



Anansi the Spider was full of mischief. He loved to play jokes and pull pranks on people. One day, he decided to collect all the common sense in the world. Everyone uses these little bits of good judgment every day. "If," Anansi thought, "I alone had all of this sensible information, I could sell it back to people when they needed it." Anansi imagined people lining up to pay him for answers to the simplest questions: *Anansi, what should I wear when it's cold outside? What should I do when I am hungry?*

"This is a brilliant scheme," thought Anansi. "I will have all the common sense in the world and all the money in the world, too!"

So Anansi got a sack and started collecting common sense. *Brush your teeth to prevent cavities! Put your socks on before your shoes!* Anansi put them all in his sack.

The sack was soon bursting at the seams. "I need to find a better place to keep the common sense," thought Anansi. Just then he spied a calabash growing on a vine. It looked like a giant pumpkin. Anansi hollowed out the calabash. Then he stuffed all of the common sense inside and kept collecting.

When Anansi had gathered up every bit of common sense, he thought, "Now I just have to find a good place to hide it."

Anansi set off through the jungle to find just the right hiding place. He dragged the calabash under ferns and over logs. He waded through streams. He trudged from shrub to bush to hedge. He hiked up muddy trails and slid down steep hillsides. Finally Anansi found the tallest tree in the jungle.

"This is the perfect hiding place," he said. "The calabash will be safe and sound. No one would ever guess that I have hidden such a valuable treasure in such an unusual place."

Using a thick rope, Anansi tied the heavy calabash around his neck so that it dangled in front of him like a locket on a necklace. He started up the tree trunk, but climbing was hard. The calabash flopped and swayed. It banged Anansi's belly. It bruised his knees and elbows. The rope burned the back of his neck. But even though Anansi was aching and battered, he did not stop. The thought of getting rich kept him going.

As Anansi was struggling upward, he heard someone giggling below him. He looked down and saw a small boy leaning against the tree trunk.

Anansi called down to the boy. "What is so funny?" he asked.

"You are," said the boy. "Anyone with a pinch of common sense knows that it is easier to carry things on your back-especially if you are climbing a tree. How foolish can you get?"

The boy's words made Anansi furious! Anansi thought he had collected all the common sense in the world. How could he have missed the one piece he needed most? The thought made Anansi madder and madder. Finally he lost his temper and swung the calabash with all his might against the tree trunk.

The calabash shattered into a million pieces. The common sense spilled out and pieces got caught in a breeze. The breeze blew little pieces of common sense all over the world. And that explains why today everyone has a little bit of common sense to use and a little bit of common sense to share. But, as you yourself know, nobody got all of it. It was Anansi who made it happen that way.