

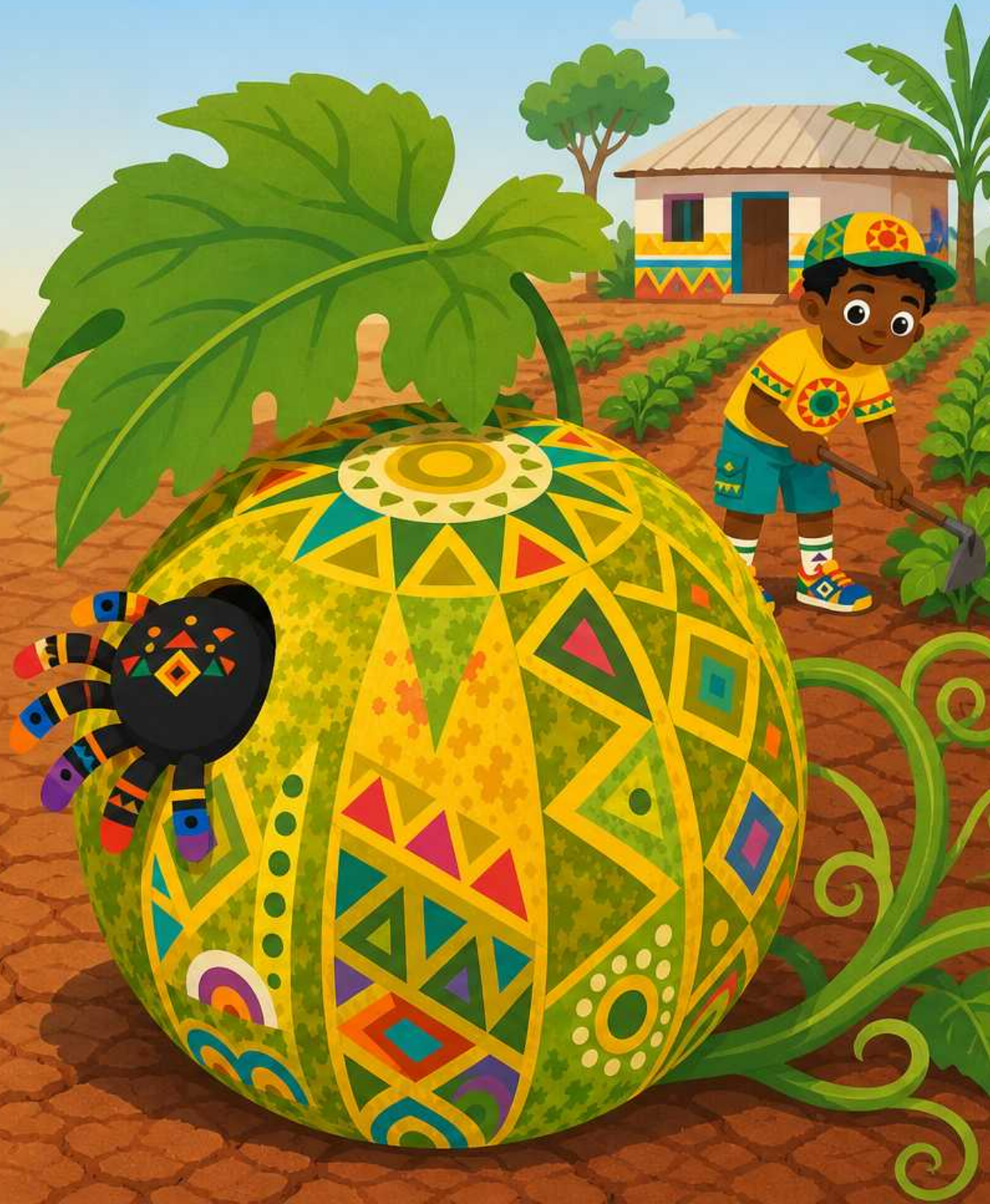
Anansi

Inside the Melon



No rain has come for two weeks. In all the town, one thing still looks happy:

Kofi's big melon, round and green in the shade of its leaf. Anansi smells it from far away. He waits, bites a small hole, and slips inside. It is dark and sweet and cool, and Anansi eats and eats and eats.





