

Traditions from

# AFRICA





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Words that are in **bold** print are explained in the glossary.





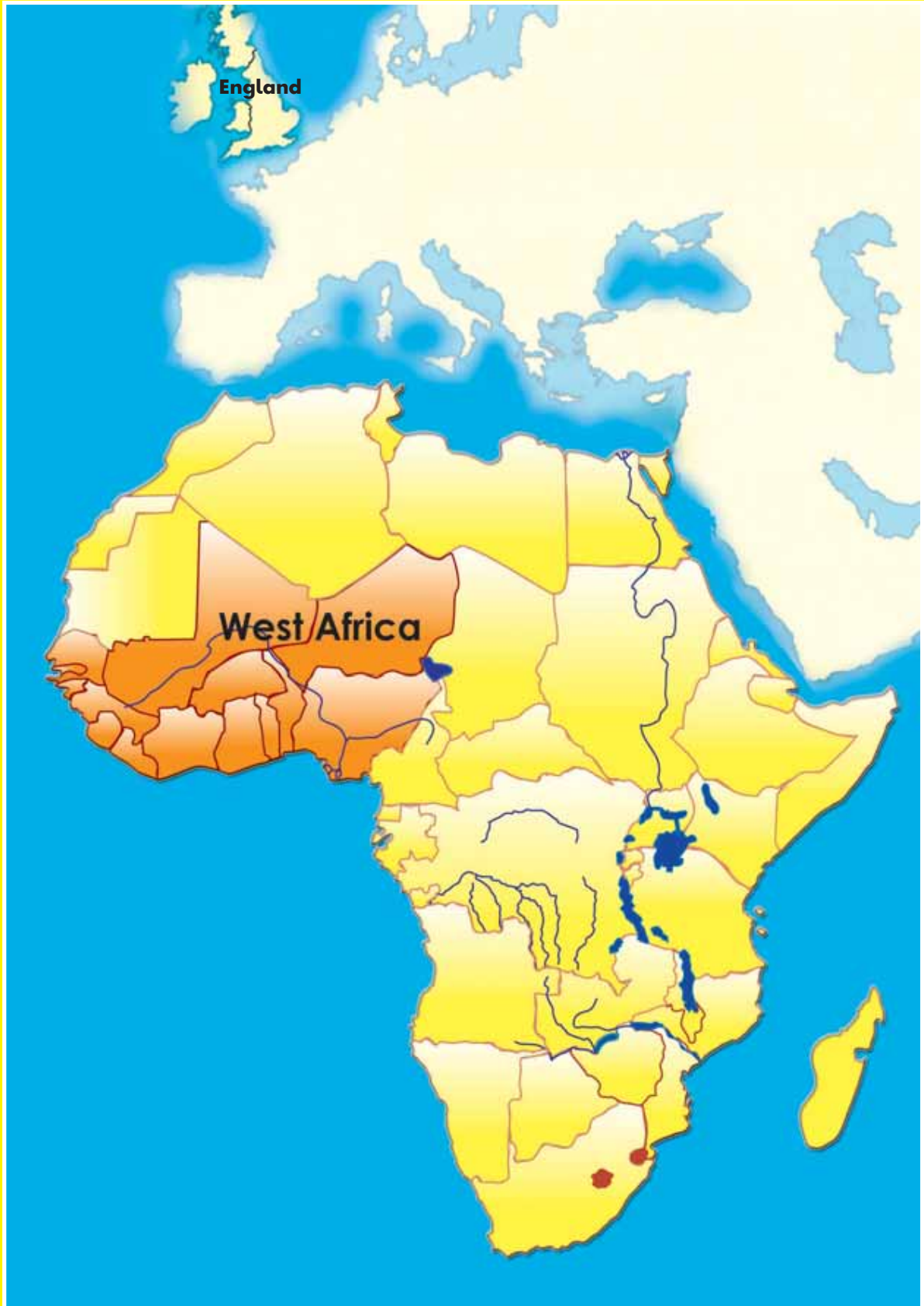
## Introduction

Welcome to Africa, a vast continent covering more than one fifth of the earth's land surface. Africa is made up of many countries, peoples, lifestyles and traditions.

As you can see on the map there are over 40 different countries in Africa. Some of the countries are smaller than England but many are larger.

