

# SAMPLE TEACHERS GUIDE

Global Arts Educational Network Entertainment



presents

## ANANSE ON TOUR!



Study Guide  
*for*  
Teachers and Students

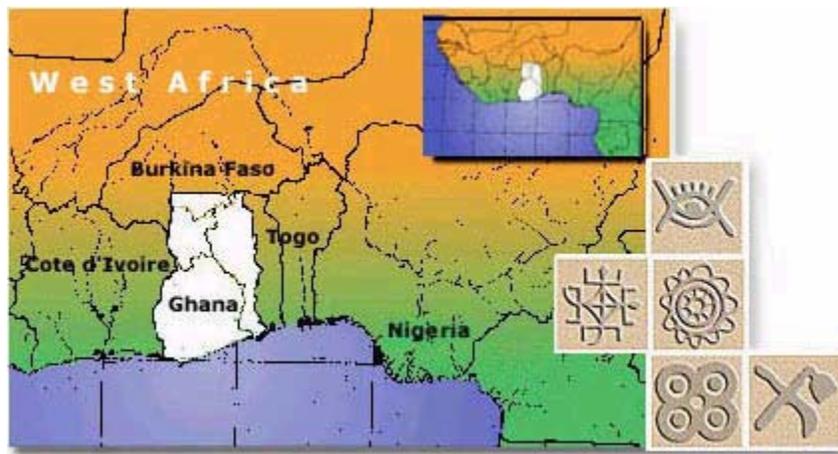
by J'miah Nabawi

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## BACKGROUND

### *Ananse the Spider*

Many of us know about *Ananse the Spider* through many of the illustrated children's books about him and from storytelling festivals and gatherings. However, these very same stories and storytelling sessions will very rarely mention or include *Ananse's* musical heritage and the numerous *recreational folktale songs* called *mmoguo* that are culturally and historically associated with him. The *kente-cloth* that has become popular in the United States and the Caribbean Islands amongst African descendants is a woven multicolored textile that carry proverbs and wisdom-sayings symbolically woven into its patterns. *Kente-cloth* is also culturally connected to and associated with *Ananse the Spider*. Ashante legend says that it was *Kwaku Ananse* who influenced the kente-cloth weavers in Bonwire, Ghana centuries ago. It is here with the Akan people, comprised of many ethnic groups with the Asante being one of the largest, where *Ananse* and his fantastic stories, recreational folktale-songs (*mmoguo*), and the geometric symbols associated with him have their beginnings.



**The Akan** of Ghana and La Côte d'Ivoire make extensive use of a system of ideographic and pictographic symbols. Individually, each symbol is associated with a specific proverb or saying rooted in the Akan experience. Collectively, these symbols form a system of writing that preserves and transmits the accumulated cultural values of the Akan people. This ideographic and pictographic writing system can be seen in use extensively in textiles, pottery, metal casting, woodcarving, and architecture.



**Akwaaba**

(Welcome)

According to Akan oral tradition, stories and the art of storytelling here on earth is attributed to *Kwaku Ananse*. After having successfully completed some very difficult tasks that were given to him by Otweadumpon Nyame, the original owner of stories, *Ananse the Spider* was given all of Otweadumpon Nyame's stories to bring down to earth for creatures — man, woman, and child — to enjoy. (See *A Story, a Story* by Gail E. Haley; *ANANSE Makes It So!* by J'miah Nabawi ). As the new owner of all stories and the first storyteller on earth, anything that had to do with stories and storytelling was named after *Ananse the Spider*. This is why we have the word *Anansem*. *Anansem* means the telling of *Ananse's* stories, or storytelling in Twi, an Akan language. Also spelled *Anansi* (with an "i" on the end), another one of his traditional names and appellations is *Ananse Kokuroko* (Ananse the Great Spider). Lastly, *Ananse* is married (sorry girls!) and has a family. His wife's name is Okonore Yaa (Aso for some). He has four sons whose names are: Intikuma (Elder); Nyaa-Nkoronhwea (Tiny Legs); Afudohwedohwe (Big Stomach); and Ti-Keneken (Big Head). (You may have read about him having "seven sons" through *retold* stories about Ananse). In spite of their odd sounding names and their various physiological shapes and sizes, Ananse's sons are very proud of themselves and suffer no lack of positive self-esteem. *HAH!* From his origins in Ghana, West Africa, *Ananse* has traveled the hard way to the so-called new world. By land and sea and through the oral traditions of the first Africans who came to the Americas, the Caribbean Islands, and Europe as enslaved captives. The stories, some altering *Ananse's* name to Aunt Nancy (U.S.), continue to carry the traditional rhythms, tempos and dance of Ghana and other African nations as they get adapted and retold to the dictates of their new environs and languages of African derived and Western cultures of the new world.

