

# Anansi and the Universe



Anansi has a plan so big it makes his eight eyes shine. He will walk each road, stop at each town, and collect all the wisdom in the **universe**: each clever thought, each sharp trick, each solution, all stuffed into one big bright plastic pot. Then he will be the wisest beast of all, and all of them will have to come to him for answers.

The pot is wide, with a tight lid of grass. Anansi looks at it the way a cat looks at a dish with a lid.





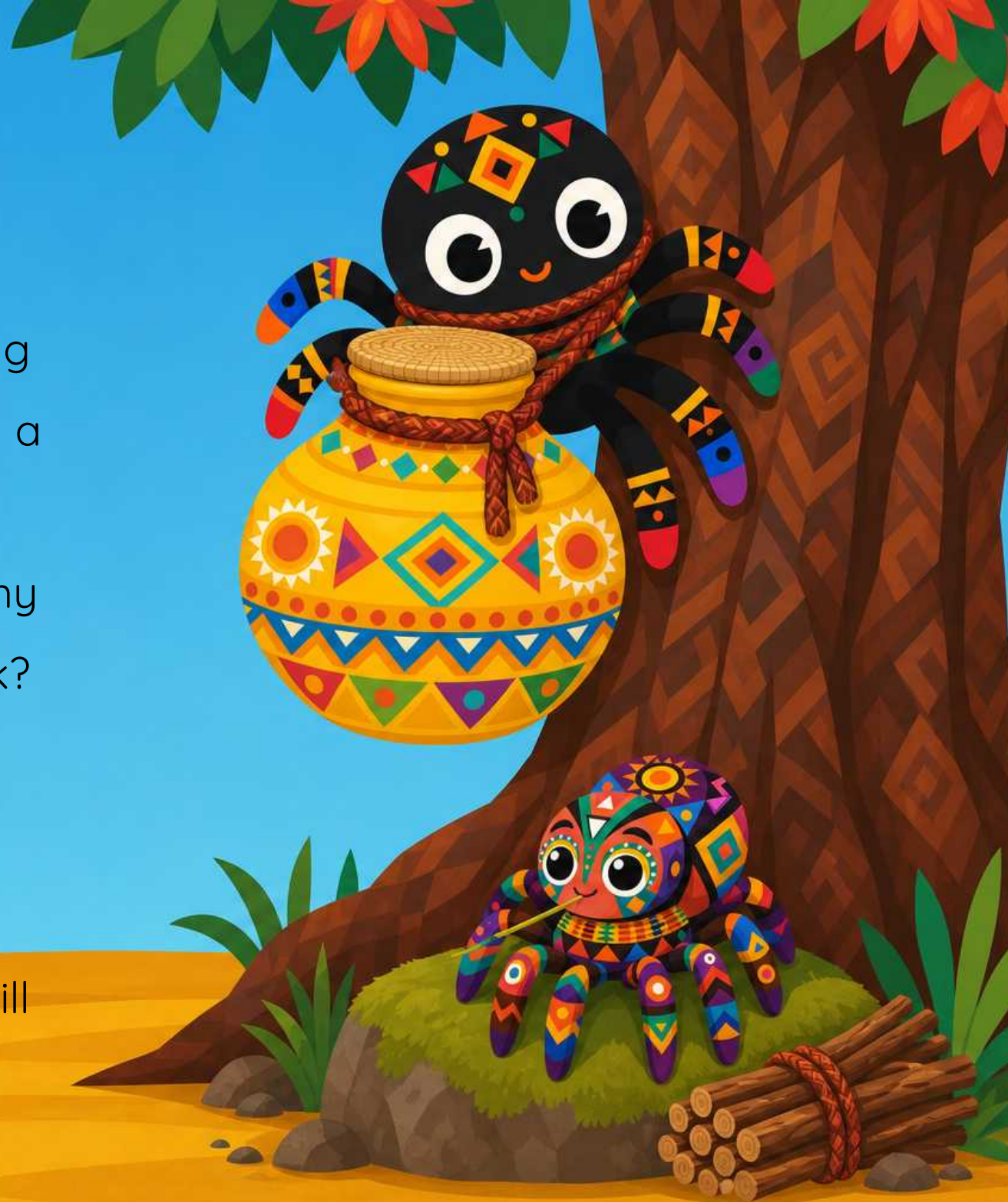
Anansi sets off through the woods. At each road fork he stops the animals and asks for their best thoughts. Gray Hornbill gives him the wisdom of waiting. River-crab gives the wisdom of moving sideways to get ahead. Old Tortoise mutters the wisdom of carrying the load on his own back. What a wise **trio!**

Anansi tips each thought into the pot, claps the lid on tight, and moves on. By the time he gets to the tallest tree at the edge of the woods, the pot feels very heavy and very full.

