, “...and so Anansi went back to Earth.” **Say**, “Read and highlight in your script where it tells us how Anansi was able to trick Onini.” Observe to see that the students highlight the sentence that reads, “*Once Anansi had tightly spun a web around Onini and the stick, he took the snake to Nyami, far up into the sky.*” **Ask**, “What disagreement did Anansi tell Onini that his wife and he had that morning?” (That the snake was not as long as the stick.) **Ask**, “What was

Onini's response?" (I am clearly longer than that stick.) **Ask**, "What does Onini's response tell you about his character?" (He was prideful) **Ask**, "Do you think Onini's character played a part in getting him tricked by Anansi?" (discuss responses) **Say**, "Look in your story and put a box around a word that tells you what Onini thought of Anansi before he was captured." Observe to see if the students put a box around the word *friend* in the sentence that reads, ' *Why thank you, Friend Anansi.*' **Ask**, "Do you feel that Anansi is really a friend of Onini?" (accept responses)

Say, "Anansi has managed to trick two of his friends." **Ask**, "How many more friends does Anansi need to bring to Nyami?" (1) **Ask**, "Who is the last animal Nyami wishes to see?" (Osebo the leopard)

Step 6

Say, "It is getting very interesting now." Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction** by saying, "Let's watch this next part to find out if Anansi will be able to trick Osebo the leopard." **Resume** video. **Pause** again when you see Nyami wink and you hear "Nyami decided to play a trick on Anansi."

Say, "Read and highlight in your script where it tells us how Anansi was able to trick Osebo." Observe to see that the students highlight the paragraph that reads, "*Well, Anansi watched carefully as Osebo tied his tail to the end of the tree. But then, instead of letting the tree up slowly, he let go all at once, and hopped on the leopard's tail.*" **Say**, "Osebo is much bigger than Anansi." **Ask**, "How did Anansi capture a huge leopard?" (He dug a hole in the ground and Osebo fell in.) **Ask**, "What trick did Anansi play on Osebo to get him out of the hole and up to Nyami?" (Anansi pretended like he was going to tie Osebo's tail to a tree and pull him out slowly. Instead Anansi let go of the tree quickly and Osebo went flying past the sky god with Anansi on his tail)

Ask, "Did we predict correctly concerning whether or not Anansi was going to be able to complete his tasks?" Compare the students' predictions from the beginning of the story to the result.

Ask, "What did Osebo call Anansi when he wanted Anansi's help?" (Friend Anansi) **Say**, "Each of the animals called Anansi a friend." **Ask**, "Do you think Anansi was a good friend?" (discuss responses) **Ask**, "What do you think about each of the characters who allowed themselves to be tricked?" (accept response)

Step 7




Say, "I find it amusing to think that the trickster Anansi is going to be tricked himself." **Ask**, "What trick do you think Nyami will play on Anansi?" (Give opportunity for students to respond. Students' opinions will vary. Allow for all reasonable answers.) Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction**, by saying, "Let's watch this last clip of video to hear find out what Nyami's trick will be." **Resume** video and play until the end of the clip. After the clip, say, "Read and highlight the part in your script where it explains Nyami's trick on Anansi." Observe to see that the students highlight the part that reads, "*He stuffed all his stories in a bag too small to hold them, and placed a thorny bush where Anansi would drop from the sky. Sure enough, just as Nyami had planned, a thorn poked through the bag, and the stories flew out!*"

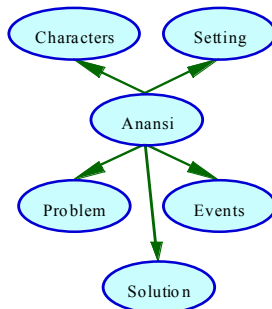
Ask, "Who can tell me how Anansi was tricked?" (Nyami put all of his stories into a bag that was too small and dropped it down to the ground on a thorn bush so that the stories spilled out all over the land.) **Ask**, "What do you suppose was going on inside Anansi's mind after he, himself was tricked? Do you feel he learned a lesson?" (Discuss)

Step 8

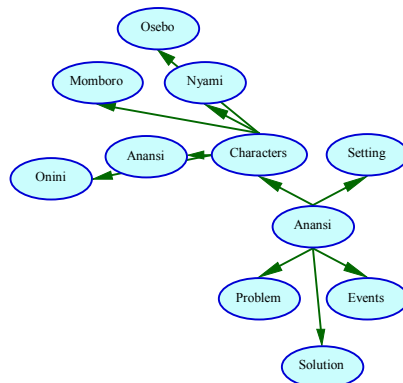
Students may pair up or work alone as you guide them through mapping out this story using Kidspiration. If Kidspiration software is not available, you may also use a copy of your favorite story map or students may draw their own maps on paper. You may also wish the students to use a computer paint program to create a story map.

Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction**, by saying, “We are going to use our Kidspiration software to create a story map of our Anansi story. You may use your script to help you as we work together to complete our map. Watch while I draw a map of the story. As I draw my map, you are to draw your own.” Use the procedures below to demonstrate to the students how to create a story map using Kidspiration. Discuss each story element as you guide the students into adding it to their map.

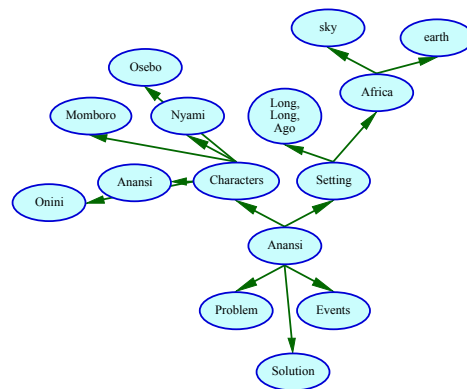
- ◆ Direct the students to open Kidspiration.
- ◆ When the main menu appears, have the students click on the picture button in the top left corner. 
- ◆ Instruct the students to type the name of the story in the first idea cell that first appears on the screen. 
- ◆ Model the selection of rapid-fire mode from the button bar at the top until there are five circles coming off the first idea circle. 



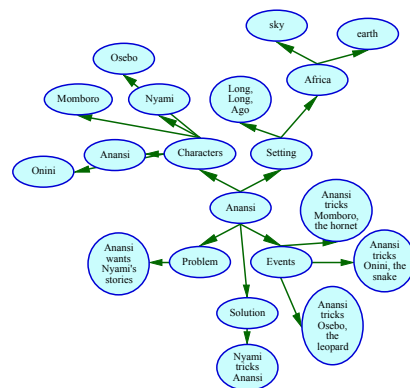
- ◆ Guide the students through entering the story elements: title, author, setting, characters, problem, solution, and events in each circle that extends from the first idea.
- ◆ Click on the Main Character cell to select it.
- ◆ Click on rapid fire tool.
- ◆ Type in one of the main characters, such as “Anansi” in the new circle. Continue clicking on the characters circle and then the rapid fire until you have demonstrated how to add each character. Model arranging your web in different ways and lead the students into selecting the most organized method. To arrange the web all you need to do is click and drag your circle to the desired place on the page.



- ◆ Direct the students to click on the circle marked setting. Then have them hit the rapid fire button. In the new circle have them type Africa. Instruct them to click on Africa and hit rapid fire twice again. In one box they will type sky. In the other box, have them type earth.
- ◆ Have the students go back and click on the circle marked setting again. Have them type “Long, Long, Ago”. Again, you will want to demonstrate how to click and drag the circles to arrange them properly.



- ◆ Show the students how to click on the circle marked problem and then again hit the rapid fire button. In the new circle have them type, “Anansi wanted Nyami’s stories”.
- ◆ Direct the students to click on the events circle. Then they are to hit the rapid fire button three times. In each new circle they are to type the following sentences: “Anansi tricked Momboro, the hornet.” “Anansi tricked Onini, the snake.” and “Anansi tricked Osebo the leopard.” One sentence will go into each circle extending from the circle marked Events.
- ◆ The students will then click on the circle marked solution. Again they are to hit the rapid fire button. In the new circle, have the students type, “Nyami tricked Anansi.”



- ◆ Instruct the students to print their maps. To do this, go to *File, Print Options*, and click on button, *Fit to 1 Page*. Students will choose landscape mode by selecting: *file, page set-up*, and *landscape* options. Then the students may print their web.

Step 9

Pass out the Quest for the magic Calabash worksheet. **Say**, “I have found a web based scavenger hunt about Anansi. He is searching all over Africa in an attempt to find parts of a calabash, or gourd, which has all of the African king and queen’s riches. Anansi has promised to share these riches with you if you help him. I am not sure that I would want to trust Anansi but maybe this time he is being truthful. You will have to decide for yourself. There is a lot of reading involved on this hunt so you are going to work in pairs. There is no way to save your answers if you don’t get to finish the hunt in one class period so I want you to mark your answers on this sheet.” Hold up the worksheet. **Say**, “That way, if you wish to complete this hunt later, you will already have several of the answers and you will not have to read those pages and questions a second time. Provide a **Focus for Media Interaction**. **Say**, “Let’s watch together as I try to help Anansi get started.” The following procedures will help you demonstrate for the students how to get started.

Teacher note: These directions may be copied and pasted into a word document and placed on the desktop to provide easy reference for the students.

