



# Jolly Plays

Bringing reading  
to life

by Louise Van-Pottelsberghe

50+ photocopy masters

# Part 1: Introduction

## About the plays

This book contains six plays, which have been written specifically to help children develop their reading fluency and their communication skills. The plays in this book do not have to be performed; they work equally well when used for group, guided or individual reading. Whether the children perform or simply read the plays aloud, they will be getting valuable reading, speaking and listening practice. A number of accompanying comprehension questions, discussion topics, cross-curricular activities and writing activities have been included for each play to reinforce this learning.

Although performance is not necessary, all of the plays have been designed to be as simple to produce as possible. Only one of the plays requires a raised stage platform, and the prop and costume requirements have been deliberately kept to a minimum, with any specific masks or props provided as templates within this book. There is also a song for each play, so that every child in the class can feel included in the performance, whether they were given a speaking part or not. For those children who were given a speaking part, helpful tips for performing have been included at the end of each play script.

There are three different types of play in this book. The first two plays: *How the Zebras Got Their Stripes* and *Why Anansi the Spider has Eight Thin Legs* are based on widely known African folk tales. Folk tales are stories that are typically passed on orally, without being written down. Often, folk tales try to explain why something in the natural world is the way it is: for example, why a zebra has stripes. There is usually also a moral lesson to be learnt from a folk tale: in *How the Zebras Got Their Stripes*, the baboon's selfishness leads to his losing all of the fur on his bottom. The next two plays are 'whodunnit-style' mysteries, featuring the Jolly Phonics character Inky Mouse as a detective who works together with her friends, Snake and Bee, to solve crimes. The final two plays: *The Un-Lucky Ring* and *The Rainbow* are designed to make the children think about the world around them. *The Un-Lucky Ring* encourages the children to discuss the nature of luck and think about whether success comes as a result of good luck or is earned, while *The Rainbow* helps children to learn about the weather and prompts them to find out about how and why rainbows occur. It is a good idea to read this play alongside the folk tales plays, which attempt to explain why zebras have stripes and why spiders have long, thin legs. The difference between *The Rainbow* and the folk tales plays is that the explanation given for rainbows is a simplified version of scientific fact. The six plays can be used in any order.

## Phonic knowledge

All six plays have been written so that the text is fully decodable. The table opposite shows the phonic knowledge required to read the plays. (If the children learnt to read with Jolly Phonics, this phonic knowledge will have been taught by the end of the children's first year, and it is the same as that used in the Jolly Phonics Purple Level readers.)

A play script looks like this:

**Narrator 1:** Megan has been studying hard all day because she has an important maths test tomorrow.

**Narrator 2:** Tom also has a test on Monday. His is a spelling test, but he has not been studying quite as hard as Megan.

**Megan:** Two times two is four; two times three is six; two times four is eight...



Tom sits with his head on the desk and snores loudly.

**Dad:** Megan, you've been studying for hours now. You should have a rest. Why not come for a walk in the woods with me?

**Tom:** (Wakes up with a start) What's that? A walk? What a good plan! I'll go and get Mum.

## Selecting the right part for each child

Selecting the right part for each child is important. Each part has been colour-coded according to difficulty level and length, so that teachers can allocate an appropriate part to each child.

Difficult or long parts

Parts labelled **red** should only be given to confident fluent readers, with good, up-to-date phonic knowledge. These parts will be long and will have a number of alternative letter-sound spellings.

Parts of average length and difficulty

Parts labelled **amber** can be given to good-to-average readers, who know most of the alternative letter-sound spellings that have been taught. These parts will be shorter than parts labelled red and will contain fewer alternative letter-sound spellings.

Short, simple parts

Parts labelled **green** can be given to less able readers and less confident children. These parts will typically be only one or two lines long and will contain few, or no, alternative spellings.

