

Anansi Must Pay



Anansi the spider had to pay great Python back for a meal. Six months ago, the river rose fast and swept off his yam garden. Python let him eat from his deep stores and did not ask him to pay it back. Now Python had come to collect. He coiled on the painted step and blocked the door, wide and thick and still, and Anansi froze in the doorway with one leg up. Python had just one **intention**, and that was to eat Anansi himself, with hot red pepper, served in a bright plastic container.





'You must pay me back that meal,' said Python, and his voice was soft and smooth. 'I have made my **decision**. The meal is you.'

His body was as thick as a tree trunk. When he smiled, his mouth opened so wide that ten spiders could fit inside it.

Anansi shook by his pot, and his knees knocked together. Sweat ran down his brow. He needed a plan, and he needed it fast.

'Wait!' said Anansi, and he held up one leg. 'You can not eat me today, great Python.' Python's eyes got thin and narrow. 'Can not? I am the longest animal in this forest, and I do what I like.' 'Of course you do, great Python,' said Anansi in a soft, smooth voice. 'But that is just the problem. If you eat me like this, the animals will call it a common **action**, the kind any old snake can do. Is that fit for a king?'



Anansi kept talking, and his words spun out soft and smooth, like silk from his web. 'I was on my way to get royal vine-rope for the great Sky-God Nyame,' he said. 'It is red rope, the strongest rope in all the forest.' Then Anansi picked up a thick coil of red vine-rope from his bench and held it high. 'This rope is strong enough,' he said softly, 'to hold any knot a true king might wish to tie.' Python's mouth fell wide open as he stared at the coil. The bright red rope had all of his **attention.**





Python had always been proud. He was the longest, the heaviest, the most powerful. But in all the forest, no one had ever called him a king who tied the perfect knot. The **notion** settled in his chest like a stone in still water.

'Tell me more about this perfect knot,' he said.

Anansi smiled his most careful smile. 'A king ties the perfect knot,' he said softly. 'Only the greatest can do it.'

'What does this royal knot look like?' Python demanded. Anansi gave a long **description**. 'It loops and it folds seven times,' he said softly. 'Only a body long enough to twist through all seven loops can tie it. Most snakes fail at loop three.' Python hissed with pride. 'Show me the first loop.' So Anansi tied the red rope over a low branch, just the start of the knot, and Python watched with great **attention**.



Python began to twist. He coiled once, and Anansi called from the side, 'That is loop one, well done!' Python twisted back the other way, and Anansi cheered, 'Loop two, what **perfection!**' Then Python folded under the red rope, and Anansi shouted, 'Loop three, most snakes give up at loop three, but not a king!' With each loop, Python puffed up with more pride, and with each loop, his long body got a little more tangled. He was paying so much **attention** to being royal that he did not see his own tail wrap around his middle.





'Now loop seven,' said Anansi.

'The final royal loop goes under, around, and back, just like so.'

Python strained and twisted his long neck, and at last he tied the final loop.

'Loop seven, what **perfection!**' called Anansi. Python puffed up with pride and roared, 'A king ties the perfect knot!'

Then he tried to move down the path to Anansi. He pulled and pulled, but he could not move an inch.

Python thrashed in the dust and hissed. He pulled left, and he pushed right, but each **motion** made the royal knot tighter. The vine-rope held every loop in place, and Python could not get free. 'Anansi!' he roared. 'Untie me at once!' But Anansi was skipping fast down the path, grinning back at the big snake. 'Only a king can untie a royal knot!' he called, and his glad voice carried all the way to the river.



But Python had one trick left. He sucked in a deep breath, the deepest breath a snake had ever taken, and roared with his mouth open wide. The roar sent a **vibration** through the trees, and every animal in the forest froze. 'Anansi is a cheat!' Python roared. 'He tricked me, and he did not pay what was due! Tell Nyame, the Sky God! Tell every animal in this land that Anansi the spider is a cheat!' Far down the path, Anansi looked back in fear. Birds shot up from the trees, and the little monkeys held their ears.





Anansi stopped on the path and stood very still under a tall tree. If Nyame the Sky God heard that Anansi had truly cheated, he would lose the right to tell stories forever. So Anansi made his **decision**, and he walked back. He untied loop seven, then six, then five, and the red rope fell slack on the ground. 'I did not cheat,' he told Python. 'I gave you something worth more than one small meal. You tied a knot no snake has ever tied, and the story of Python's royal knot will be told in every village. That pays what was due.' Python held his head up high and was quiet for a long moment. 'Yes,' he said at last, and this time he meant something new.

Python let Anansi go free, then glided off into the deep forest with his head held high. The animals still talk about that day, and the **discussion** may never end. Anansi says he tricked Python, and Python says he was never truly caught, and in a way both of them are right. The cleverest knot of all was the one Anansi tied with words. But Anansi kept the red vine-rope, and he skipped down the path with it coiled on his back, for a spider always has a use for good rope.





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Anansi owes great Python a debt for a meal, and now Python has come to collect, with a plan to eat Anansi himself. Quick-thinking Anansi spins a story about royal vine-rope and a perfect knot fit only for a king. Can he talk his way out of becoming Python's dinner? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 119: -sion, -tion), this book practices words like 'attention', 'decision', 'motion', 'perfection'.

Phonics Focus: -sion, -tion

action, attention, decision, description, discussion, intention, motion, notion, perfection, vibration

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