

## Asian Festival Educator's Guide

Teaching Through Kamishibai and The Art of Chinese Calligraphy

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## **NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR**

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## Note to the Educator

Japanese folktales reveal information about Japanese history, life, and customs.

Japanese and American traditional folktales have many similar characters (animals and royalty), plots (magical occurrences and transformations), and themes (kindness rewarded and evil punished).

In Japan, folktales are often told through a series of large pictures depicting the important scenes of the story. This is called a Kamishibai or paper play.

### TEACHER TIP

#### Using YouTube Videos at School

If your school district's policy prevents you from accessing YouTube at school, you can download educational videos at home and show them the next day. Here's how:

- At home, go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and locate the video that you want. This also works with other video sites
- Copy the URL of that particular video.
- Go to [www.keepvid.com](http://www.keepvid.com). In the blank, paste the URL of the YouTube video that you want.
- Click the Download button at the end of the URL bar.
- A choice of formats will appear. Click on the one you want and select Save. Give the video a name that you'll recognize and save it to your Desktop.
- Once the video is downloaded, copy it to a flash drive to take to school the next day.

## ***Kamishibai: Japanese vs. American Folktales***

# Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 4-8

## Objectives

- Students will be able to learn the history of kamishibai.
- Students will be able to illustrate a Japanese folktale.
- Students will be able to use oral, written, and visual language in presenting a Japanese folktale.
- Students will be able to gain an awareness of Japanese culture and Japanese society in early to mid-20th century.

## TEKS

### Social Studies: (4-5)

11A, 11B, 12A, 12B, 12C, 15B, 15C, 15 D

### Social Studies: (6-8)

2A, 4A, 15C, 18A, 18B, 18D, 21B

### English Language Arts and Reading: (4-8)

4.1A, 4.1C, 4.4A, 4.4B, 4.5A, 4.5D, 4.7C, 4.8A, 4.8C, 4.10D, 4.10E, 4.10F, 4.10I, 4.10K, 4.10L, 4.11D, 4.12G, 4.14B, 4.14C

## Materials

1. Kamishibai story board (Handout A)
2. Japanese folktales (Appendix A)

## Procedure

**1. Introduce** the lesson by asking the students if they think Japanese and American folktales are similar or different. Have them discuss their reasons why.

**2. Select** one of the folktales from the Japanese folktales list (Appendix A). Read the story.

**3. Discuss** the folktale by asking the following questions:

- A. Where does the story take place?
- B. Who are the characters?
- C. What is the problem in the story?
- D. Did a character in the story learn something?
- E. How can you apply this lesson to yourself?
- F. What was the purpose of this story?

**4. Introduce** students to the word kamishibai (paper play).

**5. Explain** that in Japan folktales are often told through a series of large pictures depicting the important scenes of the story.

**6. Discuss** with students how folktales reveal the culture, customs, and values of people from different countries. Ask students to name several American folktales.

**7. Discuss** how these stories reflect the values of its people. Describe the role of a Japanese storyteller and kamishibai in 1920s–1950s. Explain to students how kamishibai gave young children in Japan great entertainment at a time when there was no television and few cars. Share several Japanese folktales with your class and discuss with students their interpretations of Japanese traditional customs and culture.

**8. Divide** the class into an appropriate number of groups for the selected folktale. Ask each group to illustrate its part of the story on the storyboard template (Handout A). Write the portion of the story being illustrated on the back of the storyboard.

**9. Have each group** hold up its illustration and read its part of the Japanese folktale.

**10. Close** the lesson by discussing how the visual part helped reading comprehension.

**Kamishibai**

*Kamishibai* (kami-paper, shibai-play) is a popular Japanese storytelling art form that combines oral and visual narration. In Japan during the 1920s–1950s, the *kamishibai* storyteller entertained children with his telling of Japanese folktales while displaying colorful pictures to describe each scene.

The manner in which the *kamishibai* storyteller tells his stories is what captivates children. The storyteller rides into town on a bicycle sounding wooden clappers to notify children of his arrival. On the back of the bicycle is a wooden *kamishibai* box. Curved panels on both the sides and top of the box frame the box. These panels open up to resemble a small stage with a cutout screen that holds 12-16 wood block prints.

As children gather around the storyteller and the *kamishibai* box, he sells candy lollipops and tells a Japanese folktale. The storyteller displays a picture with each story scene and slides them out to reveal the events of the next scene. Just when the story reaches an exciting part, the storyteller stops and promises to continue the tale the following day.

The storyteller made his living by candy sales. He would ensure a large audience by providing appealing *kamishibai* pictures and by maintaining narrative suspense. At a time when there was no television and few cars, the storyteller was a greatly entertaining and is fondly remembered by many Japanese.