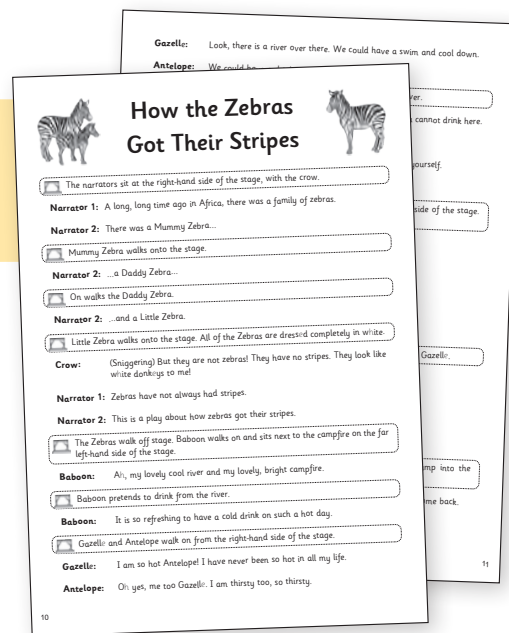
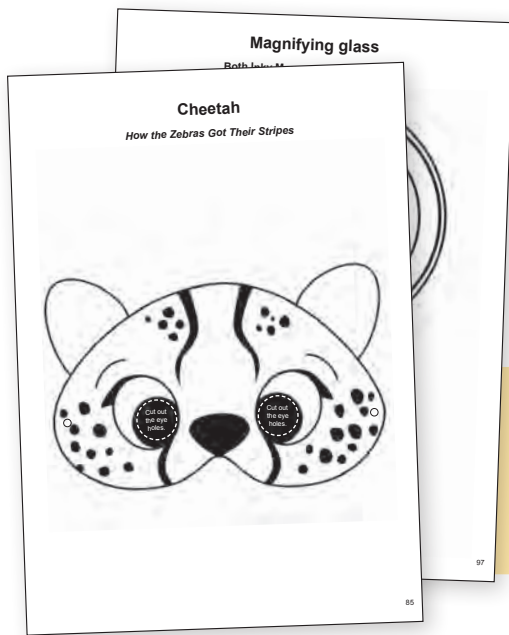
In some of the plays, there are also non-speaking parts. Once you have allocated all of the parts, provide a copy of the play for each child and encourage them to read through the whole play and highlight their lines. If performing the plays, the children can take their copies of the play home to practise their lines with their parents. It is important to reassure the children that they do not need to learn their lines perfectly; they just need to be able to convey the plot of the play to the audience.

## Plays resources

The following resources are included for each play.

### A play script

All of the play scripts in this book are reproducible. Make sure that every child has a copy of the play.

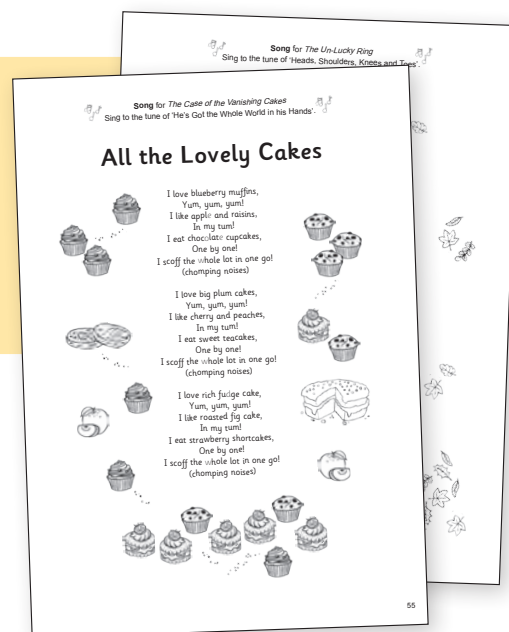
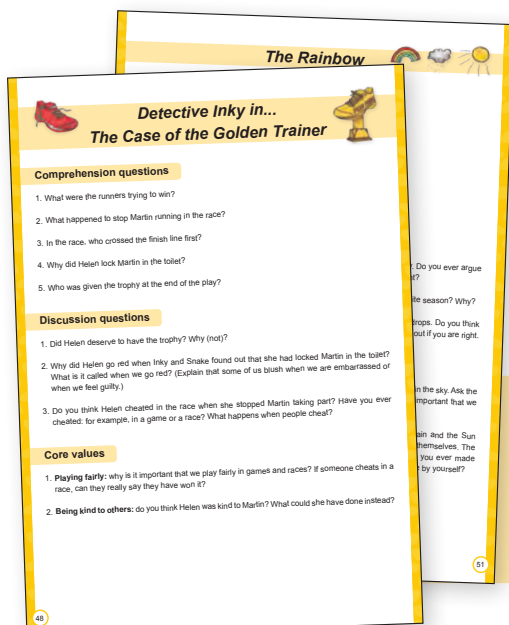


### Mask and prop templates

Reproducible animal masks and prop templates are provided for all of the plays. Instructions for making any additional props are also included.

