

Kamishibai Story Theater

The Art of Picture Telling

Dianne de Las Casas

Illustrated by Philip Chow

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The Kamishibai Story Theater Process

Introduction to Story Theater

Story Theater is the narration of events through dramatic performance. In Story Theater, the storyteller performs or dramatizes the stories through vocal inflections, facial expressions, and body movement.

There is no one right way to tell a story. Every storytelling style has value. With that in mind, storytelling and Kamishibai Story Theater is a perfect way for students with varied learning styles to communicate their creativity.

Before I begin explaining how Kamishibai works and how to implement it in the classroom, I would like to share some important techniques that will help your students acclimate to the atmosphere of Story Theater.

Establishing an Environment of Trust

To “break the ice” so that the students can get to know me better, I begin with a self-created Kamishibai story. The act of storytelling is an intimate art and allows the students to get to know me, thus allowing them to trust me. You can retell a traditional Japanese or Asian tale, or even recount an important event in your life history through Kamishibai.

In Story Theater, trust is very important. Through the act of dramatization, storytellers often expose themselves and their emotions in a way never seen before. It is the same for the students. Some of the students may have never had the opportunity to role-play or act out a part and may feel uncomfortable doing so in front of their peers. In addition, students who are not accustomed to sharing their artwork in a community setting may also feel self-conscious.

To establish the environment of trust, I introduce “The Classroom Contract,” a contract for grades 3 and up that enforces respect and prevents teasing. It is read orally and at the end of each statement, the students say, “I agree.” It helps set expectations and guidelines for the duration of my work with the students.

Classroom Contract

The Number One Rule is RESPECT

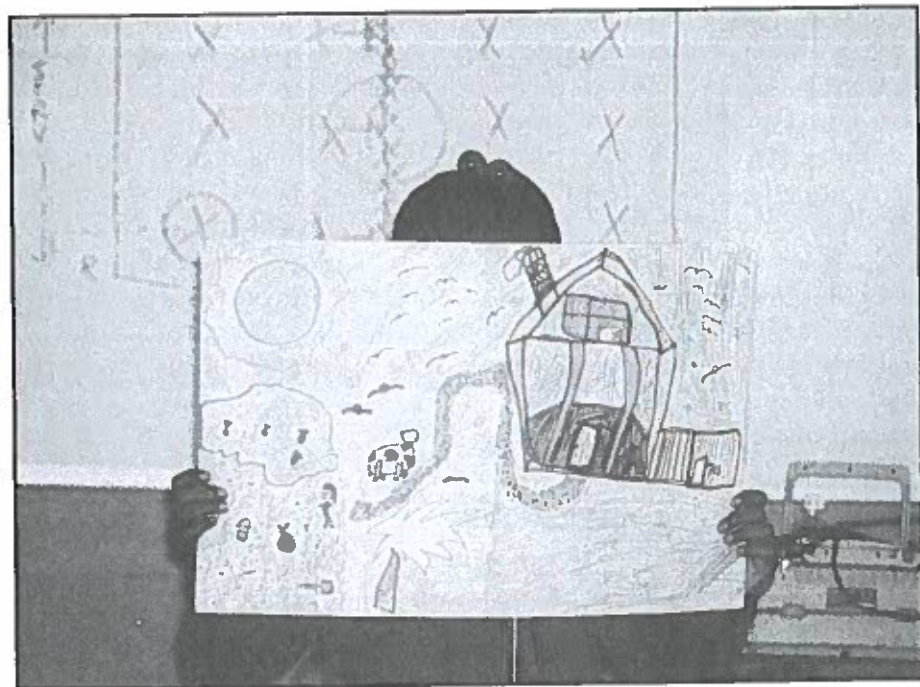
- RESPECT FELLOW CLASSMATES—I will respect my classmates at all times. I will not laugh at them, make fun of them, or make them feel bad.

- RESPECT TEACHER—I will respect [teacher’s name] by listening to her and following directions. Failure to do so will result in a behavior report [or other means of discipline suited to your school’s environment].
- RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE’S PROPERTY—I will respect other people’s property including my fellow classmates and my teacher(s). I will take care of borrowed items and put them back where they belong.

Although I find that an oral contract suffices, you can provide a signature line and have each student sign the contract. If the class becomes unruly, I simply pull out the Classroom Contract and issue a gentle reminder.

Introducing Kamishibai to Your Students

Kamishibai Story Theater involves not only the dramatization of stories but a visual art element as well. It is a great way to incorporate language arts, social studies, and visual arts simultaneously into a lesson. Students strengthen their sequencing and presentation skills and learn about another culture. With self-created Kamishibai, students also strengthen their writing skills. The teacher or students can create Kamishibai cards inexpensively on large poster board. Introduce your class to the concept of Kamishibai by telling them the history of the art form. A good way to do this is with Caldecott-Winning author and illustrator Allen Say’s book, *Kamishibai Man*.



