
Problems with the Number Nine



Anansi was digging away on his nine tall hills, all chock-a-block with yams. He was tired, he was hungry, the yams were unripe, he'd always hated hard work. In short, he was in a *very* sour mood. When he suddenly remembered the witch who had declared the number nine out of bounds – utterly taboo. Of course, Anansi didn't really have much trust in spells and suchlike, but why not give it a go?

So when Mister Hog came down the path, Anansi started to sob. Being a nice chap, Hog asked what

the matter was.

‘I – can’t – *count!*’ wailed Anansi. ‘All day I’ve been trying to count my yam-hills, but blow me down if I can get past six!’

‘Oh, no problem!’ beamed helpful Mister Hog, waving a trotter at each hill in turn and counting slowly for the poor thick Spider’s benefit. ‘Look – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8... you have *nine* hills!’

And poor Mister Hog dropped down dead, then and there.

The pork was yummy.

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The next day, it was the turn of that nice Miss Cow. She was good at maths... Anansi loved oxtail soup... the rest, as they say, is history...

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On the third morning, Anansi was sitting on a yam-hill feeling a bit peckish when Mister Chimp passed by.

‘Oh! *Sob!* My Chimp pal! Be a dear and count my hills for me – I’m – *sob* – such a nitwit I keep losing track! What you must think of me!’

‘Of course!’ said Chimp, so cheery. ‘1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 – and the hill you are sitting on!’

‘You rotter! You cheat!’ screeched Anansi, in a towering temper. ‘That’s not how you should count! It’s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8... NINE!’

And Anansi dropped dead.

He didn’t try messing with Chimp much after *that*.