## **Appendix A**

### ***Suggested Japanese Folktales***

- Bidden, Steve, Megumi. *The Crane's Gift*. Boston: Barefoot Books, 1994.
- Ito, Yoriko. *Lily and the Wooden Bowl*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Levine, Arthur. *The Boy Who Drew Cats*. New York: Dial Books, 1993.
- Fisher, Sally. *The Tale of the Shining Princess*. New York: Viking Press, 1980.
- Kawauchi, Saymi. *Once Upon a Time in Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994.
- McCarthy, Ralph. *Click-Clack Mountain*. New York: Kodansha, 1994.
- McCarthy, Ralph. *The Moon Princess*. New York: Kodansha, 1993.
- McCarthy, Ralph. *Grandfather Cherry Blossom*. New York: Kodansha, 1993.
- McCarthy, Ralph. *Urashima and the Kingdom Beneath the Sea*. New York: Kodansha, 1993.
- McDermot, Gerald. *The Stone Cutter*. New York: Puffin Books, 1978.
- Morimoto, Junko. *The Inch Boy*. New York: Puffin Books, 1984.
- Morimoto, Junko. *Kenju's Forest*. Australia: Colline Publishers, 1989.
- Morimoto, Junko. *Kojuro and The Bears*. Australia: Colline Publishers, 1986.
- Morimoto, Junko. *Mouse's Marriage*. New York: Puffin Books, 1985.
- Mosel, Arlene. *The Funny Little Woman*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972.
- Paterson, Katherine. *The Tale of the Mandarin Duck*. London: Victor Gollancs LTD, 1990.
- Sakade, Florence. *Japanese Children's Favorite Stories*. Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1958.
- Snyder, Dianne. *The Boy of the Three Year Nap*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1988.
- Spagnoli, Cathy. *On Wa Soto*. Bothell, WA: The Wright Group, 1995.
- Sumicko, Yagawa. *The Crane Wife*. New York: Mulberry Books, 1979.
- Uchida, Yoshiko. *The Magic Purse*. New York: Margaret McElderry Books, 1993.
- Uchida, Yoshiko. *The Dancing Kettle and Other Japanese Tales*. New York: Creative Arts Book Company, 1986.



## References

Retrieved November 29, 2009, from **Kamishibai for Kids** website:  
<http://www.kamishibai.com/resources/organizations.html>

Retrieved November 29, 2009 from **Fairy Tales** page website:  
<http://www-ma.beth.k12.pa.us/jhoke/jhwebquest/ftales.htm>

## *The Chinese Art of Calligraphy*



# Lesson Plan

## Grade Level: 2-4

### Objectives

- Students will compare handwriting in China with the cursive handwriting they learned.
- Students will learn about calligraphy and practice it.

### TEKS

#### Social Studies: (2-4)

14A, 14B, 16C, 17A

#### English Language Arts and Reading: (2-4)

2.1 B, 2.2B, 2.3A, 2.3B, 2.9A, 2.13 A

### Materials

Paper, brushes, black paint, Handout A, Handout B, Appendix A, Appendix B, Chinese Music CD

### Concepts

- Calligraphy (*shu*): In China, the art of writing (*shufa*).
- The Four Treasures of the Study: paper, a pointed writing brush, ink stick, and inkstone
- Ink: Chinese ink uses the carbon from burnt wood and other plant materials. This mixture was combined with animal glue and molded into a cake or stick. It was ground and then water was added.
- Scholars: Educated administrators whose purpose was to work for the emperor.

### Key Ideas

- Chinese do not use letters, but characters in which a single pictogram often connotes a whole word.
- The first characters were found in bronze from 15th to 11th centuries BCE (Before the Common Era). This is considered the ancestor of calligraphy.
- Calligraphers write from top to bottom, right to left.
- Students in China learn “characters” in school and practicing “strokes” is an important part of the curriculum.

### Procedure

1. **Read** Calligraphy Fun facts (Handout A).
2. **All alphabets are writing systems** that use symbols that stand for either an idea or a sound. In English a letter, or character, stands for a sound. Ask the students if we have one writing system or more than one.
3. **Write** a lower case “s” on the chalkboard, then an upper case “S,” then a cursive lower case “s” and a cursive upper case “s.” Explain that all of these symbols represent the same sound. But in English some symbols can have different sounds, ask the students to think of letters that have a few sounds—such as “s” when followed by “h” or the long and short vowel sounds of “a” in mat or mate.
4. **Explain** that this is not true for the Chinese language. They write characters that may be symbols for

sounds or syllables, or whole words, or even whole ideas.