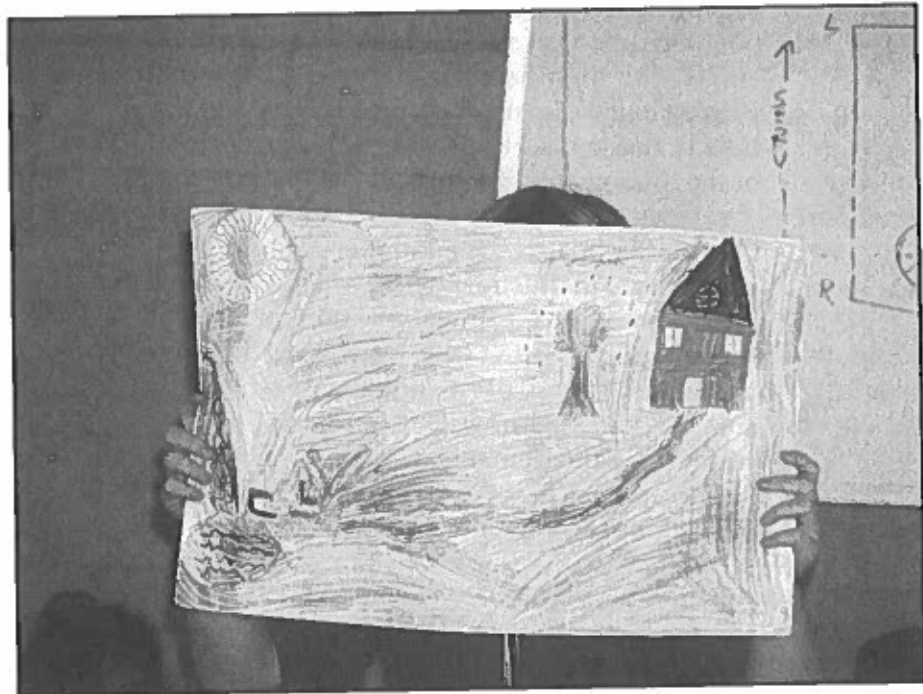
A student-illustrated Kamishibai card for "Nida and the Wishing Coconut"

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Kamishibai cards are larger than picture books, making the illustrations easier for the entire class to view. There are typically twelve Kamishibai cards in a modern Kamishibai set. The cards are viewed in sequential order, with the text for the front card printed on the back of the last card. When the teller has finished recounting each scene, the card in front is moved to the back. This continues until the story ends. There is no break in the telling of the story. The front and back of the cards are numbered in sequential order to aid the Kamishibai teller in keeping the story sequence correct.

To make telling easier, the cards can rest on a table in front of the teller, a wooden Kamishibai stage can be used, or a tabletop easel can be employed. The teller can also hold the Kamishibai cards in her lap and sit on a chair as the rest of the class sits on the floor. When I create my own Kamishibai cards, I create five story cards, illustrating the most vital scenes of the story. I place the cards on a tabletop easel and sit in a chair next to the table. The Kamishibai cards should be easy to access and change, so that the flow of the storytelling is not interrupted.

Begin with creating the story cards. Once you write your story (or use a traditional Japanese or Asian folktale), choose which scenes you would like to illustrate. You can use as few as five cards or as many as you like. If you are not comfortable retelling the story without prompts, cut the story into manageable sections and glue them to the back of the story cards. Remember to place the text for the first card on the back of the last card. The text for the second card is placed on the back of the first card. The text of the third card is placed on the back of the second card and so forth. The example of your self-created Kamishibai will inspire the students to create their own.



A student-illustrated Kamishibai card for "The Man in the Moon"

Classroom Kamishibai

There are many ways to use Kamishibai in the classroom. This method allows the whole class to present a story together and is a good way to introduce Kamishibai when you don't have a lot of time. Each student will need poster board, scissors, glue, and drawing supplies (crayons, markers, or colored pencils). The poster boards should be cut to the same size for consistency when the story is presented. Modern Kamishibai sets are approximately 11 x 15 inches. For my students, I ordered large poster board from a local art supply store and took it to a printer to be cut in half. The pieces measured approximately 14 x 22 inches. The larger cards allowed the students to create visually stunning illustrations that a large audience had no difficulty viewing.

Select a story and tell or read the story out loud to the class so that they can familiarize themselves with the story. Ask them to visualize the scenes of the story. Each student will be illustrating a scene of the story.

Make a photocopy of your selected story or create your own and print it. Count the number of students in your class. Use a pencil to draw lines dividing the story into that many sections. For example, if you have twenty-five students, the story should be divided into twenty-five sections. Number each of the sections and then cut the story apart. Each student should have a few lines each. It's a good idea to keep a master copy of the story with each student's name written beside his or her lines.

The students will then glue the lines of the story to the poster board. It is helpful to number the Kamishibai cards on back with large numbers so that you can easily track the story's sequence. In the upper left corner on the backside of the poster board, have the students write their names, their teacher's name, and their grade. The title of the story should be written above their story lines. I use a mock poster board to demonstrate. One side has the story lines glued in the middle of the poster board with the title written above it. The student's name, teacher, and grade are printed in the upper left corner of the poster board. The other side has a drawing illustrating the lines of the story. It is laminated for protection and hung at the front of the class so that the students can follow it as an example.

Once the back of the poster board has been completed, have the students turn their poster boards over and illustrate the blank side. Each student will have a different scene to illustrate. Some of your students may feel apprehensive about their artistic abilities. Assure them that you are looking for the flavor of the story and that there is no wrong way to create art. Remind them to create large illustrations so that when they are presenting their part of the story, the rest of the audience will be able to see the pictures. I encourage the students to fill the entire space with color, which gives the Kamishibai cards a vibrant look and makes the presentation vivid.

Keep the Kamishibai cards in the classroom while they are working on them. This eliminates the possibility of the cards being lost or forgotten at home. If your school has an art teacher, the Kamishibai project would be a good opportunity for a collaborative effort between you and that teacher.