“*Ananse* is the most popular and frequently encountered trickster and hero in Akan folktales and stories”<sup>1</sup>

*Before*  
THE STORYTELLING PROGRAM

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**Ananse<sup>sem</sup> Kyiri Kasa**

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**Storytelling Does Not Like Idle Talk!**

Teachers explain to students that storytelling itself is universal and that life-experiences and knowledge, family and community traditions and history, customs and values,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kwasi Aduonum is a leading ethnomusicologist and scholar of Akan culture and folkways.

acceptable behavior for social conduct and interaction, food customs, (the list goes on!) are often passed on from one generation to another through storytelling. *Ananse* tales do the same, uniquely adding music and dance to the storytelling experience. Ananse tales (*Anansem*) are for both children and adults alike. Everyone is invited to *energetically* participate in the storytelling drama through clapping their hands in a variety of rhythmic patterns, responding with song passages and/or getting up to move and dance.

This makes the storytelling session a unique “communal experience” for everyone, from toddlers to senior adults, and more fun for everyone besides the storyteller! Read-aloud a favored *Ananse* story.

The *Ananse* stories (and other story gatherings) presented by Mr. Nabawi incorporate some of the Akan elements of storytelling through the story-dance-musically dramatic style he has become noted for. The audience is always invited and encouraged to participate in his upbeat programming. The program and stories are *always* preceded by expressive, introductory exclamations and interjections to call everyone’s attention.

Let’s practice one of them.

Teacher says (loudly and expressively):      *À g o o ?*  
(pronounced: ah-GO-o-o)

Students respond (expressively):      *À m e e !*  
(pronounced: ah-MAY)

(repeat)

#### Translation / Meaning

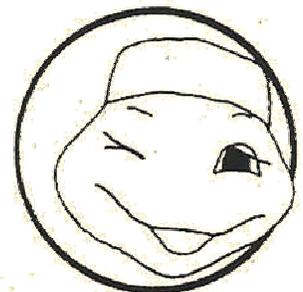
Leader/Presenter calls:      *À g o o ?*

Audience responds:      *À m e e !*

Generally said before a group of people who are gathering and may be chatting about lightly (or loudly) before the proposed program begins. It is said to quiet everyone down in order to begin the meeting, class or program that is ready to start.

*À g o o , ?* (Are you with me? Are you awake? Do I have your attention?)

*À m e e !* (Yes, we are awake. We are here. You have our attention [and respect].)



## ANANSESEM

### *KWAKU ANANSE AND THE BIG BIG DRUM*

(Adapted from the traditional work of Dr. Kwasi Aduonum)

The story begins with *ANANSE* who is many, many miles from home. He hears and falls in love with the rhythmically beautiful sounds of a drum. Upon coming to the place where the drum is being played, *ANANSE* offers the craftsman a price for the drum.

The big drum is so heavy that he must carry it home on his shoulders. The children who live in the villages he passes through have never seen such a big beautiful drum before. They immediately want to play it. *ANANSE* refuses to let them play it and while taking a much needed rest, he is suddenly surrounded by the hundreds of curious children who get closer and closer to the drum. And then . . . *putu-petepete PU-TUM-PAH!* *ANANSE* is suddenly surrounded by children, laughing and singing while playing his drum. Ananse soon joins in with the singing and merriment.

### *ANANSE AND THE HOT BEANS*

(A short retelling of a traditional Ananse tale)

#### *ANANSE Makes It So! (¡Así lo hace ANANSE!)*

(by J'miah Nabawi)

A bilingual telling (Spanish and English) of *ANANSE* who gets a visit from his friend Rabbit. Remembering *ANANSE*'s fondness for drums and drumming in the old country, Ghana, Rabbit invites *ANANSE* to help him make a drum to celebrate their friendship and to dance and move to some newly discovered *latino* beats. *ANANSE*'s refusal to help Rabbit gets him into an embarrassing predicament that finds him hiding in his web in the corner of a ceiling.

## M m o g u o !

“ . . . storytelling and its accompanying songs represent a family tree-- with roots, stems, branches and leaves. A story without its *mmoguo*--songs-- is like a dead tree.”

