

# Kamishibai (Japanese Card-Stories)

1 of 11

You will learn about a traditional form of Japanese storytelling and then have the opportunity to make one! Kamishibai (kah-mee-she-bai) is Japanese for “Paper Theaters”



See my links to resources:  
<http://www.cvsd.org/progress/kamishibai.asp>

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by

Julie Rosenoff  
Teacher-Librarian

Progress and Sunrise Elementary Schools  
Central Valley School District

[jrosenoff@cvsd.org](mailto:jrosenoff@cvsd.org)

509-926-5098

## \*\*\*\*\*INTRODUCTION\*\*\*\*\*

Kamishibai is an old traditional form of storytelling from Japan . One man I interviewed said he had many happy memories of the storyteller who rode a bicycle to a park every week. On the back of his bicycle was a box containing many different stories, each on a large card. There also was a “stage” to display the cards. He would announce his arrival by using wooden clappers.

Children who bought candy from him got to sit closest! The storyteller would put the cards in the wooden framed “stage” and show them front card's picture. He would dramatically tell a story, revealing the next card by moving the front card to the back. This would continue until reaching the end of the which was usually a cliff-hanger designed to ensure an audience the next week. He had a seemingly



unending variety of stories or series of stories to keep the children interested week after week. It's easy to understand why the children looked forward to the storyteller.

## \*\*\*\*\*DESCRIPTION OF CARDS\*\*\*\*\*

The stories I have seen usually have 10-16 different cards. Small ones measure about 20 cm. by 27 cm. Larger ones measure 27 cm. by 39 cm. They are on stiff tagboard, have a title picture/page, and are numbered on the back with a thumbnail sketch of the card the narration is used with. The narration on the back includes stage directions on how to use your voice and your body to add to the listener's enjoyment.

## LESSON MATERIALS AND RESOURCES:

- 1) Japanese card-stories--(kamishibai) --may take 2 or more weeks to obtain (See WHERE TO GET Kamishibai near end of document .) You'll need a minimum of 1; several would be helpful. Or use ones available on the Internet.
- 2) Large piece of newsprint or other drawing paper to fold and use for storyboard.
- 3) Tag board for a minimum of 10 cards/students, pencils, markers, paints, tape, etc.
- 4) Word-processor and decent printer.

# Where to view kamishibai on the Internet

## \*\*\*\*\*Experience Kamishibai Online\*\*\*\*\*

**Culture Corner-Kids Web Japan** <http://web-jpn.org/kidsweb/culture.html>

*Read the stories from "once upon a time in Japan" that every Japanese kid grows up listening to. FOLK LEGENDS OF JAPAN takes you on a journey to a fairy-tale world of boy heroes, terrible ogres, animal antics, and more. 18 different kamishibai with text in English and background music playing.*

**Kamishibai play| The Ogre who Sank Down to the Bottom of the Sea-**

<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/kamishibai/> A play in English or Japanese, complete with sound. Teacher guide for creating kamishibai links to Japanese writing.

## \*\*\*\*\*LESSON PROCEDURE\*\*\*\*\*

- Teacher explains above introductory material to students.
  
- Picture/Story Number Table Read a *kamishibai* , Japanese card-story, to the students in the traditional manner using the sequenced cards and telling the story with lots of expression.
  
- Students should have the opportunity to read a *kamishibai* to peers to better understand how the cards work. This can be done in pairs, small groups, or with younger children. (Having more than one card-story to use in class would be helpful.)
  
- Students are given their assignment at this point (or, if given in general terms at the beginning of the introduction, specifics are explained).[See HANDOUT #1-ASSIGNMENT below:]

# HINT:

Creating a table similar to this one should help students when they are on the last step of attaching the text to the back of a picture card. It can be tricky!

| FRONT of card | BACK of card |
|---------------|--------------|
| Picture 1     | Story 8      |
| Picture 2     | Story 7      |
| Picture 3     | Story 6      |
| Picture 4     | Story 5      |
| Picture 5     | Story 4      |
| Picture 6     | Story 3      |
| Picture 7     | Story 2      |

Picture/Story Number Table

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 8 | 1 |
|---|---|

\*\*\*\*\*HANDOUT #1-STUDENT ASSIGNMENT SHEET\*\*\*\*\*

ASSIGNMENT: Create, share, and evaluate a *kamishibai* (card-story).