Once the Kamishibai cards are completed, the students can begin rehearsing their story. Although they can read their lines, I encourage students to tell their part of the story, which does not mean memorizing their lines. What they tell does not have to match the lines of the story exactly as long as they are conveying what is in their scene. It typically takes four class periods for the process. The first class period

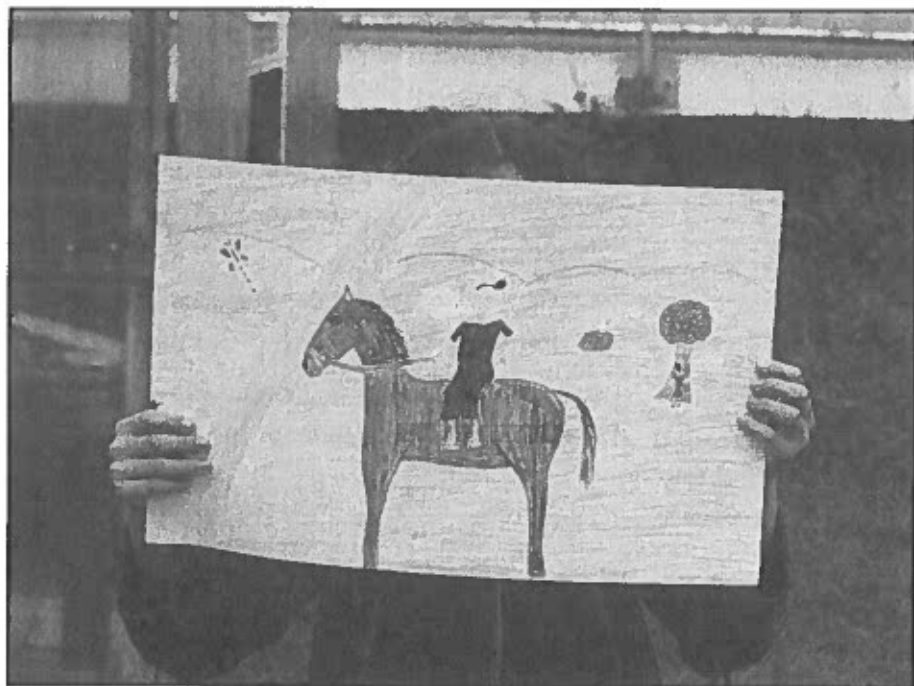
is spent with the teacher telling the story, dividing up the story, passing the story lines out, and working on the Kamishibai cards. The second period is spent completing the illustrations. The third period is spent rehearsing the Kamishibai presentation. The fourth period is spent presenting the Kamishibai story. Tips for coaching and creating a grade-level Kamishibai Story Fest are included later in the book.

Individual Student Kamishibai

In this method, students present their own Kamishibai tale in the traditional way. Each student is provided with a Japanese or other Asian folktale. Each student will need poster board, scissors, glue, and drawing supplies (crayons, markers, or colored pencils). As with the method described in the previous section, the poster boards should be cut to the same size. The boards should be a manageable size for the students to handle and be stiff enough so that they do not bend when students hold them.

For elementary students, five to six cards per student works well. It allows students to convey the story without overwhelming them with too many illustrations. Allow the students to divide their own stories for illustration. In this way, they choose which scenes they will illustrate, and it helps them sequence their story.

It may help to have the students create a storyboard outline before they begin cutting apart their story and creating the illustrations. Ask the students to visualize the story and remember the pictures they see. What parts of the story are important? Is there an exciting moment in the story that the listeners must experience? On a separate sheet of paper, have them write down what they think the important scenes are. If there are more than five or six, ask them to choose the most vital scenes. These are the scenes they will illustrate.



A student-illustrated Kamishibai card for "The Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden"

Mount the story on the back of the Kamishibai boards and then number the boards. Remember, the text for the front card is mounted on the back of the last card. The text for the second card is mounted on the back of the first card. This can be confusing for the students, so it helps to have a ready-made set of Kamishibai cards to demonstrate.

Once the Kamishibai boards are illustrated, they will need to be stored. Jumbo envelopes can be purchased online or at an office supply store. Alternatively, students can create their own envelopes using butcher paper or larger poster board for a sturdier envelope. Have the students illustrate and decorate their Kamishibai envelopes with art from the story and the story's title. This will also aid in matching the cards to the envelopes when the cards need to be stored.

When the students present their Kamishibai stories, encourage them to hold their boards at chest level, not in front of their faces. Some students will tend to want to hide behind their Kamishibai cards. Explain that their facial expressions are as important to the story as the illustrations and that holding the cards in front of their faces will muffle their voices, making it difficult for the audience to hear them. Encourage the students to tell their stories rather than read them. If you decide to have your students read the stories, demonstrate how to read their cards without covering their faces or looking down the entire time.

It is such a joy to see students presenting Kamishibai. When they are finished with their presentations, praise their success.

Student-Created Kamishibai

In this method of Kamishibai, students create their own stories that they turn into Kamishibai tales. In student-created Kamishibai, the 6 + 1 traits of writing are naturally addressed:

1. *Idea development*—Students develop the ideas and theme of the story.
2. *Organization*—Students must tell things in order and sequence the events of the story so that the story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
3. *Voice*—When students create their own tales, their inner writing voice emerges. It is the voice of the story crafter that affects the story reader or listener.
4. *Conventions*—Students make use of a title, spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, capitalization, and punctuation.
5. *Sentence fluency*—Because Kamishibai is heavy on sequencing, sentences must make sense for the story to flow properly.
6. *Word choice*—Students make use of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Because of the folktale nature of Kamishibai, stories tend to be rich in colorful language.
7. *Presentation*—The rhythm and flow of the language comes to life when the Kamishibai tale is shared aloud.