Dr. Kwasi “Mugafo” Aduonum



The Donno drum

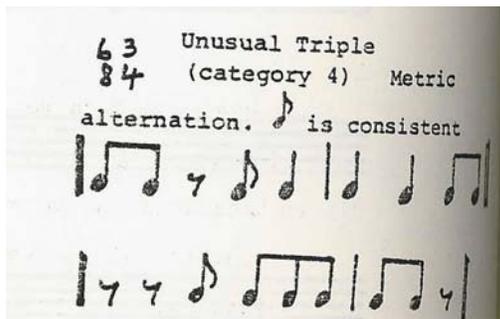
Of special interest to teachers, especially music, dance and physical education / creative movement teachers, is the word *mmoguo*. These are recreational songs and games that accompany *Ananse* stories-- *any* story! *Mmoguo* is folktale-songs as well and can also function as accompanying preludes and interludes from story to story, to dance to, and exercise with, to tease, greet, and make salutations. Teachers are also encouraged to use *mmoguo* as energizers for the relief of routine staleness and classroom boredom!

The Storyteller will set up and assign the various hand-clapping (*nsamu-bo*), claves (*nuuamu-bo*), double bell (*Gankogui*), gourd rattle (*Axatse*) and drum (*Donno*, *Apentema* and *Adowa*) patterns / rhythms for each part of the *mmoguo* song interludes. The songs will also be accompanied with recorded (dubbed) contemporary sound tracks as adapted (or composed) by Mr. Nabawi.



*Gankogui/traditional double bell*

**Students and teachers will be invited to come up to play** hand-held instruments and drums (illustrated) to play along with the music and to accompany Mr. Nabawi. Please note that schools wishing to have a pre-event, *in-house* experience with *mmoguo* before the *Ananse On Tour!* program begins and would like to arrange to have Mr. Nabawi come out to your school, museum or preferred place of venue and give a brief introductory presentation on *ANANSE On Tour!*, please contact Global Arts Educational Network or the host sponsoring the *ANANSE On Tour!* event.

**THE SONGS...****DANCE and GAMES***for***Ananse On Tour!**

Rhythmic theme and patterns for Kukyenku

**KUKYENKU** is a song sung by children about *Ananse* who did not want the children to play his big beautiful drum. Children ends up playing it anyway, with *Ananse* singing along with some of the children while others play the drum.

**kYE-kYE KULE** is a traditional song, centuries old, that has become very popular with music teachers and students in U.S. public schools. The song's original meaning has been lost over time. It was traditionally employed as a fun "exercise" game to get children up from their seated positions to move and stretch. A traditional verse of the song is first introduced in the story *ANANSE Makes It So!* The full program version however will be sung again in its adapted modern version that has today's children and youth in mind. Everyone will be invited to "get up to move and stretch" to **kYE-kYE's** new beat!

**AKAN STONE GAME**

**aw-bwah see-me sah Nana!** This original short story is based on a traditional Akan stone game. River stones get passed from one partner to the next who are invited to be teams of "stone-passers." The accompanying song is sung by the stone-passers *and* the audience as the stone-passers try not to drop the stones or lose the beat when the song is sung faster and faster.

With hand-held instruments--Axatse gourd rattle, claves, bells--and drums, the accompanying *music makers* chosen from the audience help increase the tempo of the song. Teachers will select which students will come up when prompted to do so.

**Pete Pete!** is a recreational song about a baby vulture out in the wilderness searching for food. Its mother has prepared a delicious meal and wants it to come home to eat. It is sung to discourage children and youth from truancy and wandering about wasting their time. We also use it to call our children to the dinner table when it is time for supper, to come and eat! The storyteller will conclude the program with this *mmoguo*, forming a train-like line-dance of children and adults as they dance off stage and down the aisle to exit out the door. This shall also be representative of one of the Adinkra symbols found in the follow-up activities section of the complete Teachers Guide that shows that even in diversity there are common ground and unity to be found as all living creatures' need to eat, be fed. (It is more likely that everyone will be hungry and ready to eat by then anyway!)

## NEW WORDS AND PHRASES

*and all FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES* are in the "complete" Teachers Guide that will include art-making and creative writing and drama using ADINKRA (Positive Symbolism).



"Wawa" Adinkra symbol  
meaning *hardiness and perseverance*

At present, the complete guide is only available to schools and agencies booking Mr. Nabawi's *ANANSE On Tour!* showcase as an event or as an "artist-in-education residency." *ANANSE On Tour!* will be featured as *ANANSI Tales* during the 2005 Savannah Music Festival's Educational Youth Concert series

March 23, 2005, 11AM SCAD's Trustees Theater

J'miah Nabawi *Interdisciplinary Storyteller*

*Gankogui/traditional double bell*





*Adowa traditional drum*

And now you are ready for **ANANSE On Tour!**

Come travel with Ananse the Spider through his stories and fondness of drumming, dance and song . Continuously boarding in Ghana, West Africa and making stops in Bahia (Brazil); Santiago de Cuba; Jamaica and other ports of call and points of interests.

*À goo?*

*À mee!*



*Axatse gourd rattle*

For more information contact

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