'I will hide the pot at the top of this tall tree,' says Anansi, 'where no one can get it.' He ties a long rope to the pot's neck, hugs the pot to his belly, and starts to climb. But the pot swings and bangs the bark, and Anansi slides back down to the roots. He tries again. Slide. Again. Slide. A **triple** slide, and the smooth trunk is no help at all.



Nearby, on a low rock, sits Anansi's small son, Ntikuma, with his stack of wood. He has been watching the sliding all this time. Ntikuma chews a stem of grass and thinks. Then he calls up, 'Father, why not tie the pot to your back? Then all eight legs are free to grip in **unison** and climb.' It is such a simple, plain thought that Anansi stops still on the bark.





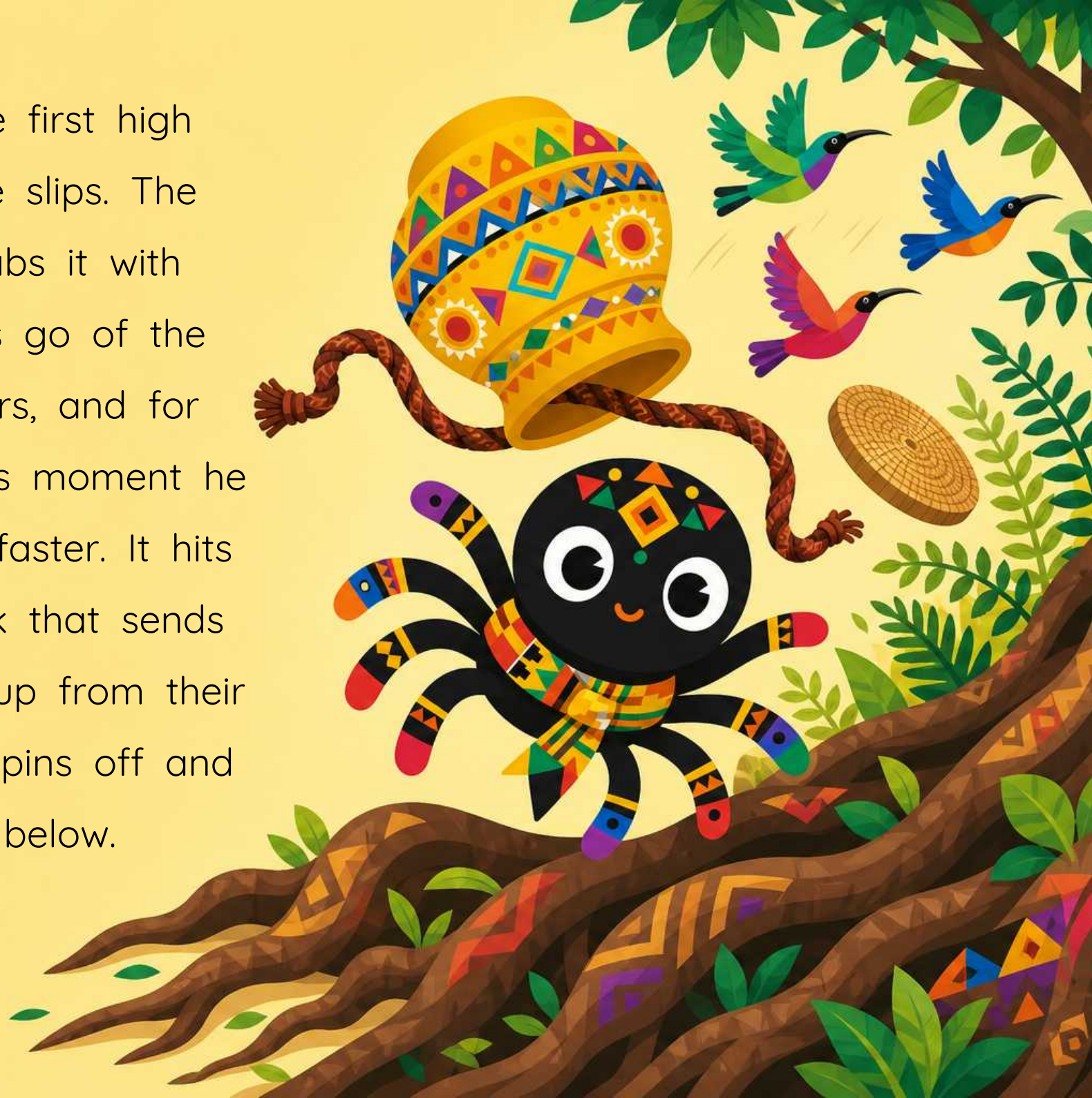
A hot rush of shame runs through Anansi, from leg one to leg eight. He spends all morning collecting all the wisdom in the world, and now his own small son gives him the most useful thought yet, free.