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Have the students brainstorm story ideas. Ask them the following questions:

- What do they want to write about?
- Who are the characters in the story?
- What is the plot of the story?
- Where does the story take place?
- What is the conflict in the story?

The Kamishibai stories should have some parameters to guide the students as they are creating their tales. Here a few suggestions:

- Write a story in a folktale style. The use of magic, talking animals, and talking objects is encouraged.
- Stories should have at least two characters, not including the narrator.
- Dialogue must be used between characters.
- The story must have a conflict, a problem that has to be solved by the story's end.
- The story should be no longer than two handwritten, single-spaced, lined pages or three double-spaced, typed pages.

If students are having trouble creating story ideas, provide them with story starters. Here are some sample starters:

There was once an old man. One day, when he was walking to the village, he saw a _____ in the middle of the road. It began talking and said _____.

The earth shook and the sky blackened. When [name of character] peeked out from behind the bushes, he saw _____.

[Name of character] was a poor girl. She had nothing but the clothes on her back. One day, as she sweeping, she saw a mouse. The mouse said _____.

[Name of character] was afraid of goblins. His father told him that if he went into the forest alone, he might be captured. One day, he saw a huge _____.

Rabbit threw a party at a time when the all the animals were friends. But when _____ stole the _____ from _____, everything changed.

To encourage students to create their own story prompts, have them ask themselves, "What if?" For example, "What if pigs could fly?" The answer to the "what if?" question is the story.

Once the students have written their stories, they must select which scenes to illustrate. After selecting the scenes, have the students mount the sequenced story to the back of the poster board as previously discussed. Students will then illustrate

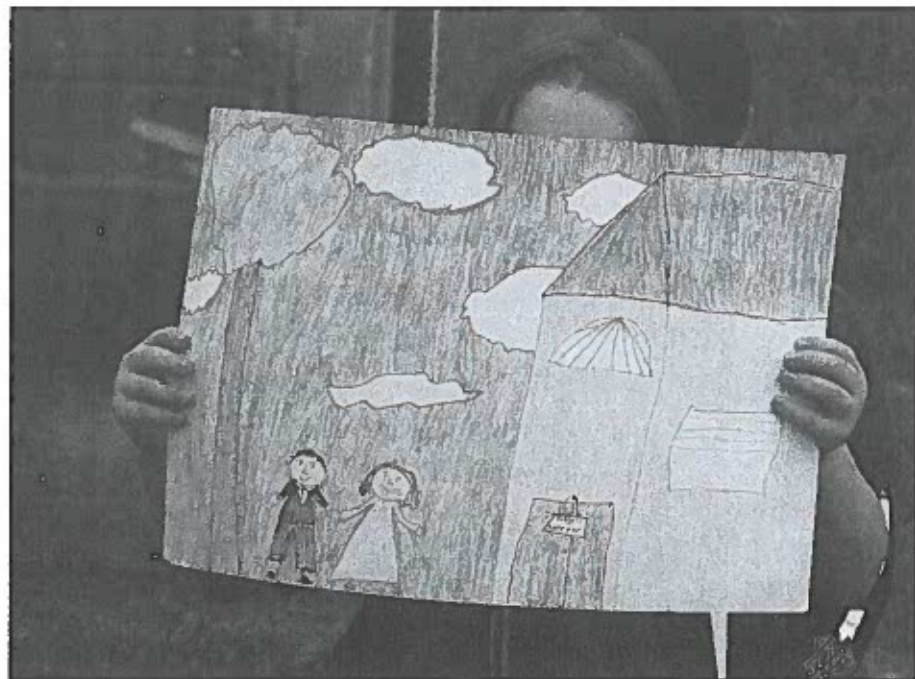
their stories and number the Kamishibai cards on the front and back. To complete the project, students can create special envelopes for the Kamishibai cards.

Coaching

Praise and an atmosphere of mutual respect are important for success for both you and your students. Here are some tips for successful coaching:

- Give suggestions rather than telling them how to perform their part. For example, instead of "Amanda, say it like this," try "Amanda, what do you think your character would sound like if he were angry?"
- When praising students, praise specific examples. "Amanda, I like the way you used your body as well as your voice to portray the bear." This will bolster the student's confidence in her abilities.
- If a student is having trouble with her part, speak to her in private. If the student refuses to perform in front of her peers, respect her wishes. Forcing a student to perform when she is not ready can have severe psychological repercussions. If the part must be reassigned, do so without fanfare.
- Sometimes, students may have trouble remembering the story. A quick glance at the illustration can serve as a reminder. If the student still has trouble remembering his lines, offer quiet story prompts. Sometimes signals or hand motions can jog a student's memory.

I have had students with behavioral difficulties absolutely shine in performance. The Kamishibai Story Theater process allows students creative success.



A student-illustrated Kamishibai card for "The Girl Who Used Her Wits"

If you are performing a classroom Kamishibai, it is helpful to have the students stay in line formation in order of the story. They can all be seated but while one teller is at the microphone, the next storyteller stands and gets ready to walk to the microphone. After the teller is finished with his part, he returns to the end of the line.