- 1) Listen to or read introduction
- 2) Read at least one *Kamishibai*, Japanese card-story, to another person using animated expression. Look carefully at how the cards are sequenced and what is on the back of each card. ASK QUESTIONS IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
- 3) Decide if you will work on your own, in a pair, or in a group of three or more. [Teacher should decide ahead of time how many cards to require, and how many students can work together]
- 4) Choose a story to use for your own *kamishibai*. E.g., a Japanese folk tale, an Aesop's Fable, a known folk tale, a Native American folk tale, a story you wrote. This also works well in other curriculum areas: choose a topic to explain a particular thing like how to make a soufflé, the process of metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly, etc.[See web resources for lists of stories and ideas.]
- 5) Obtain your teacher's approval of your subject story or topic and your audience.
- 6) Prepare your own *kamishibai* cards for the story/topic of your choice. Be sure and talk to others and get input continuously!

Suggested steps:

- 1) Take a large piece of paper and fold it in half 2 to 4 times to make a grid with the number of cards you want to make.
- 2) Plan each step's picture by picking out the main thing from it.
- 3) Draw very rough sketches of your pictures in the proper order, one per grid section.
- 4) Make sure they are in the correct order and then group them into 8-16 parts. Number each part Each part will be one card.
- 5) Under each rough sketch write the main events of each card.

- 6) Plan the first part's narration (i.e., the words you will read during that part's picture) and write a rough draft on a separate whole sheet of paper. Include lots of dialogue, and make a separate sheet for each card. **NUMBER EACH SHEET OF PAPER WITH THE PICTURE CARD NUMBER!!**
- 7) Make a rough sketch for each part on a separate piece of paper. The images should be large enough for easy viewing by an audience at least 10 feet away, so make your images large and fairly simple.
- 8) plan the rest of the cards by repeating steps c & d.

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(After finishing step #7, complete the following mandatory assignments:)  
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- 9) Ask a few people whose opinion you value for suggestions, and then do a final rough draft.
- 10) Practice reading it to a peer to make sure it all goes together well.
- 11) Make the front of each card using markers, paints, magazine pictures, photographs, etc. The cards must be sturdy, neat, and attractive. Check with your teacher for card sizes and for appropriate materials.
- 12) Use a word-processor to type up, save, and print out your narration using a large, easy-to-read font.
- 13) Add the number and a thumbnail sketch of its corresponding card.
- 14) Paper clip the papers to the back of the cards and try it out to make sure it's right. (It can be tricky!) Use the **Picture/Story Number Table**, or something similar to help you with the numbering.
- 15) Once you are sure you have it right, securely tape this paper on the back of the appropriate card.
- 16) Select and arrange for reading your final product to an age-appropriate audience
- 17) Read your *kamishibai* to at least one person (i.e. your age-appropriate audience). The oral story should take 5-10 minutes.

- 18) Fill out an evaluation sheet by asking the listener the questions and writing their answers, or by letting him/her fill it out himself/herself. [See HANDOUT #2]
- 19) Fill out 2 evaluation sheets for yourself: [HANDOUT #2, HANDOUT #3]
- 20) All you have to do now is share your completed product and papers with your teacher!