Now Anansi has a problem. He ate so much that he is as big as a yam. His belly pushes the walls, and the hole is far too small to get out. He pushes. He twists. He tries to go out legs first. Nothing works at all. Outside, Kofi walks back over the field, so Anansi pulls his legs in and stays very still.

Kofi pats the melon and walks on. Anansi is stuck, but no one has him. There is still lots of melon to eat, and the shade is cool. He can work with stuck. Then Elephant walks past on the road above the field, and Anansi gets a plan. He calls it his best plan ever. Everyone else calls it his worst.



'Good morning, Elephant!' Anansi calls in a big, deep voice from **inside** the melon. Elephant stops. She looks left. She looks right. No one is on the road. 'Down here,' says the melon. 'Elephant is very big today.' Elephant backs away one step, then two. Then she turns and runs, and her **footsteps** sound like the shaking ground.





The story runs fast, and it gets bigger with each telling. By night, the whole town has heard that Kofi's melon can talk. By **daybreak**, a big crowd stands at the field. Anansi waits until they all lean in. Then, in his best melon voice, he says, 'The rains will come back in seven days.' The crowd gasps. 'Who has heard a melon talk?' whispers one old woman. But she watches it, just in case.

By noonday, word gets to the King. The King is a big man who takes both melon crop and odd things hard. He calls for the melon to come to court. Anansi's belly drops. Going to the palace is not part of the plan. But four strong men lift the melon onto a cloth, and off it goes to the King.



The court is full. The King sits on his stool in his best cloth, gold and black. His men sit in rows, and the crowd packs every doorway. The melon is set on a low table. The King leans in and says, 'We hear that the melon can talk. Please, talk.' Inside the melon, Anansi thinks fast. He can stop now, or he can put on a grand show. Anansi will never pick quiet.





Anansi gives it his all. The melon tells the King that his soup needs pepper seeds. A good guess, and it is right! The melon says a lucky day is coming. The melon tells where the drummer lost his drumstick. Behind the water jar. Right again! The King claps and his men gasp. At the back, Kofi looks cross and mixed up all at the same time.

Then one of the King's men steps up, a sharp woman named Abena who has been thinking for a long time. 'Melon,' she says, 'what am I thinking right now?' The court holds its breath. Anansi holds his too. He **cannot** know what Abena thinks. **Anything** he says will be wrong, and Abena's look says she can tell. The quiet stretches long and hard, and the whole **airspace** of the court feels tight.



'The melon,' Anansi says at last, 'is thinking about what Abena is thinking.' The court is still for one more second. Then the King stands up slow. 'I have been a good host to this melon,' says the King, 'and it makes a fool of my court.' His voice goes very quiet, which, for kings, is worse than loud. 'Take it away. Quick.' Then the King grabs the melon and throws it hard, like airmail across the court.





The melon hits the floor with a crack. It bursts open into a big mess of green peel, seeds, pulp, and one very fat, very dizzy spider, all stained orange. Anansi rolls under a bench and lies still. He hopes they will think he is a big seed. Kofi looks at the mess. Then at Anansi. Then at the King. 'Who has heard a melon talk?' says Kofi. And no one can stop grinning for a long, long time.

The King sends Anansi home with a stern word, a towel, and a bag of pepper seeds for Kofi's soup. Anansi walks back through the town, still a bit orange, picking seeds from his legs. He was snug. He was clever. He was almost believed by a king. But he was too big to leave when the time came. 'Who has heard a melon talk?' No one. And next year, **everyone** sees that Kofi watches his melon crop very well indeed.





S1

Anansi Inside the Melon

Anansi the spider bites his way into Farmer Kofi's prize melon for a cool, sweet snack, but he eats so much he cannot get back out. When Elephant strolls past, Anansi has a wild idea: what if the melon could talk? Soon the whole town believes it, and the King himself calls the melon to court. Will a talking melon fool everyone, or is Anansi in over his head? This Bookbot level practices 2-syllable compound words like 'inside', 'outside', 'daybreak', and 'footsteps'.

Reading Skills: Compound

airmail, airspace, anything, cannot, daybreak, doorway, drumstick, everyone, footstep, footsteps, inside, into, noonday, nothing, outside

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