Work with the students as often as possible, allowing them to tweak their performance and to tighten their timing as a group. Be sure to have your copy of the story handy in the event a Kamishibai card is missing. You may also want to designate “pinch hitters,” storytellers who can fill in if someone is absent on the day of the performance.

Presentation Tips—Dramatizing the Stories

When working with the storytellers, encourage them to enunciate their parts clearly and give the characters different voices. Voice inflection and tone are important to the storyteller’s performance. Even without great movement, the storyteller can convey drama and emotion in the story with effective use of the voice and facial expressions.

Management and Organization Tips

If you are a drama teacher working with several classes, you may find it helpful to create a binder with tabbed sections for each grade. The tabs organize the Kamishibai stories you are using for each grade. Here are some tips for organizing your binder:

- Sheet protectors help preserve your copies of the Kamishibai stories.
- When you are assigning story lines, write each student’s first and last name next to his lines on your copy of the story. Also write the teacher’s name and grade at the top of your copy of the story.
- Make personal notes in the margin of your script(s) and keep them in the sheet protectors of your binder.
- Keep extra copies of stories in a folder in your binder for the inevitable moment a Kamishibai card goes missing.

Coordinating a Kamishibai Story Fest

Although the Kamishibai stories are great for in-class use, creating a grade-wide or school-wide Story Fest allows the student storytellers to share their efforts with an appreciative audience. Grade-wide Kamishibai Story Fests, where each class performs for their peers, develop an atmosphere of respect and support because each student performs during the Fest.

Another option is to have the class perform for lower grades. The younger students admire the older students, and the older students come away with a sense of accomplishment.

Rehearsals

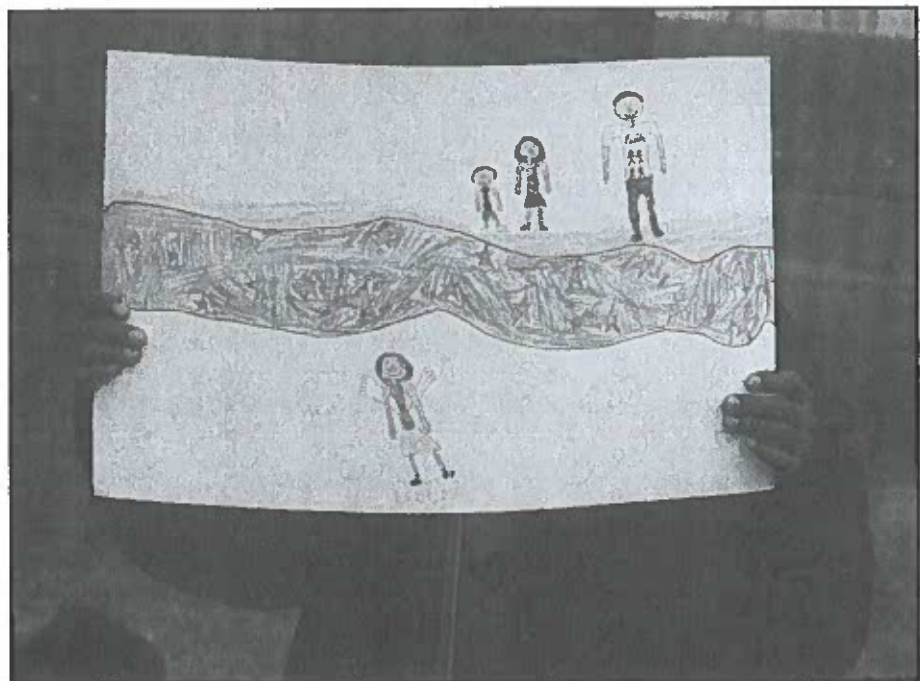
Rehearsals allow the students to work through their fears and perfect their presentations. For many students, stage fright or lack of self-confidence is the biggest inhibitor to performance success. Often they are afraid of “messaging up” in front of their peers. Assure them that you will help them with reminder lines and prompts.

The other inhibitor to performance success is inadequate preparation. When the students know exactly what to expect, they are more confident in their roles. Some elements to practice:

- Story openings and closings
- Students’ positioning on the stage
- Holding the Kamishibai cards correctly
- Entrances and exits
- Microphone usage

Talk openly with the students about ways to counteract stage fright including:

- Taking deep, relaxing breaths
- Warming up with exercises to get the blood moving
- Visualizing the story and working through any mistakes
- Pausing for a moment to collect their thoughts if they blank out



A student-illustrated Kamishibai card for “The Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden”

Still another alternative is to perform a Family Night Kamishibai Story Fest, where parents, grandparents, and other family members are invited. In this scenario, students stand proudly before their families in anticipation of their performance.

Once you have decided on your Kamishibai Story Fest, you will need to work out these details:

- *Location of performance*—Wherever you perform—cafeteria, gym, library, or auditorium—be sure to let the people in charge of that space know ahead of time. They will appreciate the advance notice and can help with preparation.
- *Schedule*—Coordinate scheduling with everyone involved, including other teachers, administration, staff, and parents.
- *Parents*—If parents are invited, send notes home. Creating a colorful invitation sets the tone for a festive mood. Asian-themed paper makes a terrific invitation.
- *Dress*—If the students desire, encourage them to dress up in Asian attire befitting the story.
- *Space*—Be sure that the space is set up for the performance well in advance.
- *Announcements*—Write up a blurb and give it to the morning announcer to remind students and publicize the event.

