

Kavad is a three-dimensional form of traditional Indian storytelling. A box unfolds to reveal pictures of episodes in a particular story, or more frequently in a series of stories about a particular character. Traditional Indian Kavadts tell stories of the Gods. British equivalents could tell tales of legendary characters such as King Arthur or Robin Hood, or of tricksters such as Jack the Giant Killer.



Kavad was a family business. Members of a family would make and decorate the kavad (which could be the size of a single wardrobe). The storyteller of the family would then travel with the kavad from village to village, telling the stories.

On arrival at a village the storyteller would face his audience, holding the kavad in front of him tilted slightly backwards so everyone could see. With a smaller kavad like the one shown he would sit cross legged.

A kavad has four main sections.

The storyteller would start by opening the small outer doors revealing the decorations on the outer panels to arouse the crowds' curiosity by talking through the highlights of the stories depicted in the kavad – in much the same way as tv shows are trailed today.

The storyteller would then open a 'donations' flap (located under the decorated panels) and ask for money to continue with the tale.

When enough coins had been passed over, the storyteller would open the panels, one by one, telling the tales depicted. Sometimes tellings could last for days and the storyteller would not only open the 'donations' flap at regular intervals, but also be given food, drink and a place to sleep.

The grand finale of the tales would come when the storyteller opened the final panels to reveal a 'shrine' – housing 3D images of the hero and his wife/wives or companions.

Because one kavad can contain many linked stories, making a kavad is a useful whole class project. The class can work in their normal groups, with each taking one story, creating the pictures for the different episodes which will form their section of the kavad and telling the tale in their own words when their turn comes.

Our sample pictures can be used to create a kavad which will set one group the task of telling the 'frame' story and seven other groups the opportunity of creating their own story telling how each of seven princes obtained their specific gift:

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| Sunday | A telescope that shows what you want to find, wherever it is |
| Monday | A violin that he can play to put anyone who hears its music to sleep |
| Tuesday | The skills of a pickpocket |
| Wednesday | A pocket that can contain anything, however big |
| Thursday | A club that turns into an army that can defeat any enemy |
| Friday | A bow with an arrow that always hits its target |
| Saturday | The power to catch anything, no matter how fast it is travelling |

The combined group telling can last up to 45 minutes – ideal to perform to parents at an open day.



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