

TEACHER

GUIDE

KA MI SHI BAI

FOR KIDS



KAMISHIBAI FOR KIDS
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THE BAMBOO PRINCESS

SUMMARY OF STORY:

Once upon a time an elderly bamboo-cutter discovers a tiny infant girl in a bamboo stalk, and with his wife, cares for her. The child is named *Kaguya-hime* (kah-goo-yah hee-meh) or "Bamboo Princess."

She grows quickly and soon is a beautiful young woman with many suitors, all of whom she refuses to marry. Five princes remain firm in their pursuit of her. Kaguya-hime assigns each one a task, promising to marry whoever is successful. Even the Emperor himself pursues Kaguya-hime; however, she also refuses him.

Finally, the Bamboo Princess tells the old couple that she must return to the moon, her true home. They do everything in their power to keep her on earth, including enlisting the aid of the Emperor, who sends his troops. But Kaguya-hime cannot be stopped. Before she returns to the moon, she gives her earthly parents a magic potion so that they can live forever. But the old couple does not want to live forever without Kaguya-hime and so climb to the top of the highest mountain where they burn the magic potion. Ever since then, the mountain has come to be known as Mt. Fuji, which means: "the mountain that lives forever."

THEMES:

Love

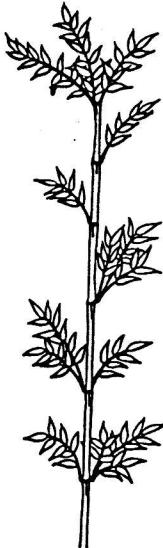
Being true to oneself

READING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:

Children always have impromptu responses, start by discussing them. In addition, the following questions will help develop the children's vocabulary, sequencing skills and comprehension of the story.

1. How does the Bamboo Princess get her name? Why do you think that name is chosen?
2. What does the Bamboo Princess tell all five princes?
3. How does the first prince deal with this task? What happens to him?
4. How does the second prince deal with this task? What happens to him?
5. How does the third prince deal with this task? What happens to him?
6. How does the fourth prince deal with this task? What happens to him?
7. How does the fifth prince deal with this task? What happens to him?
8. What does the Bamboo Princess tell the Emperor in answer to his request that she come live with him?
9. How does the Emperor respond to this information from the Bamboo Princess?
10. What does the Bamboo Princess tell her mother and father?
11. What do her parents and the Emperor do next? Why doesn't this work?
12. What gift does the Bamboo Princess give her parents? How do they use it?
13. If you were given that gift, do you think you would use it as they did? Why or why not?

CULTURAL BACKGROUND:



BAMBOO, TAKE: (tah-keh): A tall tree-like grass that grows wild throughout Japan. The main bamboo plant runs underground. The canes are only branches, therefore a grove of bamboo may be only one plant. At times of severe earthquakes, bamboo forests are considered safe ground because of their extensive and matted root system.

Bamboo is very strong and because the bamboo stem is hollow, it is also very flexible. Accordingly, bamboo is often used to symbolize strength and resiliency. It is used in many practical ways, such as to make chopsticks, baskets, furniture, and musical instruments. It is also eaten (bamboo shoots).

MOON: - The Japanese have long appreciated the beauty of the moon. The full moon in the clear autumn sky (*jugoya*) is considered most beautiful and moon-viewing (*tsukimi*) often takes place then. A spot is chosen from which to admire the moon and decorations of *tsukimi dango* (rice dumplings), *susuki* (pampas grass) and autumn fruit are displayed. When looking at the patterns made by craters on the surface of the moon, the Japanese used to believe they could see the form of a rabbit making rice cakes (*mochi*). The moon is often used as a symbol of autumn and the passage of time.

MT. FUJI, (FUJI-SAN) - The, majestic, perfectly-shaped conical peak of Mt. Fuji rises in sublime grandeur 12,395 feet above the Kanto Plain. It is the highest as well as the most famous mountain in Japan. It is reported to have been an active volcano up to the 14th century. It has been quiescent since 1707. Thousands of people climb Mt. Fuji's slopes every July and August when it is free of snow.

Japanese folktales often begin with the phrase, *Mukashi, mukashi...*(moo-kah-she). This is freely translated as "Once upon a time, long, long ago..." They often close with the word, *Oshimai* (oh-she-my), which means "the end."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

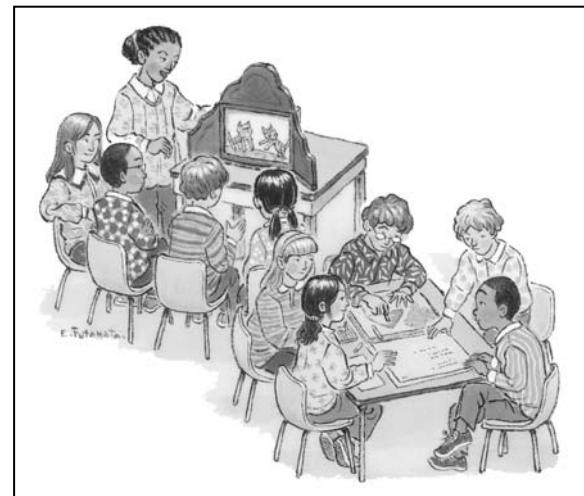
Ureshii Hina Matsuri (The Doll Festival) and *Usagi* (Rabbit and the Moon) are popular Japanese children's songs found in *Let's Sing! Japanese Songs for Kids*. The book and accompanying musical CD are published by Kamishibai for Kids.