Kamishibai Story Theater is an exciting form of performance. It works well in classroom settings as well as for larger audiences. Students have the opportunity to shine. Following their performance, reward the students' work by hosting a reception in their honor or passing out award stickers or certificates. A treat of Japanese rice candy would also make a nice surprise. Of course, the most rewarding part of Kamishibai is the process itself. Seeing students performing with their beautiful artwork is a fantastic experience. You can be proud of the fact that you and your class have worked in the line of an age-old tradition of Japanese picture telling, keeping Kamishibai alive and well. *Oshimai*.

The End



Kamishibai Story Theater

The Art of Picture Telling

Dianne de Las Casas

Illustrated by Philip Chow

De Las Casas has adapted 25 folktales from across Asia for whole classroom use, borrowing a Japanese method of storytelling through pictures. Kamishibai theater harkens back to itinerant storytellers (Kamishibai Men) who conveyed their tales by means of illustrated cards slid into slots in wooden stages built on the back of their bicycles. This book includes an introductory chapter describing in detail the methods to use in coaching students in the art of Kamishibai Story Theater. It offers tips on rehearsing, and detailed discussion and background of the Kamishibai processes, and it describes how to coordinate grade-level story presentations. Reproducible tales can be distributed to each member of the class to aide in creating illustrations. Spot illustrations for each tale give students an idea of the flavor of their drawings for that story.

The stories in *Kamishibai Story Theater* will delight children in grades 2-6, enticing them to participate in their own story fest.

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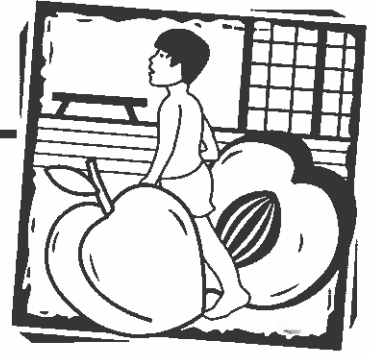
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Momotaro, the Peach Boy

Japan



There once lived a kind woodcutter and his wife. More than anything, they prayed for a child. One day, when the woodcutter went into the forest to work, the old woman went to the river to wash clothes. As she was washing, she saw a giant peach floating down the river.

She reached in and pulled out the peach. "What a fine peach you are," she said. "My husband will be very pleased to see you."

She brought the giant peach home. The woodcutter was delighted, "We have been blessed. I cannot wait to taste this delectable fruit!"

He was about to carve the peach with a knife when a voice inside cried out, "Wait, don't cut me!"

The astonished woodcutter dropped his knife when the peach split apart and a little boy stood in front of him and his wife. The boy said, "I have been sent to you in answer to your prayers."

The woodcutter and his wife were delighted. They named the boy Momotaro, which means Boy-of-the-Peach. Momotaro grew up to be a fine young boy. When he was fifteen, he said, "Mother and father, you have been good parents. Now I must venture off on my own to help my country. Not far from here is Oni Island, the land of the ogres. I must find a way to defeat the Oni so that they will stop terrorizing our people."

Though the woodcutter and his wife were sad to see their son leave, they knew in their hearts that he would return. Before Momotaro left, his mother packed him some millet dumplings.

Momotaro began traveling to Oni Island. Along the way, he stopped for a bit to eat. As he ate his millet dumplings, he saw a spotted dog. The dog barked, "Rof, rof, rof!" Momotaro offered the dog his dumplings, and the dog ate happily.

When he finished eating, the dog asked, "Where are you going?"

Momotaro said, "I am going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres."

"Then I will come with you," said the dog. "You will need help."

They began traveling to Oni Island when they happened upon a monkey. The monkey chattered, "Kia, kia, kia!"

The spotted dog growled at the monkey, and the two began to quarrel. Momotaro said, "Stop it, both of you. We need to go."

The monkey asked, "Where are you going?"

Momotaro said, "We are going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres."

"Then I will come with you," said the monkey. "You will both need help."

They began traveling to Oni Island when a pheasant jumped out in front of them. The dog and the monkey were about to attack the pheasant when Momotaro said, "Stop it, all of you. Eat some millet dumplings. We need to go."

The animals happily gobbled up the millet dumplings. The pheasant asked, "Where are you going?"

Momotaro said, "We are going to Oni Island to defeat the ogres."

"Then I will come with you," said the pheasant. "You will all need help."

During the journey, a strange thing happened. The three animals, who did not normally get along, became friends. They arrived at the sea's edge and Momotaro and the animals built a boat. They crossed the ocean to Oni Island, the land of the ogres.

As they approached the island, they saw the ugly ogres. Momotaro announced, "Surrender now before you regret it!"

The ogres laughed, "Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! You will never defeat us, little boy, with your puny animal army! Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!"

The ogres underestimated the power of determination. Momotaro and his friends charged the ogres. The pheasant pecked at them, the monkey scratched at them, and the dog bit their legs. Momotaro waved his sword high and asked, "Now will you surrender?"

The ogres wearily agreed that Momotaro and his animal friends had defeated them, and so the ogres surrendered and promised to stop terrorizing the people of Japan. They also presented Momotaro with the most wonderful treasure you can imagine: gold, silver, precious jewels, and magic objects.

Momotaro loaded their boat with the treasure and returned home. Momotaro and his friends were celebrated heroes. They had their friendship and all the millet dumplings they could eat. From that time on, their lives were just, well, peachy.

The Magic Pot

China



Mr. and Mrs. Chin were old and poor. They had a small house in the mountains and a tiny patch of land on which they grew fruit and vegetables. Mr. Chin would harvest the produce and sell it at the market in the village.