Directions

- ◆ Go to the bookmarked site, *Explore Africa with Anansi*. You will see Anansi waving on the front page and it will read, “I am so glad that you found me because I need your help.”
- ◆ On the first page you will see a picture of a gourd called a calabash and read “The Quest for the Magic Calabash” in the top right corner. Click on the calabash.
- ◆ Clicking on the calabash opens a second page where Anansi begins to tell the legend of the magic calabash. You will also see the king and queen. The story will say that these are the ones that had the calabash hidden in the first place. You must read everything on this page.
- ◆ At the bottom of this first page there is a sign that reads “next”. Click on this sign. A third page appears. You will see a stork holding a piece of the calabash in the top right corner. At the bottom of this page, Anansi says that only one person knows where all six pieces of the calabash are hidden. This last sentence is written as a link. After clicking on this last sentence the scavenger hunt begins.
- ◆ You will see Anansi peeping through a circle and there will be a map of Africa on the right hand side of the page. You should finish reading Anansi’s directions.
- ◆ Click on one of the six places indicated on the map. It is easier if you start with the slave kingdoms and work around the right coast of Africa until you get to the Lost City which is located at the bottom of the continent.
- ◆ Each time you click on a map location you will be taken to a page that describes this place. Read the entire page carefully. A question will be asked, based on what you have read. The question may come from the main paragraph or from the caption under a picture.
- ◆ Once you have finished reading the page, click on the sign that reads “To the Calabash”. On this page, you will be asked a question.
- ◆ Decide with a partner which answer is correct and mark it on your paper, then click on the answer you have chosen. If you are correct, a piece of the calabash appears. If you are

incorrect, you will have an opportunity to click the correct answer, after which a piece of the calabash will appear.

- ◆ Caution: Do not to use the back button on the menu bar to return to a previous page. Doing so will take away any pieces of the calabash you may have collected. If you need to return to a previous page you only have to hit “back” at the bottom of the page you are currently working on.
- ◆ Each time you receive a piece of the calabash from a map location, you will not be able to click on it again.
- ◆ You are to click on each of the six map locations and then answer the question on the following page.

Allow the students time to complete the activity. When students have successfully completed the hunt, they will get to a page with a certificate awarded from Anansi for a job well done. It may be better to print out this certificate, leaving out any one child’s name and then make enough copies using the school copier for your class. Once copies have been made, you may write in each student’s name. When students have completed the scavenger hunt, **Ask**, “What was the important principle that the king and queen understood?” (True wealth is not measured in money. It is measured in knowledge and experience. Your journey has made you rich in both.)

Culminating Activity:

Step 1

Say, “In Central Africa, on the road to Timbuktu, you will find one of the great architectural wonders of Africa: the Great Mosque of Djenne. Do you know what it is made with? Mud! The people of Djenne made this Mosque from materials they had right at hand. Like the people who made the Mosque, you can make some great things with stuff you have close by. Today you are going to make an Anansi.”

- ◆ Pass out the styrofoam cups that have been cut from egg cartons and the pipe cleaners.
- ◆ Instruct the students to turn the cup upside down. This will be the spider’s body.
- ◆ Use markers to draw a spider’s face on the cup.
- ◆ Poke four pipe cleaners through the body for legs.
- ◆ Pass out the lunch bags with the collage materials in them. Say, “In these bags are various items that you can decorate your spider with. Choose 2-3 things from the bag that represent you in some way and incorporate them into your Anansi.”

Teacher note: Students may draw an emblem from their favorite sports team on their spider, add a bead or feather that is their favorite color, etc. It would be a good idea for you as the teacher to make one ahead of time that represents you. You may also wish to send home a note the day before asking students to bring in small items from home that they could incorporate into their spiders.

- ◆ Students begin to decorate their spiders.
- ◆ Walk around the room and assist as needed during the art project.

Step 2

After the students have finished their Anansis, have them come to the front of the room one at a time to share their spiders and explain how their spider represents them. Say, “Just as a griot used stories to tell about their history, you have done a good job of telling us a little about you.”

Cross Curricular Activities:

Language Arts:

Have students bring in photographs and family pictures to create a poster telling about themselves. Allow time to share in class.

Math:

Go outside and count all the different varieties of spiders that are observed. Graph the results.

Science:

Have a mini unit on arachnids.

Art:

Have the students create their own Adinkra Cloth. Directions can be found at

<http://www.pbs.org/wonders/Kids/kids/.htm>

Community Connections:

Visit a nursing home and have students listen to the stories of the residents. When the students return to the school, have them write down the stories they have heard and illustrate them. The stories may be bound into a book and returned to the residents.

Quest for the Magic Calabash



Directions: Read each question as you come to it. After circling the answer on this paper, click on your answer on the web page.

1. The hare asked you,

Where is the Golden Stool housed today?

Kumasi, Ghana

A British Museum

2. The elephant desires an answer,

Do griots make up some of the stories they sing?

Yes No

3. The crocodile wants to know,

When the Aswan Dam was built, how did archaeologists save some of the Nubian ancient temples from being submerged?

On their home computers

By moving mountains

4. The monkey has a question,

In Lalibela, how do you travel from one church to another?

Canals Tunnels

5. The egret asks,

Most languages have their roots in other, older languages. What language did Swahili come from?

Bantu Arabic

6. The lion wishes you to explain,

How long did it take to build the Stone fortress on the Zimbabwean plateau?

40 years 400 years