**HANDOUT #2**

**\*\*\*\*\*EVALUATION\*\*\*\*\***

Author's name:

Evaluator's name(s)

Name of story/topic:

Date:

OVERALL SCORE: (Sum of subtotals A, B, & C)

**low --- high**

**PICTURE CARDS:**

- 1 2 3 4 5 Pictures fit the story
- 1 2 3 4 5 Appropriate number of cards
- 1 2 3 4 5 Neatness
- 1 2 3 4 5 Attractive pictures
- 1 2 3 4 5 Large and simple for distance viewing
- 1 2 3 4 5 Correct Sequence & Numbering
- 1 2 3 4 5 Creativity

\*SUBTOTAL A\*

COMMENTS:

**HANDOUT #3- SELF-EVALUATION\* \* \* \*QUALITY CHECK\* \* \* \***

Author's name:

Evaluator's name(s):

Name of story or topic:

Date:

Class Subject:

**KAMISHIBAI CARDS:**

- \_\_\_ I did my very best work.
- \_\_\_ I did good work.
- \_\_\_ I could have done a little better.
- \_\_\_ I could have improved many things.
- \_\_\_ I think I earned a score of (1-5, low to high): \_\_\_\_\_ because

COMMENTS: (What did you do well? What would you have done differently? etc.)

## Where can you buy kamishibai?

1. **Kamishibai for Kids:** [www.kamishibai.com](http://www.kamishibai.com) Background on kamishibai, with complete unit plan to create your own with music and ideas for using Japanese storytelling. Order kamishibai stories.
2. **Kinokuniya Bookstore-**  
located in Asian grocery and gifts supermarket: *Right across the street from Seattle's International District Bus Tunnel. An Asian grocery and gifts supermarket, with the two-floor bookstore Kinokuniya entrance on the main floor.*  
Uwajimaya - Seattle 206-624-6248  
600 5th Ave S #110, Seattle, WA 98104  
<http://www.uwajimaya.com/>
3. **Storycard Theater™**  
<http://www.storycardtheater.com/index.html> currently has two sets available for sale.

## Where can you borrow kamishibai?

1. East Asia Resource Center (EARC) at University of Washington campus <http://depts.washington.edu/earc/resources.shtml>  
(206) 543-1921 *Talk to Kristin Chaney. They have quite a few kamishibai and other materials that teachers can check out. The only catch is it has to be done in person, Monday—Friday, 9 a.m. –5 p.m.*
2. Consulate-General of Japan, Educational Affairs department, Seattle  
(206) 682-9107 **Japanese Language Teaching Materials List (scroll several pages down) available at** *They have several Kamishibai that can be borrowed, although only some of them are in English as well as in Japanese. They also have general information, videos, and CDs. There is no charge for borrowing Japanese language teaching materials. However, if you would like to have the items sent to you, a reimbursement of shipping fee in postage stamps is required up on return of the item(s). THEY ARE VERY HELPFUL WHEN YOU CALL THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES DEPT.*  
[http://www.seattle.us.emb-japan.go.jp/English/LearnAboutJapan/available\\_at\\_consulate/japanese\\_language/index\\_jp\\_lang.htm](http://www.seattle.us.emb-japan.go.jp/English/LearnAboutJapan/available_at_consulate/japanese_language/index_jp_lang.htm)
3. Check with your nearest Japanese American Society.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES

### Welcome to Spagnoli's

site <http://www.cathyspagnoli.com/index.htm> Incredible background information, teacher lessons, many helpful links from a master story-teller. Asian Storytelling: talks about Kamishibai background and links to directions for students creating their own.

### Make kamishibai Spagnoli

<http://www.cathyspagnoli.com/yngwriters/kamishibai.htm>

Gretchen Lee "Kamishibai: A vehicle to multiple literacies." Voices From the Middle 10.3 (2003): 36-42. Discovery. ProQuest. Spokane County Library District, WA.  
<<http://www.proquest.com/>>

Mrs. Lee's 6th Graders' Beowulf Kamishibai <http://www.gretchenle.com/beowulf/beoindex.html#anchor1308048> she used kamishibai storyboards in an integrated unit on Egypt to make textbook reading more meaningful to students. To complete the unit, students had to use multiple literacy skills as they combined textbook reading with Web research with art with oral presentations. Used to teach text features of school texts.

