



Kamishibai



Kamishibai is a box containing picture-slides to accompany the telling of an oral story. It is a Japanese artform that literally means 'paper drama'.

It can be used by pupils in groups or individually to help them develop their vocabulary and their confidence. For younger children the teacher can manipulate the Kamishibai while the whole class tells the story together.

What will I need to make each Kamishibai?

- A cardboard box
- Some sheets of plain paper
- Barbecue skewers (don't worry you'll cut the sharp ends off before the pupils get them)
- Sticky tape
- Drawing materials e.g. pencils, felt pens or crayons
- A craft knife

Using the Kamishibai

First, agree the story. Then decide which episodes or sections need to be shown in the pictures.

With very young children, have all the images ready and downloaded, except for the main character (see the example selection for Goldilocks and the three bears, all found by a Google image search). The pupils can then each draw an image of the main character and their images can be interspersed amongst the other slides. Then the teacher can tell the story with the class joining in. Their artwork might not be easily recognised in itself but the children will know they have contributed to the slides and will be encouraged to join in the storytelling.

For group work, make sure everybody has a picture to draw. They also need to agree on points like what colour clothes, hair etc. the characters have to ensure continuity. Then each pupil can draw one episode on a paper slide and take on responsibility for telling that particular part of the story.

Reluctant artists can draw their own backgrounds and let the more confident artists draw the characters on them. But reluctant storytellers should not be allowed to depute their storytelling in the performance.

When all the pictures are finished and stuck onto the skewers, arrange them in the box in order from front to back. Most groups like to make a title page or safety curtain picture to go at the very front to conceal the first picture until they're ready to tell.

The children stand in line next to the box and take it in turn to tell their part of the story while their picture is viewed by the audience. After their episode they move their slide picture to the back of the box to reveal the next picture in the story and they move aside to let the next storyteller take their position next to the box.

Why Should I use Kamishibai in the classroom?

There are three obvious ways of telling a story: oral, written and pictorial. In the oral you seek common ground between you and the person you are telling the story to, there is a real need to get them to understand the nuances of what you are trying to say.

When you are asked to draw pictures of the scenes of a story you start off with a blank page and you commit to that blank page the essential points of a story. But then you are faced with a lot of white blank space around and within the main subjects and your natural inclination is to fill that space with things from your personal experience that relate to the sort of room or landscape you see that thing happening in. So in the pictorial you start exploring your imaginings of where that thing could actually be.

All those pictorial points aren't an end point. They are a trigger to the other senses. It doesn't take long before you can smell the wood smoke, hear the fire crackling, feel the warmth. Then your experience triggers a spark to be spat from the fire that lands on the hearth rug and your immediate reaction is to go forward and stamp it out. At that point the story comes to life.

And once the story has come to life it stays with the storyteller. It becomes part of their experience, part of their memory. That's when they can become truly creative and work with the story. They can enjoy playing with words.

And then they can extrapolate from their own experience. They can deepen their understanding with research. They can tell the story to an audience and see the impact of the story. They can work on the parts that captivate the audience, look for other words to clarify points of confusion and drop those ideas that make their audience glaze over.

Once the story has left the tip of the storyteller's tongue it is in a public space. There are opportunities to share it, and benefit from other people's insights and points of view. Stories are, after all, for sharing. It's only in sharing that they become deeper and more fulfilling.

It's a natural technique. It's something that can be done by the old and the young, the gifted and the not so talented. And surprisingly enough often those with special needs can show themselves to be those with special talents.



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