

Teacher's Resource & Study Guide
For
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Department of Theatre and Dance
Touring Production of
Rising Sun, Rising Moon
By Randy Wyatt

GRADE LEVEL:

K-5

SUBJECT AREA:

Language Arts, Theatre, Music, Dance, World Cultures

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

This program brings to life two folk tales from very different cultures. “Arrow to the Sun” is taken from Native American Indian folklore, while “Anansi the Spider” derives from African folklore. This resource is intended for teachers to guide students through various activities associated with their viewing of this production.

SYNOPSIS:

The Sunlord of Native American mythology and Nyame, the African goddess of the moon introduce themselves and through quick rhythmic lines, discuss the function and origin of folklore. The first story begins with young Rising Sun being outcast by the other kids of the pueblo for not having a father. Dispirited, he returns home to ask his mother where his father is. She tells him that his father is the Lord of the Sun, and that long ago, He sent his spark to earth and placed it inside the young boy. Rising Sun, determined to meet his father, begins to ask around the pueblo to discover how he can travel to the sun. After meeting several colorful characters, including a Corn Planter and a Pot Maker, he meets an Apothecary who gives him a present of canned smoke and sends him to Arrow Maker. Arrow Maker magically turns the boy into an arrow and shoots the boy up to the sun. Once there, Rising Sun meets the Sun Lord. But the Sun Lord requires the boy to undergo four trials to prove his true heritage. Rising Sun must face cats, snakes, bees and lightning to prove his true heritage and return triumphantly to the pueblo. The second story is narrated by Nyame, who introduces Anansi the clever spider, and her six children—See Trouble, Way Finder, Game Skinner, Rock Thrower, River Drinker and Soft Back. Each one of her children has a special skill that comes into play once Anansi is caught far from home by a fish and then later by a falcon. Each spider child uses his special talent for helping their mother out of danger once. On the way home from their adventure, the children find a bright shining gem in the bushes, and each lays claim to it, proving their worthiness through their own actions. Nyame steps in and proclaims them all worthy, setting the stone in the sky as the moon to watch over them all.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

- student should be able to understand that folklore are stories that were told through oral tradition to explain natural phenomena
- student should appreciate and value the contributions of other cultures, and recognize that “different” is not a qualitative judgment
- student should recognize concepts such as cooperation and persistence as acted out by the protagonists in each story

CLASSROOM QUESTIONS:

Why won't the boys in the pueblo play with Rising Sun? (he doesn't know who his father is)

Who is Rising Sun's father? (the SunLord)

What is the problem with visiting Rising Sun's father? (he lives on the sun)

What does his mother go off to find out from the people of the pueblo? (how to get to the sun)

Who can get Rising Sun to the sun? (Arrow Maker)

What happens when Rising Sun gets to the sun? (his father makes him undergo four tests)

How does Rising Sun beat the Bees? (by using smoke to make them sleepy)

Which animal puts Anansi in trouble first? (the Fish) How? (By swallowing her)

Which of Anansi's children gets her out of the fish? (Game Skinner)

What happens to Anansi after the children rescue her from the fish? (the falcon kidnaps her)

How does she get down? (Rock Thrower knocks out the falcon while Anansi drops onto Soft Back)

What do the children find on the way home from rescuing their mother? (the moon)

What does Nyame decide to do with the moon? (place it into the sky so that everyone can deserve/enjoy it)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Line up the whole class. Four students are dubbed “Anansi” spiders and step out of the line. Each student from the line when it is their turn walks up to a teacher who whispers one of the six names of the spider children to them. (See Trouble, Way Finder, Rock Thrower, Game Skinner, River Drinker and Soft Back) Then the students spread about the room. The lights are shut off. Each student calls out his own name from their place in the room. Each Anansi spider must collect one of each of the children as they walk around the room. Once an Anansi spider has six children, they all sit down chanting “Anansi's home!” This group will be declared the winner.
- 2) Split the class into four groups: Cats, Snakes, Bees and Lightning. Put each group in one corner of the room. When the leader says GO, everyone moves to the opposite diagonal corner as their namesakes. Be sure not to hurt anyone! The

leader determines the type of movement. How do happy snakes move? How do slow lightning bolts move? How about bouncing bees? It's fun when everyone gets to the middle at once!

- 3) As a class, come up with your own folktale. The teacher picks a natural phenomena: where do storms come from? Why are there snowflakes? Why does the sun set each day? Write your own story to explain what happens. Use heroes, magic or whatever your imagination comes up with. Read your stories aloud to the class.
- 4) Draw a picture or use some other media (e.g. clay, collage, watercolor, etc.) to depict one of the scenes from either of the folktales from *Rising Sun*, *Rising Moon*. Put the scenes up on the wall as a visual mural of either of the stories.

MAJOR CHARACTERS TO LOOK FOR:

Sunlord: The God of the Sun in Native American folklore

Nyame: The Goddess of the Moon in African folklore

Rising Sun: A young boy looking for his father

Mother: Rising Sun's mother who helps him on his journey

Corn Planter: An old farmer who is hard of hearing

Pot Maker: A loud woman who sells clay pots

Apothecary: An ancient doctor who works with healing herbs

Arrow Maker: A mysterious craftsman who makes arrows

Anansi: A clever and troublemaking spider

Her Six Children: Each with a special talent—See Trouble, Way Finder, Stone Thrower, River Drinker, Game Skinner and Soft Back.

Fish: A fish who isn't very bright

Falcon: A wily and dangerous bird