

# **G**randpa **S**ydney's **A**nancy **S**tories

by Geoffrey Philp

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Miami

***Grandpa Sydney's Anancy Stories***

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For my children and the children's children...

## Author's Note

*Grandpa Sydney's Anancy Stories* retells a popular story from the Caribbean about Anancy, the spider man. Anancy stories, which originated in West Africa, have been told and retold throughout Jamaica and the Caribbean and are a rich source of folk wisdom.

This Book Belongs To:

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## Chapter One

“Tell it to me again, Grandpa Sydney,” said Jimmy as he looked into his grandfather's brown eyes that twinkled through his thick reading glasses.

“Why do you like this story so much? Your father liked this story too. Do you like it because of the trickster, Anancy?”

“Yes,” said Jimmy and he rubbed his nose with his fist. “He didn't have to fight or be strong to win. And he always did the right thing.”

“Anancy didn't always do the right things.”

“But in this story he did and that's what matters.”

“I think you're right. In this story he did the right thing. But before I read another word, you have to close your eyes and listen to the story.”

Jimmy blinked hard and yawned. He drew his comforter up to his face. His grandfather could only see Jimmy's eyes and his fuzzy brown hair.

Grandpa Sydney took the book off the shelf and opened to the page that was creased with wear.

“All right, then,” said his grandfather. “I'm going to read your favorite story, “Anancy, Snake, and Tiger.”

“Once upon a time, Snake was making trouble in the village. Yet no one, not even Tiger who owned all the stories in the land and named everything, did anything to stop him because everyone was afraid of Snake.”

But before Grandpa Sydney could say another word, Jimmy had already fallen asleep.

Grandpa Sydney laughed to himself and took off his glasses. He put the book of *Anancy Stories* back on the shelf by Jimmy's bed, kissed him on his forehead, and said a prayer. Then, he walked to the door, turned off the light, and turned on the nightlight, so that Jimmy could get a good night's sleep.

Jimmy slept soundly and the next day, when Jimmy woke up, he ran straight to his grandfather's room to wake him up.

Now that his grandfather had retired from teaching, and Jimmy's father, Winston, had got a job as a security guard, Grandpa Sydney walked with Jimmy to school. Because his father slept during the days and worked at nights, Jimmy barely saw him during the week.

Jimmy missed the tricks that his father would show him with his handcuffs or with playing cards. Jimmy wished that he didn't sleep so soundly. He wanted to wake up early enough to see his father and tell him all about school.

"Grandpa, are you ready?"

"Yes, Jimmy. I'm ready. I was only resting my eyes"

His grandfather rose from his rocking chair and brushed the pleats on his bush jacket.

"I'm not as young as you, you little spring chicken."

He tickled Jimmy.

Taking Grandpa Sydney by the hand, Jimmy and his grandfather walked into the kitchen to have breakfast. Jimmy's mother, Donna, had already made breakfast for them and she had left it in the oven to keep it warm.

Grandpa Sydney took a dish towel from off the rack, opened the oven door, and put the two plates of warm food on the counter.

"Careful you don't burn yourself," said his grandfather. "Remember what happened the last time."

"But I love dumplings," said Jimmy.

"Me too," said his grandfather. "Me too. But remember what old time people used to say in Jamaica..."

*"Craven a go choke puppy!"* they said together and laughed.

"And what does that mean?" asked Grandpa Sydney.

"Don't be greedy!"

"Yes," said Grandpa Sydney. "Yes."

It pleased Grandpa Sydney that although Jimmy was born in Miami, he was learning about Jamaica.

Jimmy's grandfather took the knives and the forks out of the drawer and gave a set to Jimmy. Then, he said grace. Afterwards, Jimmy ate boiled green bananas, dumplings, and bully beef. He gave his portion of callaloo and yellow yam to his grandfather.

"You must eat this. It's good for you," said his grandfather.

"I don't like how it tastes," said Jimmy. "The yam tastes dry and the callaloo is bitter."

