African Storytelling
Oral History

- History that is passed down by word of mouth
Folktale

- **traditional story**: a story or legend that is passed down orally from one generation to the next and becomes part of a community's tradition.
African Folktales

• Often explain why nature is the way nature is.

• They often have some important moral to learn within the story.

• Moral – A lesson about life
African Storytellers

• African Storytelling is an art.

• They often use percussion instruments, masks, and costumes to entertain while telling their stories.

• Audience participation is most often an important part of African Storytelling.
Four Key Elements in African Storytelling

1. Entertainment is part of African storytelling.

2. Morals and instructions in proper conduct can be found in African storytelling.

3. Beasts, plants and nature are part of the African storytelling process.

Anansi

- The Ashanti trickster/culture hero, also called 'the Spider'. He is the intermediary of the sky god Nyame, his father, on whose command Anansi brings rain to quench the forest fires and determines the borders of oceans and rivers during floods.

- His mother is Asase Ya.

- Anansi is sometimes regarded as the creator of the sun and the moon and the stars, as well as the one who instituted the succession of day and night.

- A typical trickster, he is crafty, sly, villainous, but he also taught mankind how to sow grain and how to use the shovel on the fields.

- Anansi is one of the most popular characters in West African mythology.
Legend says .... Once upon a time, a long time ago, Anansi visited the Sky God. The Sky God liked him so much that he gave Anansi, and only Anansi, the gift of storytelling so that Anansi could spin stories about life on earth.
Anansi Exercise

• **Four each of the 6 stories answer the following four questions (one copy per group)**

1. How was the story entertaining?
2. What was the moral of the story?
3. What key elements of nature were involved in the story?
4. Does the story have anything to do with the history of a group of people?
Sahara Folklore: Tale of Tafaka

• Djinn – Fairy, Spirit

• Moral – Always be nice to others because you never know

• Explains – Why Arabic Women have long black hair
Sahel Folklore: Hare The Theif

- Fulani – People of western Africa, Their stories often involve a Hare, who acts like a human and is a trickster
- In the US are known as Brer Rabbit Tales
• The Moon and the Sun often have human like qualities and play an important role in the stories
• Only the **Smartest** and the **Strongest** survive!
• Never let your guard down!
Ethiopian Highlands Folklore: Ark of the Covenant

- Historical tale
- Ethiopia is Blessed
Savanna Folklore: The Caterpillar and the Hare

• The Maasai – A tribe that lives on the Savannah, most of their tales are about animals, life has a definite rhythm that is never changing
• Words are powerful
• Being small doesn’t have to be a disadvantage
• Don’t judge a book by it’s cover
Swahili Coast Folklore: The Heart of the Monkey

• Swahili tales feature animals and often feature happy endings

• Moral – **Good** triumphs **Evil**

• Explains why monkeys do not go into the ocean
Rainforest Folklore: The Spirit

- Baka – people of the rainforest region in Africa that tell chilling tales of life in the rainforest, animal life plays a role, as well as powerful spirits

- Women often tell these tales to their children to teach them lessons

- The little boy was haunted by his decision to eat all the meat

- Do you think it was a spirit????

- Tale to make children think twice before acting inappropriately
Great Lakes Folklore: 
How Death Came to Earth

- Baganda – People from the Great Lakes Region of Africa, stories often revolve around how things were created

- Katonda- Supreme Creator God
- Kintu – The first Baganda Man

- Explains why when people die and go to heaven they can never come back
Southern African Folklore:

- Zulu – A group of people for Southern Africa, use stories to explain why things are the way they are, celebrate the aging process, elderly people have been blessed by God

- They believe that death is just a milestone, and life goes on after breathe leaves the body

- Death is a punishment for not obeying a god

- The chameleon is bad luck