One day, on his way home from the market, he saw a large black pot in the middle of the road. He said, "What a nice pot! Why, with this pot my wife could cook rice, with this pot my wife could stew, with this pot my wife could cook soup with noodles!"

It didn't seem to belong to anyone, so Mr. Chin carried the heavy pot home. When Mr. Chin arrived home, his wife greeted him at the door. He gave her the pot and said, "This nice pot is for you, dear wife."

Mrs. Chin was delighted. She said, "What a splendid pot. Why, with this pot I could cook rice, with this pot I could stew, with this pot I could cook soup with noodles!"

Mr. Chin groaned and rubbed his stomach. "Wife, please do not speak to me of food. I am so very hungry!"

Mrs. Chin said, "I have an idea. Why don't we use the pot now?! I will cook some rice." Mrs. Chin ran to the kitchen and returned with a bag of rice. She held the rice over the pot.

What Mr. and Mrs. Chin did not know was that the bag of rice had a small hole at the bottom. A single grain of rice fell into the pot. Mrs. Chin saw it fall and looked inside the pot. "Aaaah!" she screamed.

"Wife, wife, what is the matter?" cried Mr. Chin, thinking that something was wrong.

Mrs. Chin said, "We have a magic pot!"

Mr. Chin said, "That's ridiculous. It is an ordinary pot. How can it be magic?"

Mrs. Chin replied, "One grain of rice fell into the pot and two grains of rice came out! It is a magic pot that doubles everything you place inside it. I'll prove it." Mrs. Chin pulled a chopstick from her hair.

Lo and behold, one chopstick went into the pot and two chopsticks came out. Mr. Chin gasped. "It is a magic pot!"

Mrs. Chin was excited. "Husband," she said, "let us double everything we own!" They began placing objects inside the pot. One bowl went into the pot and two bowls came out. One mat went into the pot and two mats came out. One pillow went into the pot and two pillows came out!

After they had doubled most of their belongings, Mrs. Chin had a brilliant idea. She went to the back of the house and returned with a gold coin in her hand. One gold coin went into the pot and two gold coins came out!

She smiled at Mr. Chin and placed the two gold coins into the magic pot. Two gold coins went into the pot and four gold coins came out. Four gold coins went into the pot and eight gold coins came out.

Eight gold coins went into the pot and sixteen gold coins came out. Sixteen gold coins went into the pot and thirty-two gold coins came out. Thirty-two gold coins went into the pot and sixty-four gold coins came out.

Sixty-four gold coins went into the pot and one hundred twenty-eight gold coins came out! One hundred twenty-eight gold coins went into the pot and soon, there were too many gold coins to count! Mr. and Mrs. Chin were rich!

Mr. and Mrs. Chin put the magic pot away in the kitchen, but that night, Mrs. Chin could not sleep. She kept thinking about the magic pot! Early in the morning, she crept into the kitchen and pulled out the magic pot.

"Oh, magic pot. You have changed our lives for the better! I love you!" She bent over to hug the pot and suddenly, Mrs. Chin fell in! One Mrs. Chin went into the pot and two Mrs. Chins came out! They screamed!

Mr. Chin came running, and when he saw two Mrs. Chins, he screamed too! "I can barely handle one wife. How will I handle two?"

The two Mrs. Chins began to argue. The first Mrs. Chin said, "I was here first. You must leave!"

The second Mrs. Chin said, "He is my husband too, and I am here to stay!"

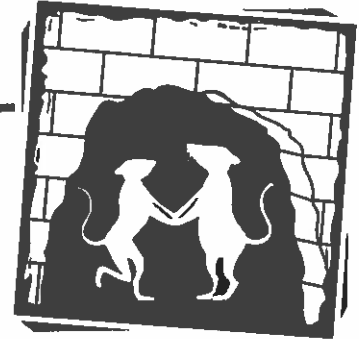
Mr. Chin yelled, "Please stop! Surely, there must be a solution to this problem!"

It was then that the first Mrs. Chin whispered into the ear of the second Mrs. Chin. They called Mr. Chin over, and when he was close to the pot, they pushed Mr. Chin in! One Mr. Chin fell into the pot and two Mr. Chins came out!

Both sets of Chins looked at each other, and that's when the first Mrs. Chin had another brilliant idea. With the gold from the magic pot, she built a house next door for the new couple. When the neighbors passed, they commented on how much they resembled each other. They said, "We must be seeing double Chins!"

The Mouse's Wedding

Japan



Long ago, there lived a rich mouse who had a beautiful daughter named Sachiko. Sachiko had a suitor, a handsome but poor mouse by the name of Makoto. Makoto wanted to marry Sachiko.

One day, Makoto came to visit the family. They sat at the table and drank tea. Father Mouse, "I wish to marry Sachiko. May I have your permission?"

Father Mouse laughed. "I am a rich mouse. My daughter cannot marry a common mouse like you. She must marry the mightiest creature in the world."

Makoto answered, "Father Mouse, I promise to work hard and give Sachiko everything that she needs." But Father Mouse would not hear of it and sent Makoto away.

Father Mouse spoke to his wife. "Wife, Sachiko has a suitor, a common mouse. But I cannot let my daughter marry unless she marries the mightiest creature in the world. Everyone knows the mightiest one is Mr. Sun."

Mother Mouse nodded. "Of course. Perhaps you should see him and ask him to marry our Sachiko." Father Mouse thought it was a good idea and set off to see the Sun.