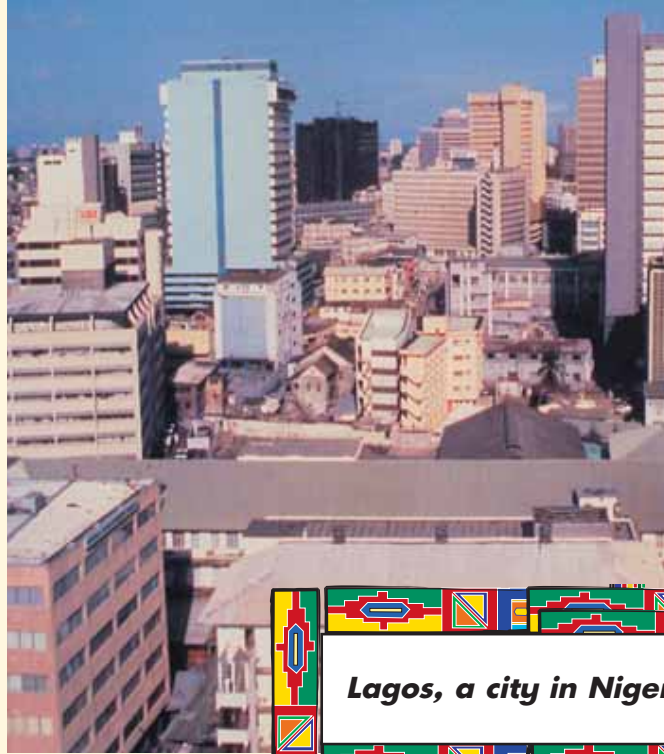
The traditions that people follow depend on where in Africa they live. In this booklet you will find out about some of the traditions of West Africa.





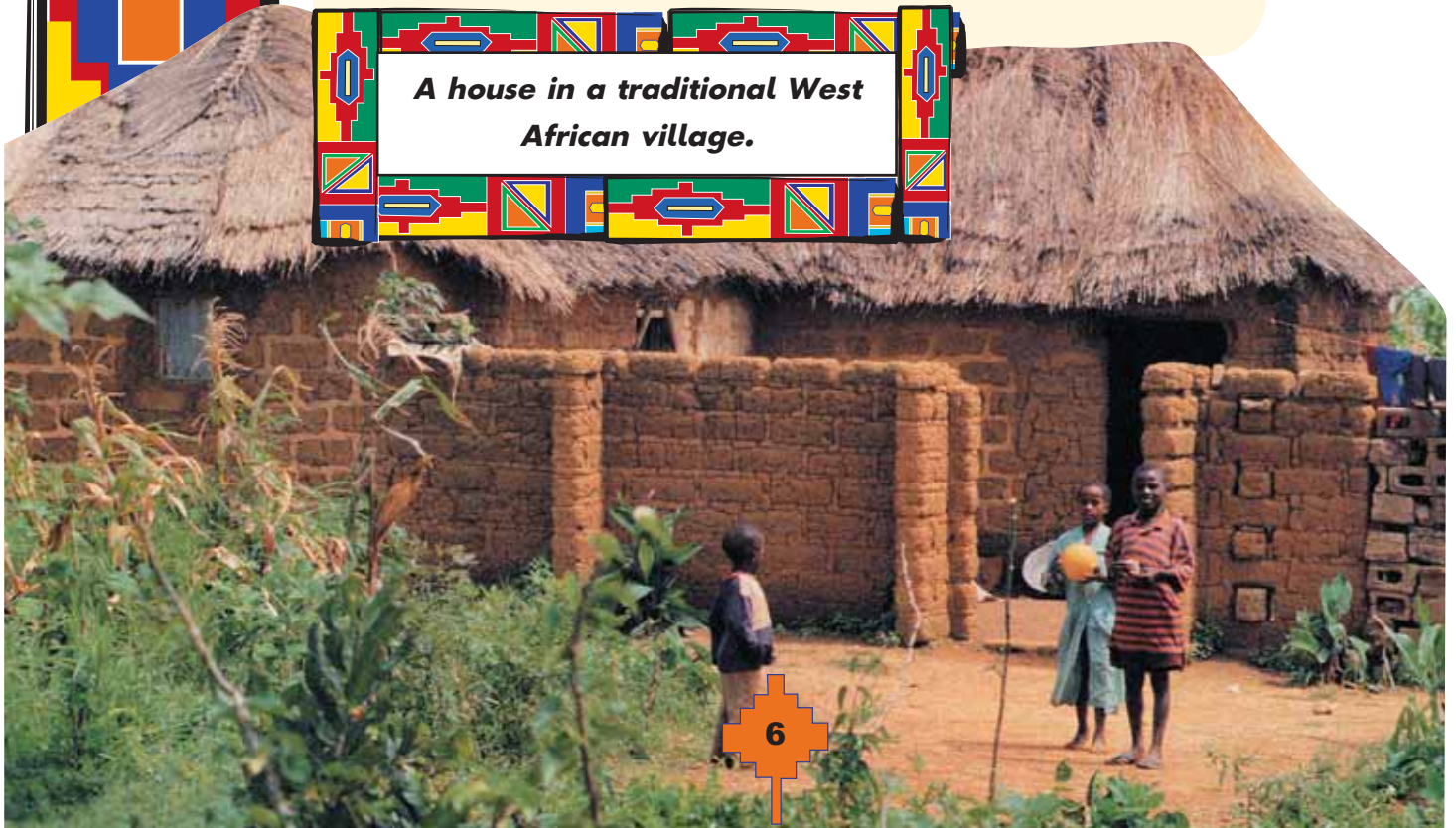
West Africa is an interesting mix of the old and the new, the **modern** and the **traditional**.

