

# Africa Storytelling Challenge— Notable Submissions: In Josephine Godwyll's Words

*Committed to championing scientific innovations and advancements, Godwyll is affecting change in her community and throughout Africa—and this year's judges of the Africa Storytelling Challenge lauded these impressive efforts. Recognized as a runner-up in this year's contest, Godwyll shares her essay submission below.*

A global study "Assessing Learning Achievements" confirms the assertion that a good number of African countries are among countries where more than 50% of basic school students are unable to achieve literacy, numeracy and basic life skills at the end of basic school education (Schaefer, 2000).

In Ghana, where we work, the emphasis is on poor passing rates in subjects like Science and Mathematics, which is an annual concern raised after results of Basic Education Certificate Examination are released (<https://www.myjoyonline.com/.../educationist-bemoans-poor-performance-in-public-b...>). One of the proposed ways in addressing this trend has been to, "Try and excite students with the things around them" ...Prof. Anamuah-Mensah - EDUIT Consortium.

At Young At Heart Gh, we realize that stories continue to remain one of the most effective and relatable channels of knowledge transfer. Therefore, we are exploring folklore stories as a medium of teaching Science and other subjects like Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics through our innovative e-learning platform.

## **How will your work impact people and society?**

Lessons of science and other related subjects in Ghana often do not extend beyond the classroom. The experiences at home, at play and in communities have not been explored as mediums to knowledge transfer. Teaching Science through stories and guiding users of our e-learning platform (Ananse The Teacher App) to conduct experiments and activities using everyday materials is our way of breaking the perception of their abstract nature.

Guiding the users of our e-learning app to realize how close Science and other related lessons are to them, encourages them to relate to different lessons beyond the classroom and to explore practical activities with everyday materials.

The e-learning app targets basic school students who are of the ages of 8 to 15. It focuses on raising a generation of young Ghanaians who can easily relate to Science and other like subjects and explore their environments as an open laboratory waiting for innovations to be discovered.

As students read these stories they not only discover how relatable S.T.E.A.M subjects are, but they are also empowered to acknowledge African brilliance and ingenuity. This boosts their self-esteem to realize innovations in Science and other related fields are not the specialty of certain races but subjects that are rooted in African folklore and thus a part of us.

### **What motivates us?**

The members of the Young At Heart Gh team, having grown up in Ghana, realized in our experience that, there is an obvious disconnection between learning practical subjects like Science and our experiences of everyday life. We are inspired to change this narrative for our younger selves. Students in basic schools must be given the opportunity to embrace Science and other related subjects in a manner that is not abstract but fun. We believe our folklore stories can provide an avenue for us to do that.

The folklore stories we review inspire us, because having our scientific lens on, we have discovered so many different lessons captured in the stories we grew up listening to. We did not relate these stories to Science when we heard them growing up however now they are clear to us. As the hero's of these stories carry out different activities like creating simple machines (How Ananse Stories came to exist), exploring the different states of matter (Why the Tortoise has a rough shell), exploring principles of friction (Why children cry for nothing), we are inspired about the brilliance and ingenuity we have ignored for so long. We are inspired to believe in Africa.

### **Why do you think it is important to tell stories of science?**

Stories of science like the folklore stories we use as a channel, are a means of boosting confidence, self-esteem and sharing with the world the brilliance of Africa. It is important to show people that the story of brilliance showcased in the "Black Panther" movie is not only fictional, but has factual demonstrations in the innovations that arise from our continent. Its the ultimate way to change the narrative of corruption and wars and focus on the brilliance and ingenuity of our continent.

*The content and views presented here are those of the individual Challenge participant.*

### **About the Africa Storytelling Challenge**

The inaugural [Champions of Science—Africa Storytelling Challenge](#) took place between May and August 2018. Open to all scientists doing innovative work in Africa, the contest drew more than 100 submissions. An independent selection committee of scientists, policymakers and science journalists reviewed the applications and selected the winners. Each winner will be awarded \$5,000 and will have the opportunity

to share their stories at the 2019 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Washington, D.C.