

## Ghanaian culture in *Maisie's*

### An introduction to the book

A joyful celebration of a mixed-race family and the love that binds us all together, *Maisie's Scrapbook* is the perfect book to use with children to explore the beautiful coming together of different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and perspectives in every family. Having the scrapbook as the narrative framework encourages children to think about their lives as a collection of stories and memories and how their cultural heritages inspire and ultimately empower them to shape their lives.

*We asked Samuel Narh, the author of Maisie's Scrapbook, to share some fun facts and interesting stories about Dada's Ghanaian culture.*

#### ***Food***

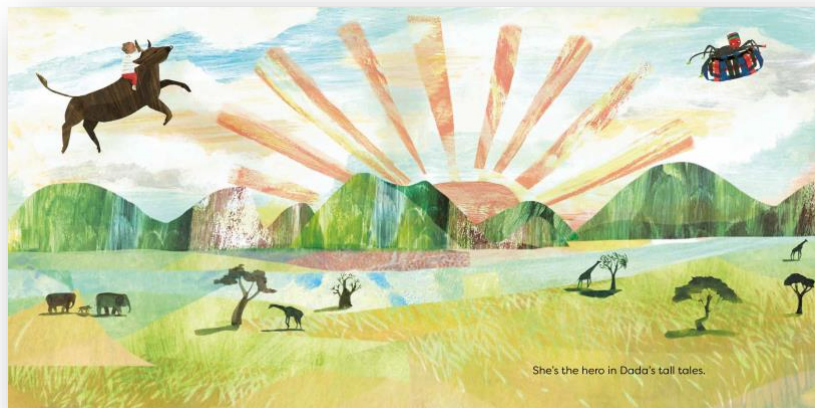
*Aamo* is Ghanaian for tomato.

*Jollof* is a rice dish in Ghana very similar to risotto.



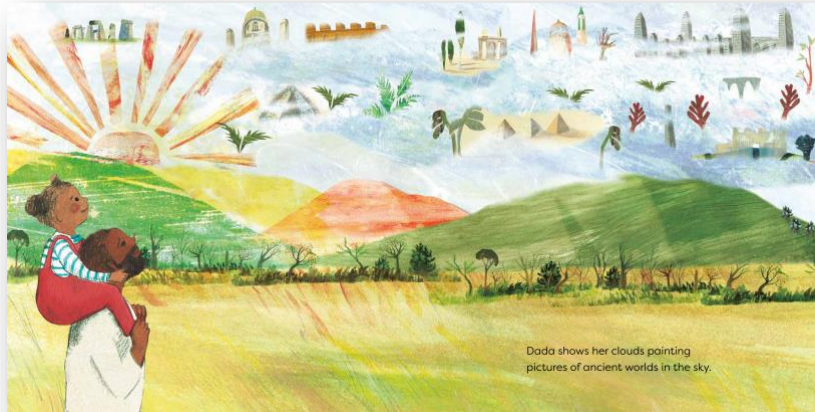
### ***Ananse the spider***

In Ghanaian folklore, Ananse the spider is the wisest creature in the world, but he uses his cleverness to trick others, thinking only of himself. The story about Ananse and the bull spider in *Maisie's Scrapbook* was made up by Samuel using elements from the traditional Ananse tales. It was a time of great famine, and Afia saved the world from perishing when she stopped Ananse from leaving the earth in his flying basket filled with grains and fingerlings. When Afia chased him on her bull, Ananse's basket tipped over, and the grains and fingerlings replenished the earth.



She's the hero in Dada's tall tales.

Yet despite all his trickery, Ananse was the architect behind every civilization. His intelligence inspired people to create cloth, weave baskets, and learn how to hunt and fish. In *Maisie's Scrapbook*, Maisie and Dada gaze up at the clouds and imagine those ancient worlds. Ananse also played an important role in astronomy. Dada shares this with Maisie and shows her that the constellations look like a big spider's web in the sky.



### ***Kente cloth***

*Kente* is a traditional cloth in Ghana. According to Ghanaian legend, a man was watching a spider spin its web when inspiration struck! He invented the loom and weaved the first kente cloth. The spider, of course, was none other than Ananse.

### ***Adinkra symbols***

Adinkra are symbols representing the proverbs and sayings, historical events, behaviours and attitudes, or important concepts of the Akan people of Ghana. You can find them in pottery and woodcarvings and on fabric and walls.

In *Maisie's Scrapbook*, you can find two Adinkra symbols. On the page where Maisie is eating risotto and jollof rice, you can see a wooden figure of a bird looking backward. That is the Sankofa symbol. Sankofa reminds us that we should take the time to go back for the important things we may have forgotten, or remember important things from the past.



Gya Name is another Adinkra symbol. On the page where Dada is playing marimba, you will find this symbol on the wall hanging behind him. Gya Name means “except for God.” The most popular Adinkra symbol, it reflects the importance of religion in Ghanaian culture.

### ***Marimba***

A wooden xylophone common in West African countries.



Here is a useful link to a list of Adinkra symbols:

- [http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra\\_index.htm](http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm)

Photos:

Ghanaian Chicken Kebab with Ghanaian Peppers and Ghanaian Jollof Rice (Ghanaian Cuisine).jpg from Wikimedia Commons

Kent wove.jpg from Wikimedia Commons

# Maisie's Scrapbook

Do you like dancing like Maisie does?



Do you like playing hide and seek?

Maisie is feeling grumpy. Do you sometimes feel grumpy?



Can you try growing plants from seeds like Maisie?



Colour in Maisie and Dada and do your own  
storytime drawing