### Song lyrics

There is one song for each of the plays. The songs can be used whether the children are performing the plays or not. To download the songs audio, visit [jollylearning.co.uk/login](http://jollylearning.co.uk/login); log in or register; go to **My resources**; and enter the code: **JPLAYSBE1**.



### Comprehension and discussion questions

Comprehension and discussion questions encourage the children to recall and think deeply about what they have read. There is a set of such questions for each play.



# Why Anansi the Spider has Eight Thin Legs

This play has twelve speaking parts. If you are using this play for group or guided reading, simply allocate the parts and provide one copy of the play for each child. (See pages 16 to 19 for a reproducible play script.) If you are intending to perform the play, the following pages provide suggested costumes for each character and outline the props necessary for performing the play.

## Characters

- Narrator 1
- Narrator 2
- Anansi

- Mummy Spider
- Rabbit
- Chimp
- Impala
- Frog
- Mouse
- Lizard

- Crow
- Buffalo

A teacher could read the narrators' parts if necessary. A teacher could also read the stage directions if the play is being used for group or guided reading.

## Costume suggestions

### Narrator 1 and Narrator 2

These children could either dress up as African animals, or they could wear their usual school clothes.

### Crow

This child should wear black clothes and, if possible, black wings. He or she should also wear a crow mask. (See page 80 for the mask template.)

### Anansi and Mummy Spider

These children should wear spider masks and black clothes, with four black ribbons or strips of fabric, tied to their waists to form four additional legs. (See page 86 for the mask template.)

### Rabbit

This child should wear grey, brown, black or white clothes and a matching rabbit mask. (See page 87 for the mask template.)

### Chimp and Buffalo

These children should wear brown or black clothes and a chimp or buffalo mask. (See pages 88 and 89 for the mask templates.)

# Why Anansi the Spider has Eight Thin Legs



The narrators sit at the left-hand side of the stage, with the crow.

**Narrator 1:** Once upon a time, there was a spider called Anansi. He had eight short legs.

**Crow:** Short legs? But spiders have long legs...

**Narrator 1:** Well yes, they do now, but spiders have not always had long legs.

**Narrator 2:** This play is about how one spider, called Anansi, got his long legs.



Anansi walks on stage and waves.

**Narrator 1:** One morning, Anansi was feeling particularly hungry. He said to his mum...

**Anansi:** Mum, when will lunch be ready? My tummy is rumbling.

**Mummy Spider:** I have only just started cooking! Why not go for a little walk? Lunch will be ready when you get back.

**Anansi:** But how will I know when lunch is ready if I am out walking?

**Mummy Spider:** You can spin a little strand of your web and tie one end to the cooking pot and the other end to one of your legs. When lunch is ready I will tug on the web to let you know.

**Anansi:** That is an excellent plan!



Anansi pretends to tie one end of a strand of web to the cooking pot and the other end to his ankle.

