

Program Name: Africa Alive

Artist: Milton Gray

Performance Description

Special Points of Interest:

We do not really mean that what we are going to say is true."

Ashanti storytellers traditionally begin their stories with these words and let them end as follows:

"This is my story which I have related, if it be sweet or if it be not sweet, take some elsewhere and let some come back to me."

Teaching Artist Milton Gray, actor and storyteller, brings the importance of oral communication in traditional African life alive during this engaging performance.

Milton explains the purpose of the storyteller in an African tribe while sharing several stories that originated on that distant continent. He focuses on the storytelling tradition of the Ashanti people of West Africa, home of *Anansi the Spider*.

Milton, a master storyteller, performs each story with enthusiasm and imagination while teaching socialization skills. Each of these stories contain an important lesson to

be learned. For example, the story *Why Monkeys Live in Trees* teaches students that cheating has unpleasant consequences, and *Why Dogs Chase Cats* is a story about the importance of sharing.



Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- Make connections between knowledge gained from stories and personal experiences
- Compare accounts of one story from multiple perspectives

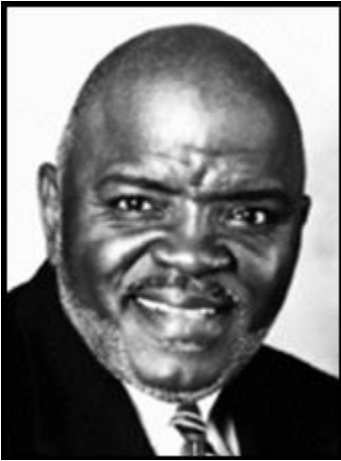
Behavioral:

- Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior.

Theater:

- Understands the emotional and social impact of dramatic performance in other cultures.

Artist Bio: Milton Gray



Actor and storyteller Milton Gray has been sharing his talent with children through his work with Kansas City Young Audiences for many years. He is currently featured in this performance and *Character Counts*.

As an actor, Milton has played roles with the Jackson County Historical Society, Eagle-Reed American Theater, Paseo Baptist Church Ministry Drama, M.C.

Players, and J.T. Productions. His *Kwanzaa Principles* program for the Kansas City Museum has been featured on television and KCUR.

Charles Etta Freeman and Almeta Williams, teachers at Milton Moore School, said, "It is always evident with our children that not only did they gain something from Mr. Gray's presentation, they had a wonderful experience at the same time."

List of Resources:

Books:

Anansi the Spider by Gerald McDermott
Henry Holt & Company; 1st Henry edition (March 1, 1987) ISBN: 0805003118

Ashanti to Zulu by Margaret Musgrove
Puffin Books; (September 1, 1980)
ISBN: 0140546049

Jambo Means Hello
by Muriel L. Feelings, Tom Feelings
Puffin Books; Reissue edition
(September 1, 1981) ISBN: 0140546529

Zomo the Rabbit
by Gerald McDermott,
Gerald McDermott
Voyager Books; (May 1, 1996)
ISBN: 0152010106

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

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Vocabulary

Africa: Second-largest continent in the world.

Allegory: The representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form.

Ashanti: A region and former kingdom of western Africa in present-day central Ghana. The powerful Ashanti confederation of states, formed in the late 17th century, was defeated by the British

in 1896 and annexed to the British Gold Coast colony in 1901.

Jeli (griot): The name for the African historian who is the recordkeeper, counselor, mediator, master dancer, and second in power to the king or queen.

Oral Tradition: A method of passing down history and tradition through songs and stories rather than the written word.

Post-Performance Activities

1. Have the children practice their own storytelling skills. One student should be picked to begin telling a made up story. After a few lines, the teacher will say "freeze" and then the next student will continue the story. Repeat this method until all students have had a turn to finish the story, with the last student telling the ending.
2. Create a story in the spirit of *Why Monkeys Live in Trees* or *Why Dogs Chase Cats* that communicates a moral or object lesson to the audience.