### Teachers' Ideas: how to use kamishibai

<http://www.kamishibai.com/ideas.htm>

**Integrating Japanese Folk Tales into the classroom** (Marte Peet) Detailed guide with resources, web links and an assessment rubric for original kamishibai stories Includes rationale, lesson plans, list of favorite Japanese folk tales  
<http://www.smith.edu/fceas/curriculum/peet.htm>

### Kamishibai play| The Ogre who Sank Down to the Bottom of the Sea-

<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/kamishibai/> A play in English or Japanese, complete with sound. Teacher guide for creating kamishibai links to Japanese writing.

### Teacher's Guide to Kamishibai

<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/kamishibai/teachkam.html> Comprehensive site by Indiana University and East Asian Studies Center. Includes searchable lesson plans, lesson plan sites, information for teachers and for students. Don't miss this one!

### Dianne Clouet "Kamishibai Stories." Teaching Pre K - 8

1 May 2005: 50-51. Discovery. ProQuest. Spokane County Library District, WA.  
<http://www.proquest.com/Kamishibai> is a form of Japanese storytelling that excites young authors and illustrators into creating stories of their own. Here, Clouet discusses about her kindergarten Kamishibai collaborative project

### KEIKO KAMBARA "A Vanishing Folk Art Tells Japan's Story Culture:

Storytellers surrounded by children on Japan's busy streets show pictures and sell sweets. But they can't compete with video games or the need to cram for school classes :[Home Edition]. " Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext) [Los Angeles, Calif.] 9 Sep. 1991,2. Los Angeles Times. ProQuest. Spokane County Library District, WA.  
<<http://www.proquest.com/>>

## CATHY SPAGNOLI

For pictures with instructions go to <http://www.CathySpagnoli.com>

Young writers can also be young tellers, using this great Asian prop. Kamishibai are sets of picture cards used to tell tales today in Japan, Singapore, Laos, and Vietnam. Try making a set using a story you created, a family or folk tale—then use it to help you remember your story and to hold your audience.

### Materials

- a story to share
- eight pieces of white cardboard, each 9" x 12" / 23 mm x 32 mm
- a large piece of plain newsprint or paper
- pencil, colored markers, or other colors

### Instructions

1. Choose a story with strong visual images and enough action to divide into at least eight scenes.
2. Plan out the story's sequence: select the important scenes to illustrate, and decide how to draw the scenes in different ways.  
**Consider:**
  - close-ups of characters or important story details,
  - long shots showing setting,
  - a partial view of a character (a hand reaching out, two huge feet),
  - a view from the top, side, back, or front.
3. Play with these ideas, then make a rough draft. Fold newsprint into eight sections. Make eight quick sketches, sharing each important scene. Check

that the scenes have visual variety, are large enough to see, and work well in sequence. You don't need to include every story detail visually, because you'll be telling the story, too.

4. When you have a good outline, start on the cards. Choose the best medium: markers work nicely, watercolors can be used carefully, crayons are all right but can smear, as can pastels. Make illustrations big and bold enough to be seen. Number the cards on the back but don't write words down yet. Remember the story through pictures.
5. Once the cards are done and the story known, bring the tale to life. Use vivid description, sounds, pauses, character voices, and facial expressions. Tape record and listen to the story for more feedback. Then stand or sit with the cards held out chest high, directly facing your imaginary audience. Practice smoothly telling the tale, moving each card to the back as you continue the story. Keep the cards steady and try not to cover the pictures with your hands. Use your voice well varying pitch, feeling, volume and make sure that your eyes are on the audience, not on the cards.
6. When you're ready, share your tale with a real audience. Try it out on different listeners. Finally, you can write the words you've been saying down if you like—either on one sheet of paper to keep for later review, or on the backs of the cards.
7. After you finish your set, start another. Or try an extension; varying size, using velcro for paste-ons, allowing space for drawing during telling, etc. You can also organize kamishibai festivals, exchanges, and so much more. Have fun!