

Seven Spools of Thread A Kwanzaa Story (Sources shelf) (BP)

By Angela Shelf Medearis

Materials Needed: half-moon piece of orange felt, pictures from book: sons with father, Chief, sons in hut holding hands, sons on way to market with baskets on head, bag of gold; felt pieces to indicate fields, felt pieces to indicate market; 7 baskets, 7 strips of Kente cloth folded into baskets, 4 pieces of sticks held together with string at corners to make a loom, 7 spools of thread made by winding embroidery floss around a small stick in blue, green, red, orange, yellow, white, and black; Kinara with candles.

Presentation:

Now, watch carefully where I go to get the lesson.

Go to the Sources shelf and remove lesson basket.

Ah, here it is. Hmm, I wonder what this could be.

Take out orange underlay and unroll then flatten.

It's a orange color. It could be a smile. It could be.....

Wait for responses from children. Look in basket.

Take out garden pieces and lay out to your right on underlay, midway down the edge so there is room for the picture above.

Hmm. This is green. It could be grass. It could be.....

Wait for responses from children. Look in basket.

Take out market piece and lay out to your left on underlay, midway down the edge.

That's all there is to get ready.

In a small African village in the country of Ghana there lived an old man and his seven sons.

Lay out picture with old man and sons to your right at top of underlay nearest you.

After the death of his wife, the old man became both father and mother to the boys. The seven brothers were handsome young men. Their skin was as smooth and dark as the finest mahogany wood. Their limbs were as straight and strong as warriors' spears.

But they were a disappointment to their father. From morning until night, the family's small home was filled with the sound of the brothers' quarreling.

As soon as the sun brought forth a new day, the brothers began to argue. They argued all morning about how to tend the crops. They argued all afternoon about the weather.

Point to each son around father as you say their line.

“It is hot,” said the middle son.

“No—a cool breeze is blowing!” said the second son.

They argued all evening about when to return home.

“It will be dark soon,” the youngest said. “Let’s finish this row and begin anew tomorrow.”

“No, it’s too early to stop,” called the third son.

“Can’t you see the sun is setting?” shouted the sixth son.

And so it would continue until the moon beamed down and the stars twinkled in the sky.

At mealtime, the young men argued until the stew was cold and the fu fu was hard.

“You gave him more than you gave me,” whined the third son.

“I divided the food equally,” said their father.

“I will starve with only this small portion on my plate,” complained the youngest.

“If you don’t want it, I’ll eat it!” said the oldest son. He grabbed a handful of meat from his brother’s plate.

“Stop being so greedy!” said the youngest.

And so it went every night. It was often morning before the seven brothers finished dinner.

One sad day, the old man died and was buried.

Pause a moment, then put the Chief piece over the old man piece to cover him.

At sunrise the next morning, the village Chief spoke to the brothers before him.

“Your father has left an inheritance,” said the Chief.

The brothers whispered excitedly among themselves.

“I know my father left me everything because I am the oldest son,” said the oldest.

“I know my father left me everything because I am the youngest son,” said the youngest.

“He left everything to me,” said the middle son. “I know I was his favorite.”

“Ehh!” said the second son. “Everything is mine!”

The brothers began shouting and shoving. Soon, all seven were rolling around on the ground, hitting and kicking each other.

“Stop that this instant!” the Chief shouted.

The brother stopped fighting. They shook the dust off their clothes and sat before the chief, eyeing each other suspiciously.

“Your father has decreed that all of this property and possessions will be divided among you equally,” said the Chief. “But first, by the time the moon rises tonight, you must learn how to make gold out of these spools of silk thread. If you do not, you will be turned out your home as beggars.”

For once, the brothers were speechless.

The Chief spoke again. "From this moment forward, you must not argue among yourselves or raise your hands in anger towards one another. If you do, your father's property and all his possessions will be divided equally among the poorest of the villagers. Go quickly; you only have a little time."

The brothers took their silk thread, bowed to the Chief and hurried away.

Place picture of brothers holding hands on underlay to left of first picture at top.

When the seven Ashanti brothers arrived at their farm, something unusual happened. They sat side by side, from the oldest to the youngest, without saying anything unkind to each other.

Place spools of thread in front of each brother as you name their color.

The oldest brother had received blue thread.

The next brother, red.

The next, yellow.

The middle son was given orange thread.

The next, green.

The next, black.

The youngest son had received white thread.

"My brothers," the oldest said after a while, "let us shake hands and make peace among ourselves."

"Let us never argue or fight again," said the youngest brother.

The brothers placed their hands together and held each other tightly.

For the first time in years, peace rested within the walls of their home.

"My brothers," said the third son quietly, "surely our father would not turn us into the world as beggars."