When he arrived, he greeted the Sun with a bow. "Good day, Mr. Sun. I want my daughter to marry the mightiest creature in the world. Since you bring light to the world, you must be the mightiest."

The Sun smiled, "I am flattered but I am afraid I am not the mightiest. When Mr. Cloud passes by, he covers my face, therefore, he must be the mightiest."

Father Mouse thanked the Sun and continued on his journey. When he found the Cloud, he greeted him with a bow. "Good Day, Mr. Cloud. I want my daughter to marry the mightiest creature in the world. Since you cover Mr. Sun, you must be the mightiest."

The Cloud smiled, "I am flattered, but I am afraid I am not the mightiest. When Mr. Wind comes near, he blows me across the sky, therefore, he must be the mightiest."

Father Mouse thanked the Cloud and continued on his journey. When he found the Wind, he greeted him with a bow. "Good Day, Mr. Wind. I want my daughter to marry the mightiest creature in the world. Since you blow Mr. Cloud across the sky, you must be the mightiest."

The Wind smiled, "I am flattered, but I am afraid I am not the mightiest. When I approach Mr. Wall, he stops me in my tracks, therefore, he must be the mightiest."

Father Mouse thanked the Wind and continued on his journey. When he found the Wall, he greeted him with a bow. "Good Day, Mr. Wall. I want my daughter to marry the mightiest creature in the world. Since you stop Mr. Wind in his tracks, you must be the mightiest."

The Wall smiled, "I am flattered, but I am afraid I am not the mightiest. Do you see that hole in me? That hole is made by the mightiest creature around. He has the power to chew right through me!"

Father Mouse asked, "Honorable Mr. Wall, what creature has that kind of power?"

The Wall laughed. "Why, it's the mouse! You mice must be the mightiest and strongest creatures in the world!"

Father Mouse was surprised. He thanked the Wall and journeyed home. And you can guess what happened next! Father Mouse granted Makoto permission to marry Sachiko because the mouse was, after all, the mightiest creature in the world! And they lived happily ever after. Squeak! Squeak!

The Noble Frog

China



In Old Cathay, there lived a Chinese general and his wife. They prayed for a baby. It seemed as though their prayers were being answered, for the wife conceived and gave birth. But the birth was a great shock to everyone for she did not give birth to a baby but to a frog as large as an infant child!

The mother of the frog had no choice but to set him loose in the garden. He returned daily for his food and grew in size. The frog's father was away fighting a civil war. Word reached the family that he had been captured.

The frog spoke to his uncle. "Uncle, you must take me to the castle so that I may ask the emperor to help me save my father's life."

No sooner had they arrived at the castle when they heard the emperor decree, "Whoever banishes the rebels and sets my general free can marry Mei Ling, my only daughter."

Mei Ling was of uncommon beauty. The moon paled in comparison to her glowing splendor. She had a smile that stole many hearts.

When the frog saw Mei Ling, his heart leaped with joy. Not only would he defeat the enemies and bring his father home, he would also win the hand of the lovely princess!

The frog insisted on an audience with the emperor. When he was brought before the emperor, the frog bowed low. "Most honorable emperor, my father is the general of your army. He has been captured by enemy troops. I wish to free him and bring him home, but I request your help."

The emperor looked at the frog with disbelief. "How can you, a lowly frog, expect to defeat my enemy? Nevertheless, I will help you only because your father has given me many years of loyal service and I wish his safe return. I will give you a horse and a few soldiers. That is all."

The frog thanked the emperor and set off on his white horse with his tiny army. They traveled to the far region of the land and faced the emperor's enemy. When the enemy army saw the cavalry the emperor had sent, they roared with laughter. There was no way this tiny army and ridiculous frog on a white horse could defeat them.

They charged the frog and his army. The frog spit poison that rained upon his enemy. The poison paralyzed them and the frog and his soldiers rescued the general and the other imprisoned soldiers.

There was much rejoicing when the frog returned a hero. He had saved his father the general and freed the emperor's army. The frog said to the emperor, "You proclaimed that whoever freed the general and defeated the enemy could marry Mei Ling, your only daughter."

The emperor was aghast! There was no way he would allow an unsightly creature like this frog marry his daughter. Finally he said, "Come back tomorrow. If you can pick out my daughter from a group of maidens, you may have her hand in marriage."

That night the frog dreamed that the princess wore a yellow chrysanthemum in her hair. The next day, the emperor had Mei Ling and all the maidens dress alike. Mei Ling had placed a beautiful yellow chrysanthemum in her hair. The frog hopped to Mei Ling and tugged at her gown with his mouth.

The emperor was not happy but he had to keep his word. The frog asked for a suit to be made for the wedding, and the emperor scoffed, "What good will a suit do a frog?"

The frog answered, "The clothes make a man." So a suit was made for the frog. When the frog put on the suit, he shed his frog skin and became a dashing young man. Mei Ling was ecstatic. The frog man and Mei Ling were married.

The emperor couldn't understand how the young man fit into a frog's skin so he stole the skin and tried it on. Once he put the skin on, he was no longer able to take it off. The disbelieving emperor had no choice but to allow his new son-in-law to rule in his place.

From that moment forward, Mei Ling and her husband ruled wisely and justly. As for the old emperor, he became accustomed to his life as a frog and spent the rest of his days hopping happily about the palace gardens and sleeping on a grand lily pad. And they lived happily for the rest of their days.