"And what if your mother asks me if you ate it?"

"It will be our secret," said Jimmy.

"All right. It will be our secret. Now go to your room and get your book bag. We're going to be late."

Jimmy ran to his room, picked up his book bag, and was running through the door when his grandfather said, "Don't forget to brush your teeth!"

Spinning on his heels, Jimmy dropped his book bag, went to the bathroom, and brushed his teeth. As soon as he was done, he ran back to the living room, picked up his bag, and headed for the front door where his grandfather was waiting for him.

"Let's go," said Grandpa and Jimmy ran through the door.

"Slow down," said his grandfather. "Take it easy now. Let's just enjoy the morning."

Jimmy always liked this part of their morning's walk because his grandfather knew all the names of the birds and the trees.

"And what's the name of those birds, Grandpa?"

"Ground doves."

"And what's the name of those trees with the yellow-yellow flowers?"

"Trumpet trees. They only begin to bloom now in April."

"How you know all these things, Grandpa?"

"Because Miami is almost like Jamaica."

"Almost?"

"Almost. I miss the hills." said Grandpa Sydney. He wiped a tear from his eyes.

## Study Questions for

### *Grandpa Sydney's Anancy Stories*

1. What is the name of the little boy?
2. What is the name of his grandfather?
3. What is the name of the spider-man?
4. What's the name of the boy's favorite story?
5. Where was Jimmy born?
6. What was the grandfather's job before he retired?
7. What kind of work does Jimmy's father do?
8. What is the name of Jimmy's father?
9. What does Jimmy's father teach him?
10. What is the name of Jimmy's mother?
11. What is Jimmy's favorite food?
12. What are some of the names of the birds that Jimmy's grandfather teaches him?
13. What are some of the names of the trees that Jimmy's grandfather teaches him?
14. What country is Jimmy's grandfather from?
15. What is the name of the crossing guard?
16. What language does the crossing guard speak?
17. What is the name of Jimmy's teacher?
18. What is the name of Jimmy's best friend?
19. What is the name of the new boy?
20. Why doesn't Jimmy report Kevin to Miss Saunders?
21. How does Anancy trick Snake?
22. What did the family eat on Sunday?
23. What is the name of the drink they had for Sunday dinner?
24. How does Kevin end up being chained to the bench?
25. What nickname does Jimmy's grandfather call him at the end?

## Critical Thinking

1. Where is Jamaica? Draw a map of Jamaica.
2. Where is Miami? Draw a map of Miami.
3. What is the distance between Miami and Jamaica?
4. What are typical foods in Jamaica? What are some typical foods in Miami? How are they similar? How are they different?
5. Who are the people of Jamaica? Who are the people of Miami? How are they similar?
6. Name five birds found in Jamaica. Name five birds found in Miami. Name five birds found in Miami **and** Jamaica. Draw pictures of the birds.
7. Name five trees found in Jamaica. Name five trees found in Miami. Name five trees found in Miami **and** Jamaica. Draw pictures of the trees.
8. Should we tattletale on other kids?
9. What are some things that we should **always** tell to people in our family? Why?
10. What are some things that we should **always** tell our teachers? Why?
11. Do you know any Anancy stories? Write or find an Anancy story to share with your family and classmates
12. Anancy stories are folk tales. Do you know any folk tales? Does anyone in your family know any folk tales? Ask someone in your family to tell you a folk tale and share it with your friends and classmates.
13. Did Jimmy do the right thing? Write a few sentences about why you think Jimmy did the right thing or if he should have done something else?
14. Kevin is a bully. What are some of the things that bullies do to other children? Why does someone become a bully?
15. Have you ever bullied anyone? Why? How did you feel? Why did you do it? Write a few sentences about the experience
16. Have you ever been bullied by anyone? How did it feel? What did you do? Write a few sentences about the experience.
17. What are five things that you like to do with your family? Write them down and share them with your family and classmates.