The pot should hold it all. But this thought comes from outside the pot. So the pot does not hold it all. The **universe** has more wisdom than one pot can hold.

'If a child at home has wisdom I do not have,' Anansi mutters, 'then so does the drummer in the next town. And the elders who read the clouds.' The pot feels less like gold now, more like a very heavy load. Still, he can not give up his plan. He climbs again, and this time the pot is tied to his back. All eight legs grip in **unison**. Up and up he goes.



He is almost at the first high limb when the rope slips. The pot tilts. Anansi grabs it with two spare legs, lets go of the trunk with the others, and for one long, weightless moment he falls. The pot falls faster. It hits a root with a crack that sends a **trio** of sunbirds up from their nests, and the lid spins off and rolls into the ferns below.





The wisdom bursts out of the pot, shining, spinning, scattering on the morning wind. Some lands in the lilies by the stream. Some drifts into the ears of small kids. Some blows all the way to the next realm, and the one beyond that, out into the **universe**.

Anansi lands in the ferns with a soft thud, safe, but his bright plan is lost. The pot is split in two, and the wisdom is gone for good. No one holds all the wisdom, and now the world has the proof.

Anansi sits in the ferns for a long time. Ntikuma sits by him and does not say a thing, because that is the wise thing to do. Then Weaver-bird lands on the split pot, tips its head, and sings a **trio** of bright notes, as if it knows a thing or two. Anansi looks at his legs, all eight, all empty, and for the first time today he feels light.



'Gray Hornbill gives me the wisdom of waiting,' Anansi says, 'and do I wait? No. River-crab gives me the wisdom of moving sideways, and I climb straight up. Tortoise tells me to carry the load on my own back, and I hug the pot to my belly.' He counts on his legs. One, two, three. A **trio** of wise thoughts, and not one of them put to use. 'The wisdom was never in the pot,' Ntikuma says. 'It was in the using of it.' Anansi opens his mouth, and then he shuts it again.





From that day on, wisdom lives in the wind and the water, in old songs and new questions, in elders and in small boys who watch from rocks. It **unites** them all. When an elder gets too sure of all his answers, a little gust will scatter his papers, and a small kid nearby will laugh. Anansi tells the tale of his own fall, and he laughs first, because a beast who can laugh at his own plan is hard to beat.

Nyame looks down from the sky, pleased. Not because the pot is split, the Sky-God is too kind for that, but because the wisdom now lives at each end of the woods, not shut in one plastic pot under one tree. And when little Ntikuma unties a knot that the elders can not undo, that is his own wisdom at work. No one holds all the wisdom, not even Anansi. And that, it turns out, is a **universal** truth, and a very wise plan for the world.





# Anansi and the Universe

Anansi has a plan so big it makes his eight eyes shine: he will gather every scrap of wisdom in the universe and seal it inside one big pot, so everyone must come to him for answers. He ties the pot to his belly and climbs, but it swings, bangs, and sends him sliding right back down. Will Anansi ever get his precious pot to the top of the tree? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 127: uni-, bi-, tri), this book practices words like 'trio', 'universe', 'unison', 'triple'.

**Phonics Focus:** uni-, bi-, tri

trio, triple, unison, unites, universal, universe

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