



THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA

PALEY EDUCATION @Home
presented by **citi**

What We're Watching





Greetings from The Paley Center for Media’s Education Department!

Welcome to the latest installment of “What We’re Watching.” Twice a month the education department reaches out to the community with tips and ideas for consuming media with kids by highlighting different themes that connect to two selected programs, one for younger viewers and one for older viewers, each with related activities and resources.

Watching media alongside your kids is a perfect jumping-off point to making media literacy a part of your everyday lives. Familiarizing yourself with the basics is a great first step. You can [view our first newsletter about media literacy best practices archived here](#). We also recommend the [National Association for Media Literacy Education’s Parents Guide](#)—it’s a terrific introduction!

What We're Watching: The Endurance of Myth and Immortality of Us

Myths, legends, fables, and folklore inhabit a deep and sacred place in our humanity. The stories we tell and retell, timeless tales of trickster gods or superhuman immortals and their relationship with us humans, are a rich storehouse of our values, customs, and knowledge. In his illuminating study of mythology, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell asserts “that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into the human cultural manifestation” and that “the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.” Myth is a cauldron for creativity, an incubator of

ideas. For our adventure through media, we journey to Ghana and Nordic mythology, entering an enchanted arena where tradition and revision, cultural experiences both dynamic and permanent, are artifacts that embody our humanity and sustain our history.

This Week's Recommendations for Younger Viewers

Anansi the Spider, a tale from the Ashanti (1969)

Recommended for Grades K+

[*Available on YouTube*](#)

This charming and magical tale of Anansi, that loveable rascal of a god, has delighted the children of Ghana for generations and American schoolchildren since at least 1972, enchanted by the marvelous picture book illustrated and written by Gerald McDermott. McDermott was primarily a filmmaker and initially produced an animated film of Anansi in 1969 that his book is based on. Flute and kalimba music, accompanied by narration, introduce this tale of Anansi, the trickster spider god and hero to the Ashanti people. Set within beautiful backdrops of vivid color and geometric patterns, the story finds the mischievous deity tumbling once again into trouble. After being swallowed by a fish, Anansi's six sons use their namesake powers to rescue him. See Trouble, Road Builder, River Drinker, Game Skinner, Stone Thrower, and Cushion each use their exceptional skills to spot danger, travel great distances, and save their father. When the time comes to offer a gift to the son who saved him, Anansi asks the god of all things, Nyame, to hold the globe of light until it is decided which son deserves the prize. Nyame watches the vain argument amongst Anansi's sons, then takes the great globe of light into the sky and "keeps it there for all to see. It is still there. It will always be there. It is there tonight."

Viewing Questions

- What happens to Anansi that he needs to be rescued?
- What are the different ways that his six sons help rescue Anansi?
- What is the problem Anansi faces in rewarding the son who rescued him?
- How would you fix the problem that Anansi is having?
- What do you think the great globe of light is that Nyame takes into the sky?
- Do you think it is better to reward one person or share the reward with everyone? Why do you think so?

Additional Resources

Read

[Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti](#) by Gerald McDermott

[A Story, A Story: An African Tale](#), retold and illustrated by Gail E. Hailey

Watch

[The Magic Tree: An Animated African Folktale](#)



This Week's Recommendations for Older Viewers

Ragnarök: "New Boy" (2020)

Recommended for Grades 10+

Available on Netflix

Destruction and rebirth are critical stories within mythology. From the cyclic uproar that generates the Buddha to the Mayan cataclysm where the Rain Serpent and Tiger-clawed Goddess unleash floods from the heavens, apocalyptic myths span our globe. This cycle of annihilation and renewal is revealed within the lore of ancient Vikings through the story of Ragnarök, the epic battle between the Norse gods and the evil giants that presages the end of times. In Netflix's eponymous coming-of-age drama, this legendary clash is told anew and repositioned within our current existential crisis: climate change and environmental catastrophe. These are the end times our modern hero Magne, the quiet teen and eldest son, faces after he moves

to Edda, Norway, with his mother and younger brother. Befriending Isolde, a classroom outsider and environmental activist, Magne quickly learns the forces of evil in this town are the industrial polluting, power broker family, the Jutuls. In this land of the giants, the last Norwegian town to abandon Norse paganism and accept Christianity, Magne learns of his power and purpose. Enraged after a tragic death, Magne hurls a hammer far into the distance, setting in motion a modern retelling of one of the most ancient legends of ruin and rebirth.

Viewing Questions

- In an early scene after Turid and her sons Magne and Laurits arrive, an old man in a wheelchair blocks their path. How does Magne respond? How does his brother, Laurits respond? What might that say about the personality of these two brothers?
- What happens to Magne after the old lady in the town rubs his forehead?
- What do we learn about Edda, Norway and its history regarding the old Norse gods and Christianity?
- Who are the members of the Jutul family and what is their social position in Edda?
- What are Magne's new "powers" and how does he learn he has them?
- For their assignment on Norwegian democracy, what do Magne, Isolde and Gry decide to investigate?
- How would you describe the chance meeting at the gas station between Magne, his mother Turid, Vidar, and Vidar's dog, Trym. Is there anything we can predict based on this meeting?
- What is the relationship like between Magne and his younger brother Laurits? How do they support or not support each other?
- How would you describe the old woman and old man that Magne meets at the grocery store? What do you think their role in the story is?
- What does Magne learn about Isolde's mother when he has dinner at her house?
- After learning Isolde and Magne are going up the mountain, Fjor reminds them his family owns the mountain, but Magne mentions the "freedom to roam." What is the "freedom to roam?" And is that a freedom we have in the United States?
- What does Isolde discover when she is on the mountain alone?
- How does Magne express his grief at the end of the episode? What might that say about who he is?

Additional Resources

Read

[Norse Mythology](#) by Neil Gaiman

[The Vikings](#) by Else Roesdahl

[The Poetic Edda](#) translated by Carolyne Larrington

[The Hero with a Thousand Faces](#) by Joseph Campbell (PDF)

Watch

[The Norse Mythology Game with Ragnarök](#) stars David Stakston and Herman Tommeraas

[Thor: Ragnarök](#)

Listen

[Norse Mythology](#) by Neil Gaiman (audiobook)

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at eduny@paleycenter.org.

Happy viewing,

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Photos—*Anansi, the Spider*: Gerald McDermott Films; *Ragnarök*: Netflix