**Mummy Spider:** Enjoy your walk. Remember to come running when I tug on the web.



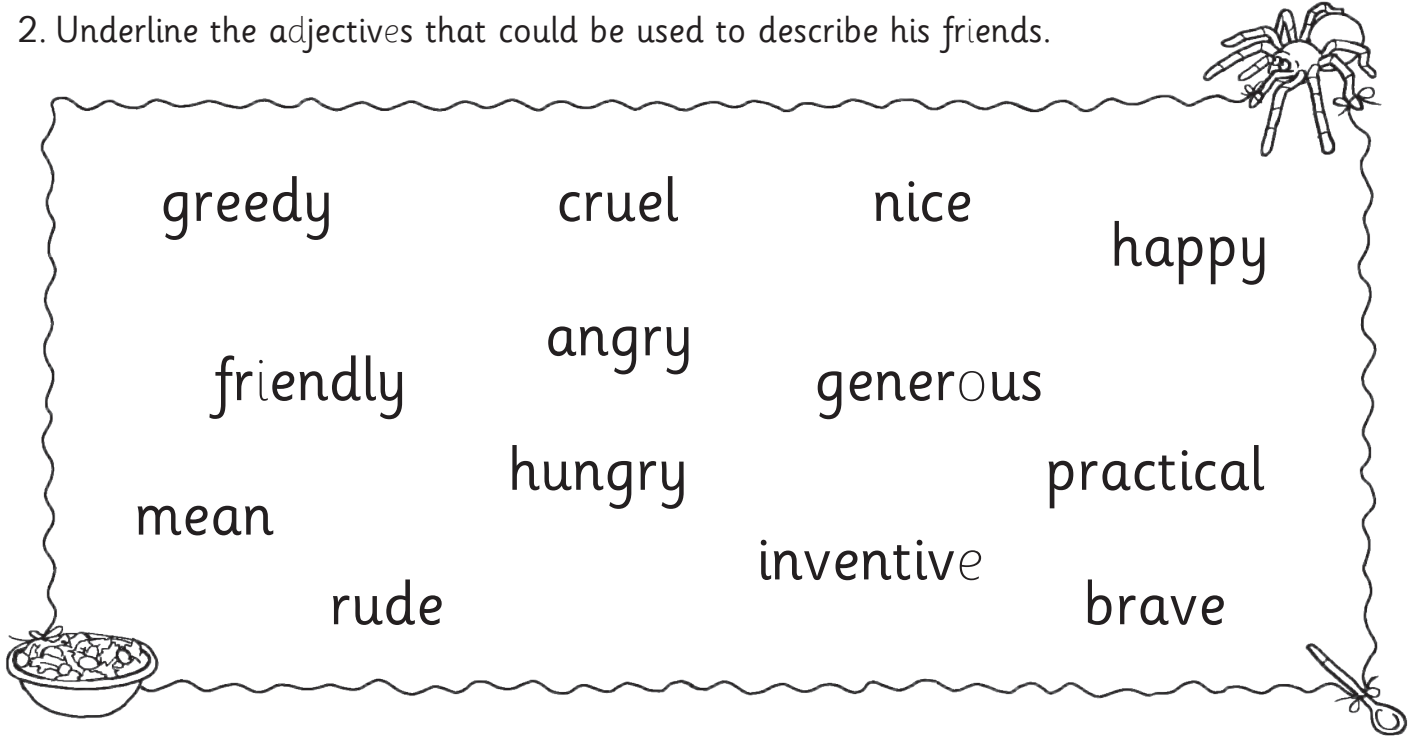
Anansi whistles and walks along the stage.

**Narrator 2:** Anansi walks along, whistling to himself, until he sees...

**Anansi:** Rabbit! Good morning! What are you doing?

## Why Anansi the Spider has Eight Thin Legs

1. Circle the adjectives that could be used to describe Anansi.
2. Underline the adjectives that could be used to describe his friends.



greedy      cruel      nice      happy

friendly      angry      generous

mean      hungry      practical

rude      inventive      brave

3. Use some adjectives from the box to write sentences about Anansi and his friends.

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4. Read the sentences, and highlight the correct adjectives.

