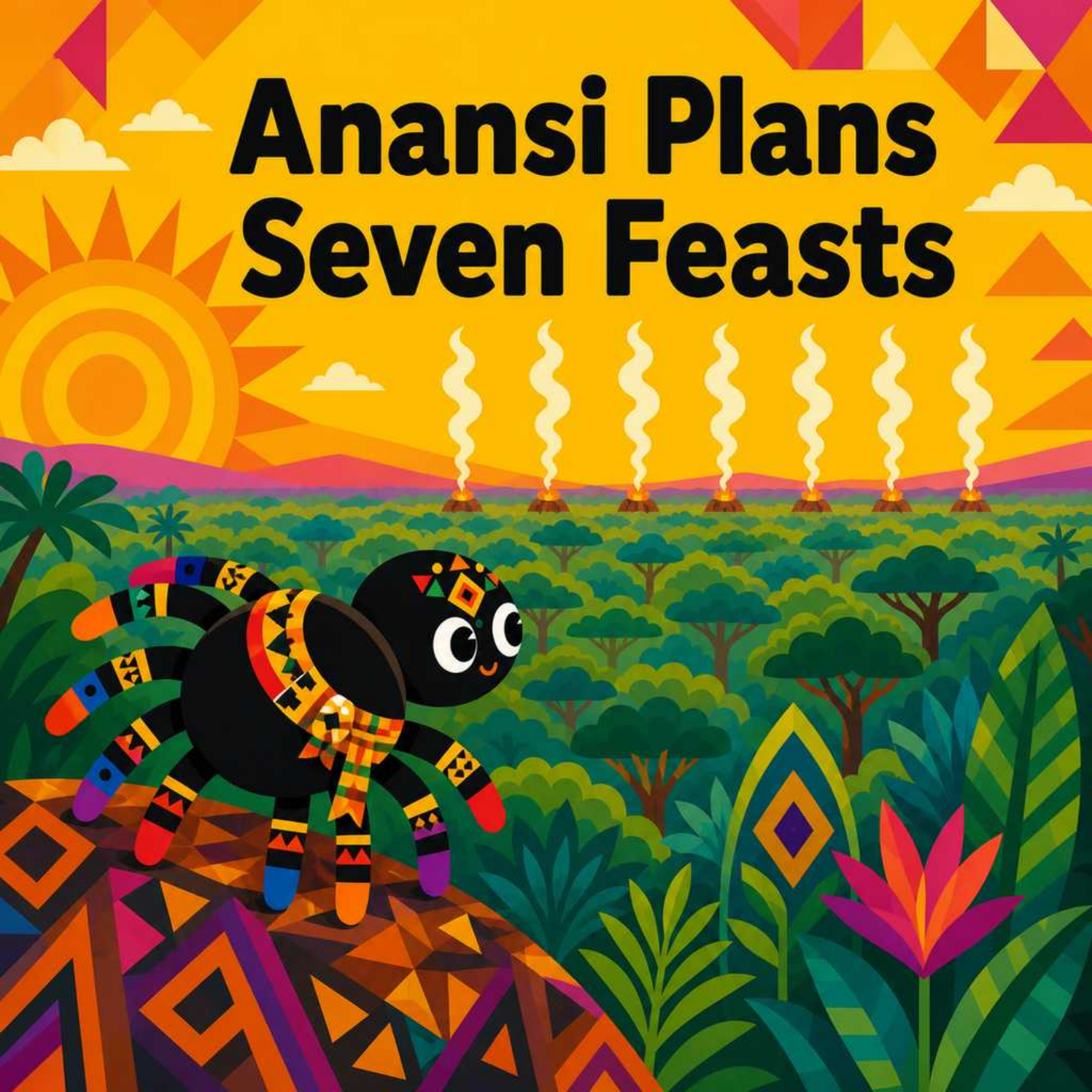
Anansi Plans Seven Feasts



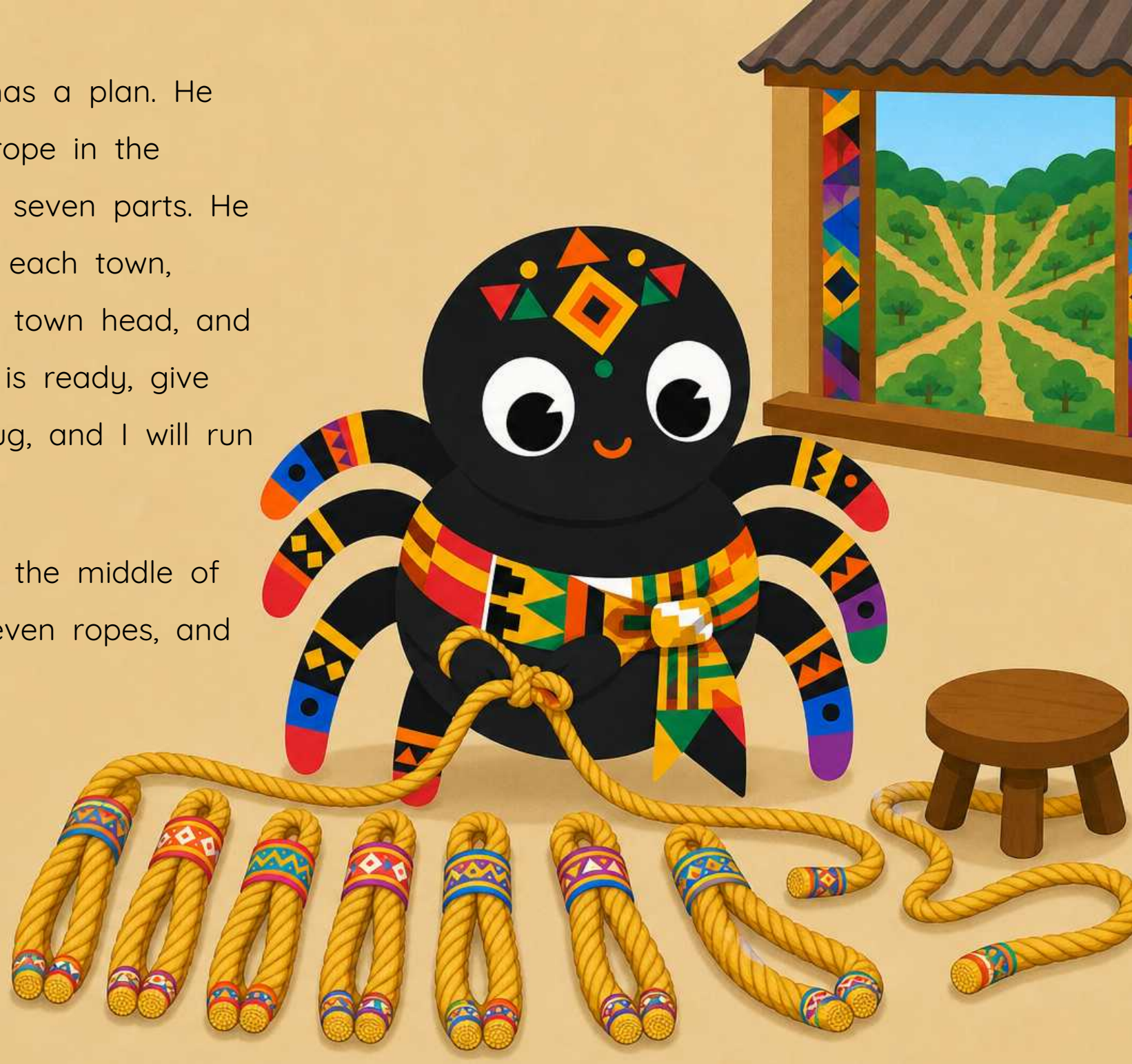
Anansi the spider has a very fine round belly. It is smooth and fat as a ripe watermelon, red as good river clay. Anansi pats that belly **proudly.** He keeps it well fed, and he intends to keep it that way forever. Then the big Harvest Festival starts, and so does Anansi's bad luck.

The big Harvest Festival happens **only** once in seven summers. This summer, each town in the Ashanti forest has its feast on the very same day: the hill town, the river town, the valley town, all seven towns at once. There is yam, and nut stew, and the **freshest** roast corn, and so much more that the smell of it floats on the wind for five days.