Most people live in the countryside but more and more West Africans are moving to towns and cities in search of work.



*Lagos, a city in Nigeria.*

*A house in a traditional West African village.*





*A street scene in Ghana showing different styles of clothing.*

## Clothes

People in West Africa wear many different styles of clothing.

In Ghana, weavers make narrow strips of cloth from silk. These strips are called **ken-te** strips. The long ken-te strips are sewn together into large cloths, which people wear on special occasions. Sometimes strips of ken-te cloth are worn with modern clothing.



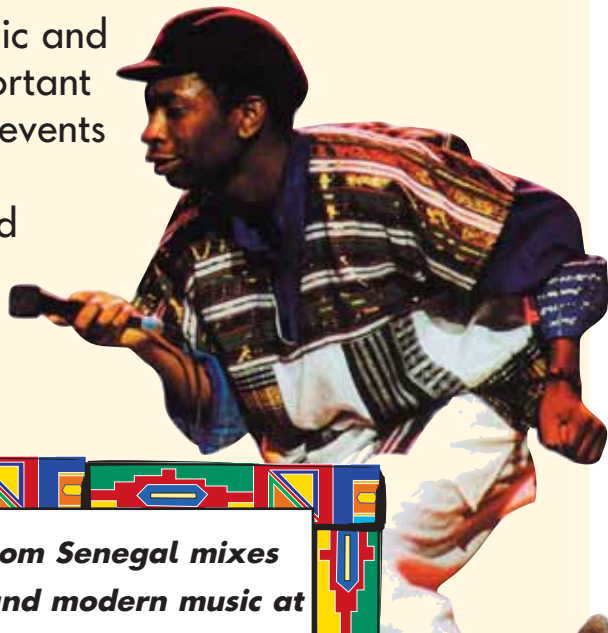
*Ken-te cloth worn in a traditional way.*



*Ken-te cloth worn in a modern way as a tie.*

## Music and Dance

All over Africa, music and dance play an important part in celebrating events such as birth and marriage. Music and dance in West Africa are a mix of the traditional and modern.



*A singer from Senegal mixes traditional and modern music at a pop concert.*

Traditional dancers often wear masks made from wood or animal skins. Mask-makers work carefully so that the masks are the same as they have been for hundreds of years.

Masks can be in the form of a person or animal or a mixture of both. When people put on a mask they can almost feel like they have become another person or animal.

*A wooden antelope mask.*





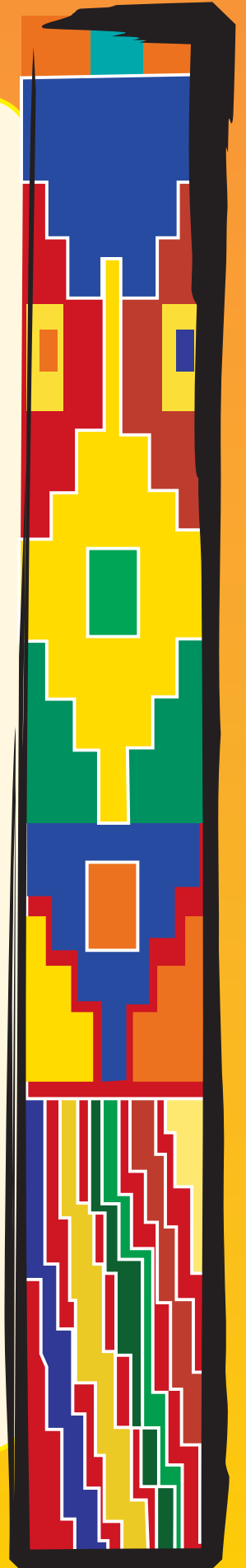
# Story Time

There has always been a great tradition of storytelling in Africa. Around fires at night, people told stories and poems that entertained them and helped them to make sense of the world. In some villages, people still gather together to hear stories.

