

# Self discovery in anansi boys



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In West African culture, Anansi is a cunning god, who takes the shape of a spider. He is known to be a trickster and very deceitful. He is considered the god of all knowledge of stories. In other words, Anansi owns all stories. In *Anansi Boys*, the main character, Fat Charlie, learns a great deal about his backgrounds and who he really is. After his father's passing, he learns that his humiliating dad was really the god, Anansi, and that he also has a brother. Charlie eventually meets his estranged brother, Spider, who torments and seems to ruin his life. He gets him fired from his job, steals his fiancé, and gets him arrested. However, at the end of the novel, we see that through all this torture, Spider has actually helped Charlie move forward with his life. In *Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman, the readers witness Charlie develop and discover more about himself emotionally through his brother, Spider, and other outside influences.

In the beginning of the novel, we learn that Charles Nancy has a strong hatred of his father and has good reasons for it. Mr. Nancy gave Charles the unfortunate nickname, Fat Charlie, and despite the fact that Charlie was only fat for a short amount of time, the name stayed with him because, “when his father gave things names, they stuck” (Gaiman 3). Additionally, Mr. Nancy once got Charlie to go to school dressed as President Taft and personally took him to school to watch all the other kids laugh at him. Charlie's father would sing and dance at the beach and convinced him that mermaids were out in the Atlantic. Despite all the embarrassing things Mr. Nancy has done and the emotional scars it left Charlie, in the end of the novel, we see that Charlie learns to love and care about his father. In an alternate universe where he is still alive, Mr. Nancy even tells Charlie that he

loved him. Later in life, Charlie takes his own son, Marcus, to the beach to search for mermaids, which turn out to really exist. Together they sing and dance on the beach just like Charlie's father did. The clear change in how Charlie feels about his father is a perfect example of how Charlie develops throughout the novel. In addition to his change in feelings about his father, Charlie's feelings about his fiancée also change throughout the novel.

Charlie Nancy is engaged to Rosie whom he thinks he is in love with; but at the end of the novel, he realizes that he does not love her, and Rosie does not love him. When Charlie's estranged brother, Spider, enters his life, he impersonates Charlie and steals Rosie. Once Rosie realizes that she had been with Spider, she recognizes that she likes being around him more than being with Charlie and that she really loves Spider. Even though Charlie is devastated that Rosie left him, Charlie admits to himself that he was never in love with Rosie. In fact he is in love with Daisy, the cop. When she first kissed him he felt, "there was an oomph behind the kiss that he had never in his whole life had before, not even with 'Rosie'" (100). This was the first hint that Rosie was never really the right girl for Fat Charlie. As the readers, we know that Rosie is really only marrying Charlie as a rebellious act against her mother. This is one of the main changes Charlie goes through in the novel. He realizes that he is not in love with his fiancée, Rosie, and that he was not meant to be with her. In addition to Charlie changing how he feels about other, he also gains confidence.

Fat Charlie is a timid man in the beginning of the novel who is afraid to show off his amazing voice; by the time the book ends, Charlie learns to gain the confidence to sing in front of others. When his brother first takes Charlie to

sing karaoke, Spider steals the show and everyone listening thinks he is amazing. Meanwhile, when it is Charlie's turn to sing, he chokes. From his father, he inherited an incredible voice, which he could not share because "in front of an audience, Charlie couldn't even open his mouth" (83). Ever since he was a kid, Fat Charlie has had serious confidence and self esteem issues. In a life threatening situation, Charlie must do something he dreads doing to save both his and Daisy's life: sing in front of an audience. He works up the courage to do it and leaves the audience mind blown. Through this difficult situation, we see Charlie get over his fear of singing in public, and the fact that he becomes a famous singer shows that the risk paid off. Throughout the novel, we see Charlie's confidence progressively gets stronger through his singing. Additionally, Charlie's newly found self-confidence allows him to pull off a hat he never would have been able to before. He also sheds the horrible nickname that was given to him as a child. Through many different experiences and risks, Charlie develops a sense of courage and confidence he never had before.

As we, the readers, see Charlie develop, we not only see the benefits of change; we also see the challenges that are accompanied by change. Changing is always complemented by difficulties. Even though it may not seem worth it at the moment, in the long run the challenges one may face going through change will pay off in the end. It may require risks that do not turn out the way we want, and we may not want to take those risks, but as shown by Charlie's character, it is crucial to development and maturity. Even though we may not like it, putting ourselves in uncomfortable situations is essential to learning how to change.