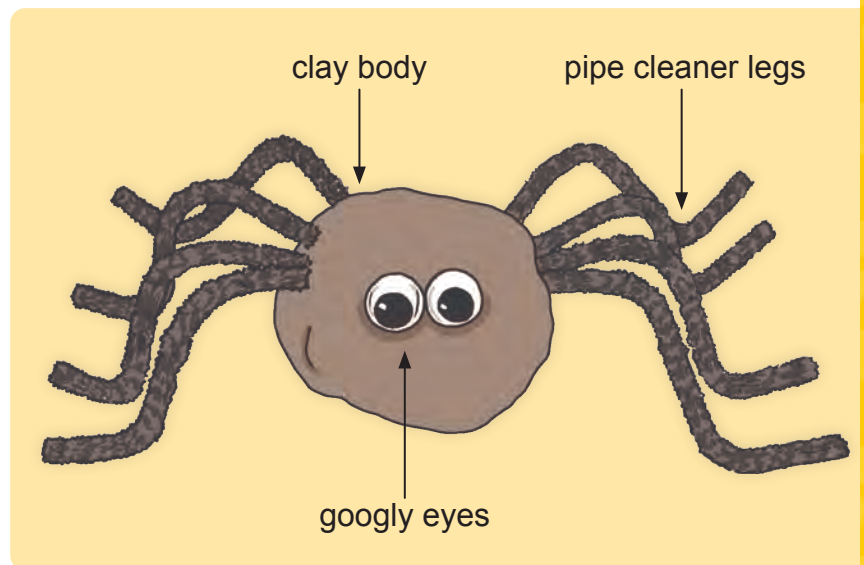
- Anansi whistles, hums, sings, grins and beams to himself. This means he is **happy** **sad**.
- At the **beginning** of the play, Anansi's legs are **long and thin** **short and stubby**.
- At the **end** of the play, Anansi's legs are **long and thin** **short and stubby**.

5. Have you finished? Draw Anansi on the back of this sheet.

## Make Anansi the spider (art and crafts)

After reading *Why Anansi the Spider has Eight Thin Legs*, have the children make some spiders of their own using air-drying clay or plasticine, pipe cleaners, paint and googly eyes or buttons.

- Each child takes a small ball of air-drying clay or plasticine, and rolls it out into a long, thin strip.
- They then take four pipe cleaners and twist them together at the middle to make eight legs.
- Once they are happy with their legs, they wrap the strip of clay (or plasticine) around the middle of the pipe cleaners (covering the twisted part completely) and smooth the clay back into a ball, to form the spider's body.
- Depending on the resources available, the children can either use a pencil to give their spiders some eyes, or they can push buttons or googly eyes into the clay.
- If using the air-drying clay, the children will have to leave the spiders to harden completely before painting them. If using the plasticine, the spiders are ready now.
- To finish off their spiders, the children should bend each of the pipe cleaner legs to give their spider some knees and feet.
- When the spiders are finished, the children can take them home and put them in the shower to scare their parents!



## Have a fun run! (sports)

After reading *The Case of the Golden Trainer*, have a fun run at the school. Running not only helps with the children's physical health, but it can also help the children to think more clearly.

- Set a short running course around the school grounds: around 1.5 to 2 km is a good length for young children.
- Encourage the children to dress up in fancy dress for their fun run.
- Hand the golden trainer trophy to the first child to cross the finish line.