African stories are for children and adults. Many stories are designed to teach the listener how to behave. In most stories at least one character is taught a lesson. Some stories explain how things first came about or were discovered.

Many traditional African stories are hundreds of years old. However, each time a story is told, the storyteller changes the story a little. The changes the storyteller makes will depend on who the listeners are. If the listeners are young children the storyteller will make the story easier to understand.

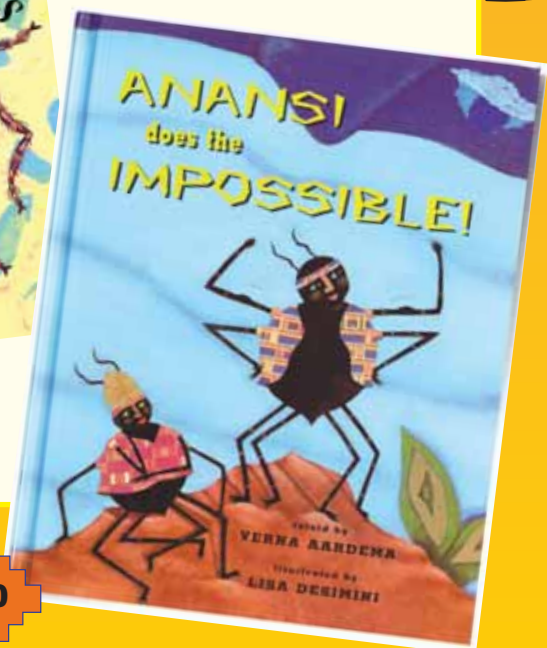
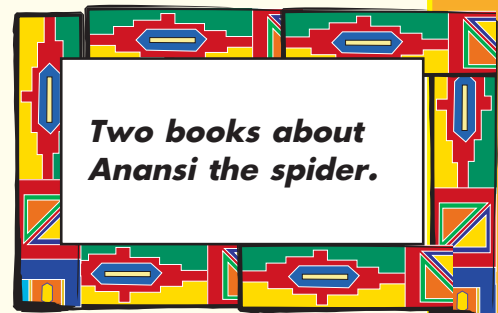
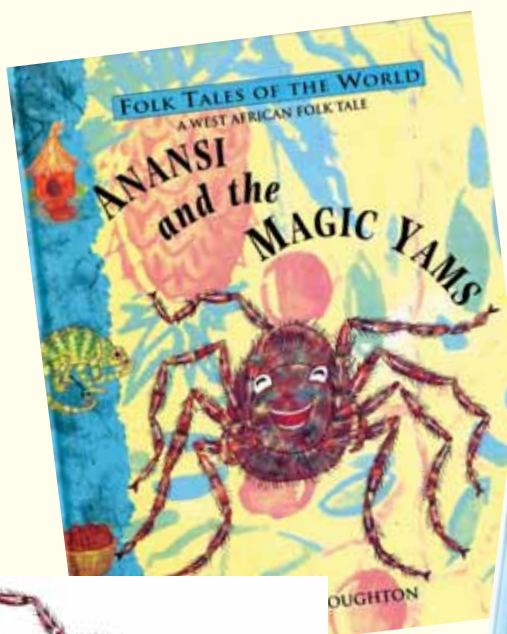
African stories often have an unusual or surprising ending; in this way the storyteller keeps the listeners on the edge of their seats right to the end. Sometimes the listeners even have to help the storyteller decide on the best ending for a story.



Many African stories have been made into books. People all over the world enjoy reading about traditional characters such as Anansi.

Anansi is a special creature. Sometimes he is a spider, sometimes a man and sometimes a little bit of both. Anansi is often called a 'trickster' because he likes to play tricks on people and animals. Anansi stories came first from Ghana in West Africa, and later travelled to different parts of Africa and to the islands of the **Caribbean**.

The story you are going to read next is about another special spider.



# Glossary

## ***Caribbean***

A sea off the coast of America.

## ***ken-te***

Ken-te is the name given to a colourful silk cloth made in a traditional way.

## ***modern***

Doing things in a new way.

## ***traditional***

Doing things in the way they have been done for many years.

Picture acknowledgements:

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