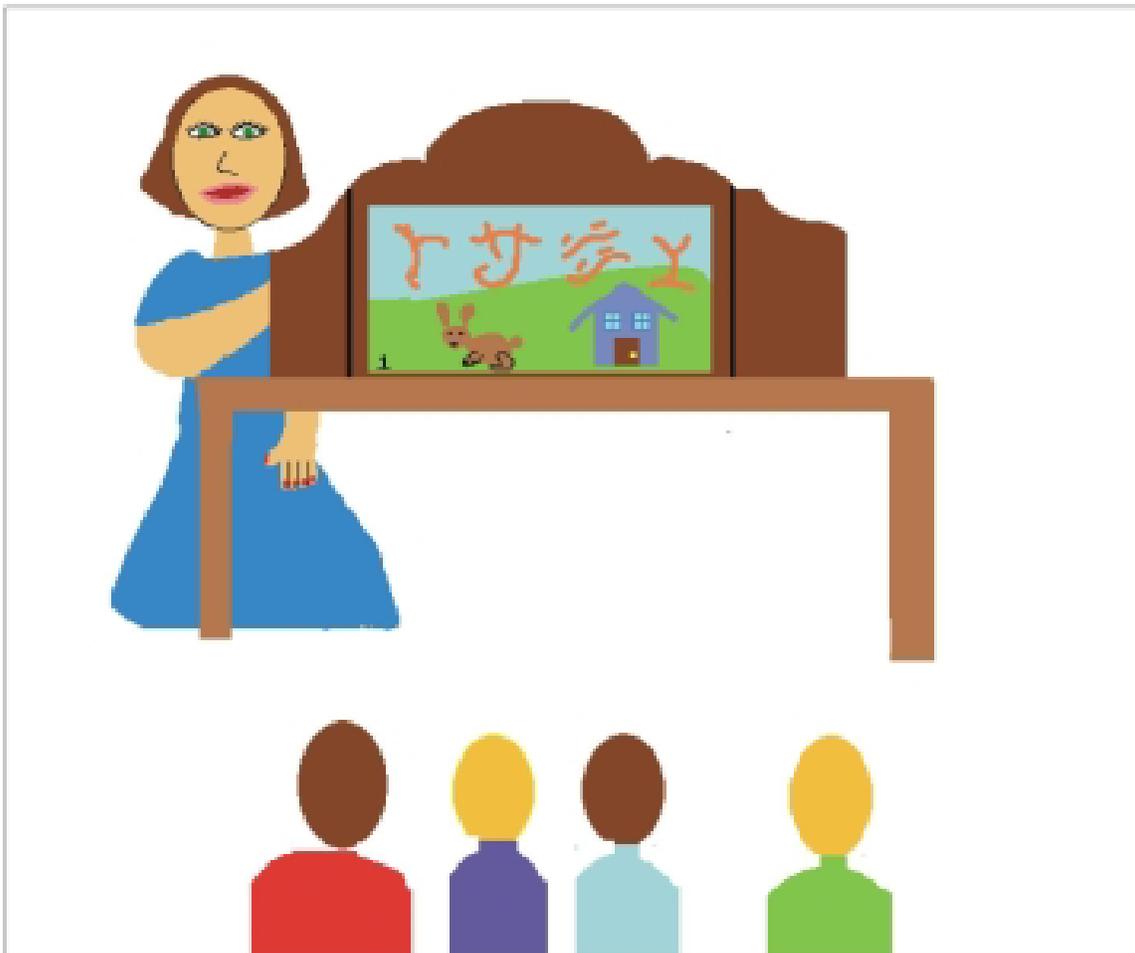


Using Kamishibai with a Stage

1. The stage is easiest for children to see if it is set slightly above eye level. For a classroom audience of 15 to 30 children, place the stage on a desk or table with the children seated on the floor or on chairs in front of it. For larger groups, it is best to place the stage on a higher stand such as an AV cart. Some Japanese storytellers put the stage on a tripod, then adjust the height of the legs according to the audience size. For aesthetic reasons, the AV cart or tripod is often covered with a large piece of plain-colored cloth.
2. Make certain the cards are in correct numerical order. The numeral for each card is in the lower left corner of the colored illustration. Insert the cards as a pack into the stage, illustration sides facing forward.
3. The opening to the stage, from which the cards are inserted and pulled out, is on the right. Sit or stand on that side of the stage to make it easier to pull the cards out. Use your right hand to do this. Try to keep eye contact with the audience. Avoid standing directly behind the stage.
4. You can begin the kamishibai performance with the use of the traditional wooden clappers, *hyoshigi* (hyoh-she-ghee), or use a similar percussion instrument such as a clave or even wooden blocks. The *hyoshigi* are struck slowly at first, then faster and faster, to build anticipation for the performance. Children love this ritualization of "kamishibai time."
5. Open the stage doors one by one, and announce the story.
6. Begin reading. The text for Card 1 is on the back of the last card. When you have finished reading the text for Card 1, slide it out (toward you, to the right) and then slide it in again, but this time, at the very back of the pack. The audience will now see the illustration for Card 2. The text for Card 2 is on the back of Card 1.
7. Continue telling the kamishibai story in this way. When the story is finished, end it with a simple "The End" or use the Japanese phrase, *oshimai* (oh-she-my), then slowly close the doors of the stage.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE KAMISHIBAI STAGE

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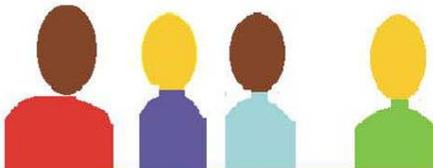
Helpful Ideas From Our Japanese Kamishibai Colleagues:

This method allows the storyteller to see the text more easily. After you finish reading the Text for Card 1, pull out the Illustration for Card 1 but do not put it back into the stage. Instead, hold it behind the stage with your left hand and with the text facing you. This will be the Text for Card 2. After you finish reading, place the Text for Card 2 on the table and use your right hand to pull out the Illustration for Card 2 from the stage. Hold it behind the stage with your left hand in the same way and read the Text for Card 3 from the back. The complete kamishibai story can be told in this way. Do not remove the last card at the end of the story, rather signal the end of the story, by sliding the "stage curtain" card slowly back in to the stage as you quietly say, "And that is the end of my story," "The End," or whatever comparable phrase you wish to use.

To make the performance more theatrical, make a simple "stage curtain" from a piece of oak tag or light cardboard, cut to the dimensions of a kamishibai card. Cover or collage the front with attractive paper that fits the mood of the story. Insert this "stage curtain" card in front of the kamishibai story cards. The stage doors may remain open. Pull slowly to the right before or while announcing the kamishibai story title. Slowly reinsert the "stage curtain" card at the end of the story.

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Characters in kamishibai stories move! The movement is always right to left. The pulling of the card from one scene to the next is a distinguishing and important feature of kamishibai. The directions found in the text, enhance and reflect the mood and tempo of the story. Sometimes they say to pull out the card quickly, sometimes slowly and at other times only partway. Follow these directions to achieve maximum dramatic effect. It is often helpful to practice with the kamishibai and stage in front of a mirror.



Sydney Luethi
Age 14