## Bake a cake (cooking, maths)

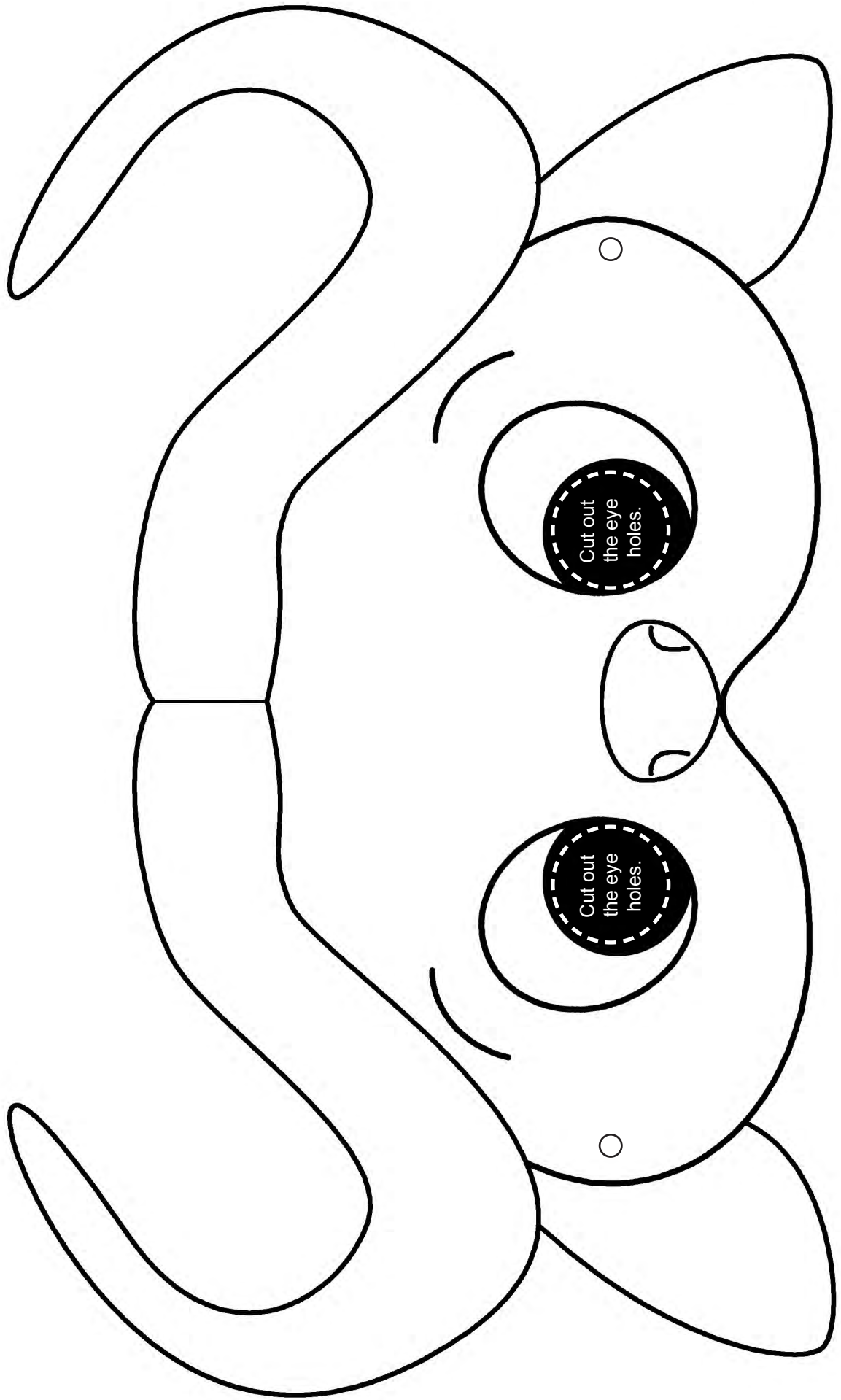
After reading *The Case of the Vanishing Cakes*, teach the children how to bake a simple cake.

- Find a very simple recipe that can be completed in the time allotted for the lesson. Before doing this activity, it is important to find out if the children in the class have any allergies and to choose a recipe that avoids any known allergens.



# Buffalo

*Why Anansi the Spider has Eight Thin Legs*



Ages  
5-7

# Jolly Plays

## Bringing reading to life

Jolly Plays are designed to help children become **fluent and confident readers**, with well-developed **speaking and listening skills**. As with Jolly Phonics, the teaching in Jolly Plays is **multisensory, active and fun**. Each of the **six plays** in this book comes with a number of additional **teaching resources** and **cross-curricular activities**, which can be used whether the children perform the plays or simply read them aloud. All of the **parts in each play are colour coded** to help teachers select the right part for each child, and there are **songs and nonspeaking parts** for less confident children, ensuring that everyone in the class is included.

### This book provides

- Six reproducible play scripts, which are decodable at the Jolly Phonics Purple Level
- A large number of mask and prop templates, for use when performing the plays
- Six songs, with reproducible song lyrics and downloadable audio
- Comprehension and discussion questions for each play
- Story sequencing and reading comprehension activities for each play
- Cross-curricular activity suggestions including art, craft, science, physical education and cooking suggestions, as well as literacy activities

And much more!

# Jolly Phonics

To see the full range of Jolly Phonics products, visit our website at [www.jollylearning.co.uk](http://www.jollylearning.co.uk)

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