"I agree," said the middle son. "I do not believe our father would have given us the task of turning thread into gold if it were impossible."

"Could it be," said the oldest son, "that there might be small pieces of gold in this thread?"

The sun beamed hotly overhead. Yellow streams of light crept inside the hut. Each brother held up his spool of thread.

Hold up each color to the light then put down.

The beautiful colors sparkled in the sunlight. But there were no nuggets of gold in these spools.

"I'm afraid not, my brother," said the sixth son. "But that was a good idea."

"Thank you, my brother," said the oldest.

"Could it be," said the youngest, "that by making something from this thread we could earn a fortune in gold?"

"Perhaps," said the oldest, "we could make cloth out of this thread and sell it. I believe we can do it."

“This is a good plan,” said the middle son. “But we do not have enough of any one color to make a full bolt of cloth.”

“What if,” said the third son, “we weave the thread together to make a cloth of many colors?”

“But our people do not wear cloth like that,” said the fifth son. “We wear only cloth of one color.”

“Maybe,” said the second, “we could make a cloth that is so special, everyone will want to wear it.”

“My brothers,” said the sixth son, “we could finish faster if we all worked together.”

“I know we can succeed,” said the middle son.

The seven Ashanti brothers went to work. Together they cut the wood to make a loom. The younger brothers held the pieces together while the older brothers assembled the loom.

Place stick loom on underlay underneath picture of sons.

They took turns weaving cloth out of their spools of thread. They made a pattern of stripes and shapes that looked like the wings of birds. They used all the colors—blue, red, yellow, orange, green, black, and white. Soon the brothers had several pieces of beautiful multicolored cloth.

Lay out cloth strips under the loom.

When the cloth was finished, the seven brothers took turns neatly folding the brightly colored fabric. Then they placed it into seven baskets.....

Fold each length of fabric and put into basket.

...and put the baskets on their heads.

Lay out picture of sons on their way to market to the left of last picture at top of underlay. Place one basket on each son's head to cover the basket in the picture.

The brothers formed a line from the oldest to the youngest and began the journey to the village. The sun slowly made a golden path across the sky. The brothers hurried down the long, dusty road as quickly as they could.

As soon as they entered the marketplace, the seven Ashanti brothers called out, “Come and buy the most wonderful cloth in the world! Come and buy the most wonderful cloth in the world!”

Place baskets within market felt piece on left end of underlay.

They unfolded the cloth and laid it out for all to see.

Take cloth from each basket and lay out in a line.

A crowd gathered around the seven Ashanti brothers.

“Oh,” said one villager. “I have never seen cloth so beautiful! Look at the unusual pattern!”

“Ah,” said another. “This is the finest fabric in all the land! Feel the texture!”

The brothers smiled proudly. Suddenly, a man dressed in magnificent robes pushed his way to the front of the crowd. Everyone stepped back respectfully. It was the King’s treasurer. He rubbed the cloth between the palms of his hands. Then he held it up to the sunlight.

Rub one piece of cloth then hold up as if to the sun.

“What a thing of beauty,” he said, fingering the material. “This cloth will make a wonderful gift for the King! I must have all of it.”

The seven brothers whispered together.

“Cloth fit for a king,” said the oldest, “should be purchased at a price only a king could pay. It is yours for one bag of gold.”

“Sold,” said the King’s treasurer. He untied his bag of gold and lay it next to the cloth.

Put bag of gold piece in middle of cloth.

The seven Ashanti brothers ran out of the marketplace and back down the road to their village.

A shining silver moon began to creep up in the sky. Panting and dripping with sweat, the brothers threw themselves before the Chief.

Move loom piece over and put Chief piece under seven sons piece in center of underlay.

“Oh, Chief,” said the oldest, “we have turned the thread into gold. The placed the bag of gold at the Chief’s feet.

Put bag of gold at feet of Chief.

“Have you argued or fought today?” asked the Chief.

“No, my Chief,” said the youngest. “We have been too busy working together to argue or fight.”

“Then you have learned the lesson your father sought to teach you,” said the Chief. “All that he had is now yours.”

The brothers smiled happily, but the youngest son looked sad.

“What about the poor people in the village?” he asked. “We will receive an inheritance, but what will they do?”

“Perhaps,” said the oldest, “we can teach them how to turn thread to gold.”

The Chief smiled. “You have learned your lesson very well.”

The seven Ashanti brothers taught their people carefully. The village became famous for its beautiful, multicolored cloth, the villagers prospered. From that day until this, the

seven Ashanti brothers have worked together, farming the land. And they have worked peacefully, in honor of their father.

Wondering Questions:

I wonder what was your favorite part of the story?

I wonder what part was the most important?

I wonder who you were in the story?

I wonder if there is anything we can take out of the story and still have everything we need?