Anansi wants to eat at every feast. That is the problem, because the towns are spread across the forest, and each feast starts at the same hour. Every other animal **wisely** picks just one town, but Anansi can not pick. 'Eyes **bigger** than your belly, Anansi,' says Weaver Bird. Anansi waves her away. He is thinking hard.

By morning, Anansi has a plan. He will get the **longest** rope in the forest and cut it into seven parts. He will take one part to each town, hand one end to the town head, and say, 'When the feast is ready, give this rope one hard tug, and I will run over at once.'

Then he will stand in the middle of the forest, hold all seven ropes, and wait.



Anansi trots from town to town with his best smile. 'What an honour,' says each town head, and takes the rope **gladly.** It is nice to have such a fine friend. Anansi visits all seven towns and trots back to his spot in the middle of the forest. It is a long, long walk, but the dream of seven feasts keeps his legs moving. He ties all seven rope ends **tightly** around his waist, and he sits down to wait.

Anansi waits all morning. He plans his path: hill town first, then river, then valley. 'I will eat a little at every feast,' he tells himself, 'just a taste of every dish.' Then he stops. 'No. I will eat the full feast at every one!' He grins. What a **boastful,** greedy plan. He does not know how much bad luck is on its way.

Here is what Anansi does not know. The harvest this summer is the best in forty summers, and every town has its feast ready **quickly.** Each town head looks at the steaming feast and thinks, the **sooner** we tug, the **sooner** our fine friend gets here.

All seven town heads smile. All seven reach for their ropes at the very same minute.

Yank! Yank! Yank! Seven ropes snap taut at once. Seven towns pull in seven ways, and the pull hits Anansi's round middle hard. He lifts off the ground. He spins like a top. He makes the **loudest** sound any spider has ever made. The ropes do not break. The knots hold **perfectly,** because Anansi made them, and Anansi's knots are always the best. That, it turns out, is the problem.

Anansi is pulled east and west and north and south, up two hills and down to the river, all at the same minute. Every rope is taut. Every town head tugs **harder** and thinks: why is our friend so slow? Anansi tries to yell for help. **Only** a tiny, tiny sound comes out, because there is not much room for air in his middle now. The ropes pinch **tighter.** And **tighter.** And **tighter** still.

At last the ropes go slack. All seven baffled town heads let go at the same minute, and Anansi drops to the ground like a stone. He rests there a long, long time, looking up at the sky.

His belly, once so pretty and round, is now pinched in the middle so **tightly** that it looks like two round parts joined by the **thinnest** thread.

He sits up **slowly.** He looks down at his waist. He sighs **sadly.**

By the time Anansi gets to the hill town, the feast is over. At the river town, the pots are empty. At the valley town, each child is in bed. Anansi walks **sadly** from town to town, past empty tables and glad animals. Each one pats its full round belly when it sees him. At the last town, Weaver Bird sees him get there late. She says it again: 'Eyes **bigger** than your belly, Anansi.' This time she means his waist. Every animal can see his waist now.

Anansi goes home **unfed.** His pretty round belly is gone forever, pinched into the thin waist that all spiders have to this day. It is a **reminder** that no one can be in seven places at once, and that wanting it all often means getting nothing at all. So when a child piles a bowl too high, a grandmother in the Ashanti forest sets it down **softly** and says, 'Eyes **bigger** than your belly.' And now you know where that saying came from.

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Anansi Plans Seven Feasts

Anansi the spider has a fine, round belly, and he intends to keep it fed forever. But the Great Harvest Festival means seven feasts in seven towns, all at the very same hour, and Anansi cannot bear to pick just one, so he wisely, or maybe not so wisely, ties seven ropes tightly round his waist and waits: will his clever plan really let one spider eat every feast? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 106: Affixes Review 1), this book practises words like 'wisely', 'tightly', 'boastful', 'freshest', 'proudly'.

Phonics Focus: Affixes Review 1

bigger, boastful, freshest, gladly, harder, longest, loudest, only, perfectly, proudly, quickly, reminder, sadly, slowly, softly, sooner, thinnest, tighter, tightly, unfed, wisely

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