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The Spider Weaver: A Legend Of Kente Cloth



Synopsis

Two weavers discover a magical-looking, beautiful spider web in the jungle. Inspired by the web's brilliant design and the weaver who created it, the men return to their village and create complex patterns of their own, which they come to call kents, a cloth that is now known throughout the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Weavers in Ghana all know the story of the remarkable spider that showed two enterprising weavers a brand new way to weave beautiful patterns into their cloth. These weavers, named Nana Koragu and Nana Ameyaw, are walking through the jungle one day on their way home to their Ashanti village, when they come across what seems like a "small miracle"--a spider web with a wondrously intricate design. Awestruck, the friends decide to bring this treasure home with them to study. Alas! The web collapses at their touch, and is ruined. But all is not lost. At Ameyaw's wife's suggestion, the weavers return the following day and watch as the amazing Master Web Weaver, a large yellow and black spider, spins her magic for their benefit. Inspired by their skillful teacher, Koragu and Ameyaw begin imitating the spider's weaving dance on their looms to create a new woven cloth called kente-nwen-ntoma, worn to this day by kings and regular people alike. Margaret Musgrove is the author of *Ashanti to Zulu*, which won the Caldecott Medal for illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon. Her knowledge of African traditions and stories stems from her many visits to

West Africa over the years. Artist Julia Cairns lived in Africa for 10 years, working on landscape paintings in the Okavango Swamps in northern Botswana. Readers will be reluctant to tear their eyes away from her stunning illustrations. (Ages 5 to 9) --Emilie Coulter

Bursting with colors as vibrant as kente cloth, this picture book's brightly patterned endpapers quickly set the tone for Musgrove's (Ashanti to Zulu) artful retelling of an Ashanti tale. Here, she dips into the folklore of 17th-century Ghana to relate how two master weavers learn from a clever spider how to weave the beautiful cloth for which the region is famous. While hunting one night, Koragu and Ameyaw stumble upon a web in a banana tree. "Never before had either of them seen such a wondrous design!" Eager to study it more closely, the two men try to bring it home and inadvertently destroy the web. Ameyaw's wife counsels, "Though you cannot find the same web again, perhaps you can find the same weaver," and sure enough, they track down the spider, who shows them her weaving dance: "Dip! Twist. Turn and glide." The men then redesign their looms and imitate the spider's technique, with stunning results. Musgrove's lucid prose is as crisp as the designs on the weaver's cloth, while Cairns's (Off to the Sweet Shores of Africa) watercolors conjure a lush and verdant forest setting. The artist punctuates the cool greens of the leafy backdrop with dashes of red and yellow, and her flattened perspective and characters displayed largely in profile add a folk-art flair. An afterword explains more about the significance of kente cloth. Ages 4-up. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Great book for the art classroom.

We used this to introduce a Kente Cloth art project after studying some Anansi stories! Love it!

I used this to share with my students 1-2nd graders when we made Kente Cloth designs in art class.

Two weavers, walking through the jungle on their way home to their Ashanti village, find an amazing web, unlike anything they've ever seen, in a banana tree. Both men want to bring the web home so that they can study its unique and intricate design, but when they try to detach it from the tree, it falls apart and is ruined. When one of the weavers tells his wife about their lost discovery, she suggests that even though they can't find the web again, they may be able to find the weaver. So the two men go back to the banana tree and as they approach, see the beginnings of another marvelous creation. As they watch, they realize that this master web weaver is a spider. The men spend the

day watching the spider do her weaving dance, twisting, turning and dipping as she moves back and forth across her web. By the end of the day, the weavers have learned her special technique and hurry home to begin weaving this new design which they name kente-nwen-ntoma, or Kente cloth..... Margaret Musgrove's well researched retelling of this wonderful Ghanaian legend will charm and delight children of all ages. Her simple, gentle text is beautifully complemented by Julia Cairns' bold, vibrant watercolor artwork and together this dynamic duo brings this very visual folktale to life. Perfect for youngsters 5 and up, The Spider Weaver includes an afterword about the story and the history of Kente cloth and is a terrific introduction to African folklore that shouldn't be missed.

I love to use "living books" like this instead of textbooks to teach about other countries and cultures. Your children will learn about Kente cloth, and ponder the relationship between the patterns in nature and those we create ourselves. When the spider weaver dances as she spins, webs become things of wonder to the reader--no longer objects to be brushed away, but works of art. The illustrations are lush and draw you right into the story. The glossary and pronunciation guide at the end are also helpful, especially if you plan to read this aloud. (I found the names surprisingly difficult to pronounce!) We read The Spider Weaver as part of a unit based on the story of "Joseph's Coat" in the Golden Children's Bible. My children then drew their own Kente cloth patterns. This is a good, solid, enjoyable tale for all ages. It did not quite reach the level of greatness for me, but my 6-year-old son thought it did.

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