The Tale of the Shining Princess adapted by Sally Fisher, from a translation of the story by Donald Keene, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Viking Press. This is the literary version of *Kaguya-hime*, with illustrations reproduced from a late 18th century illustrated edition of *Taketori Monogatori* (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter) which is in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

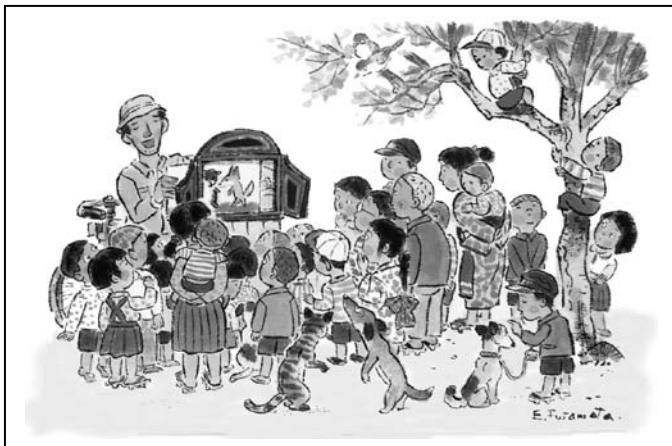
Big Bird in Japan - Children's Television Workshop, One Lincoln Plaza, New York. A delightful video adventure for all ages! The drama begins when Big Bird and Barkley the Dog are separated from their tour group in Tokyo and are befriended by a young and mysterious Japanese woman. Eventually we discover that this beautiful young woman is indeed the legendary *Kaguya-hime*, *The Bamboo Princess*.

USING KAMISHIBAI CREATED BY CHILDREN AS PART OF A SHARED, GUIDED AND INDEPENDENT WRITING PROGRAM

1. *Kamishibai* stories can be made individually, in pairs (one illustrator, one writer), in small groups or as a class project.
2. The sources for student-created *kamishibai* are unlimited: original ideas, topics related to the curriculum, the retelling of an existing story or some item of current events.
3. *Kamishibai* stories do not have to be a specific length.
4. Some children prefer to start by drawing illustrations; others by creating the text, either way works.
5. When composing the text for a *kamishibai* story, remember the characters use dialogue. The children can either write or dictate the story and dialogue.
6. Have the children divide the text into sections and make sketches for each one. Some children prefer working on and completing the illustrations before the text; either way works.
7. Check to see that the sketches correlate with the text. Reread and edit the text. Work on the final illustrations.
8. Arrange the illustrated cards in order and write the number for each card in sequence in the front, lower left-hand corner.
9. Tape the text for illustrated card #1 to the back of the last illustrated card. Tape the text for illustrated card #2 to the back of card #1 and so forth.
10. Now your children have their own *kamishibai* story. Children gain proficiency and fluency when they perform the stories they have created.



A Brief History of *Kamishibai*



Kamishibai (kah-mee-shee-bye) or “paper-theater” evolved from a form of vibrant street storytelling that was extraordinarily popular throughout urban Japan from the 1920’s to the 1950’s. Before there were television and movies for children in Japan, special storytellers, called “*Kamishibai* Men” would bring stories to children on a bicycle.

Each *Kamishibai* man was also a candy seller. Riding a bicycle equipped with a large box attached on the back, he would enter a neighborhood and loudly strike together two wooden clappers called *hyoshigi* (hyoh-shee-ghee). The sound was a signal for children to run from their homes and gather around for an exciting story and candy snacks.

There were drawers in the big wooden box on the back of the bicycle filled with sweets. The children who bought some got to stand nearest to the wooden stage attached to the top of the box, and those who didn’t had to stand in the back. The *Kamishibai* man would insert the story cards into the stage and then, in a dramatic manner, deliver episodes of two or three *kamishibai* stories. These were suspenseful serials, and the *Kamishibai* man always concluded at a cliffhanger, leaving the children impatient for his next visit.

The introduction of television in 1953 led to the gradual disappearance of *Kamishibai* men from Japan’s streets. The artists who had made their living writing and illustrating *Kamishibai* turned to more remunerative ventures such as the creation of *manga* (Comic books) and later *anime*. (Animated cartoons)

In recent years, however, *kamishibai* stories have enjoyed a renaissance in Japanese schools, libraries and cultural centers.

The renowned author, illustrator and Caldecott Medalist, Allen Say grew up in Japan during *Kamishibai*’s spirited heyday. His recent highly acclaimed book, *Kamishibai Man*, recreates through exquisitely detailed watercolors and simple text, the excitement and pleasure that *kamishibai* stories convey.