5. **Students in China** use pencils to write every day. However, calligraphy—the art of painting large characters—is done with a brush and ink. This is considered a fine art and a difficult one to master, requiring much skill. When students in China learn calligraphy, they use brushes.
6. **Display** images of calligraphy examples (Appendix A & B).
7. **Explain** concept of scholar. These were highly respected men in China. They were very intellectual and influential. The scholar was a man who had worked for the emperor as a court official, and in retirement, painted and practiced calligraphy.
8. **Make** the connection between poetry, calligraphy, and painting, which were all considered valued arts. The writing, or calligraphy, is an integral part of the piece.
9. **Display brushes and ink.** Demonstrate how to dip the brush into the ink and hold it upright. Practice for students making thick and thin lines by varying the pressure placed on the brush. Point out that it may take many strokes to create one character.
10. **Pass** out copies of the Chinese number (Handout B). How many strokes will it take to write the number 4?
11. **Students** may practice calligraphy by constructing a Chinese number book while listening to Chinese folk music

### Sample Exercise

**Fold** paper in half and then in half again.

**Unfold** to have four sections. Students may pick four different numbers from their number chart.

**Using** brushes and black paint, students should follow the order and directions of the strokes to complete each number character; they may darken with black marker afterward.

**When** complete, students may illustrate each character with a symbol of Chinese culture, such as 1 dragon, 2 chopsticks, 3 kites.

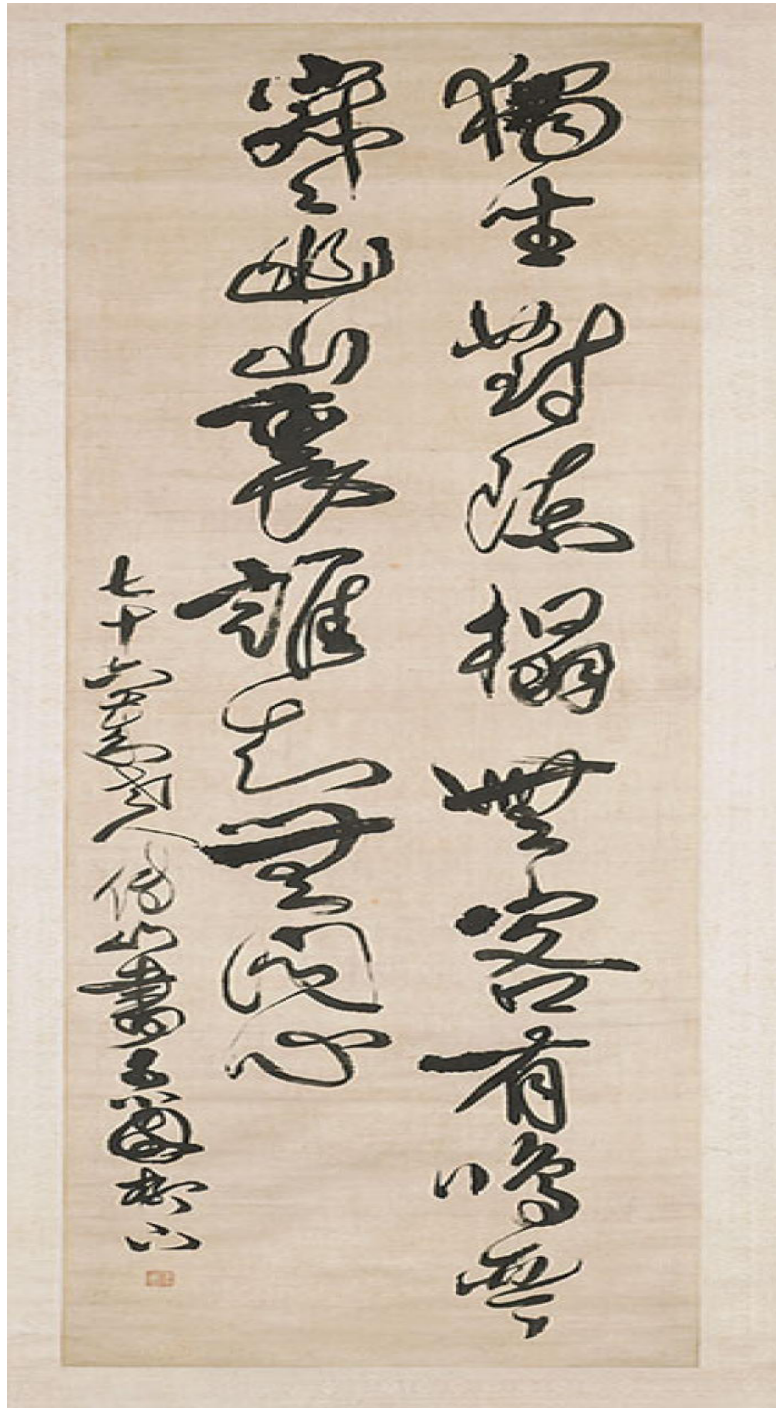
## Chinese Calligraphy and Writing

Reader's Notes	
	<p>In China, painting and writing developed hand in hand, sharing the same tools and techniques. Some sort of pliant brush, capable of creating rhythmically swelling and diminishing lines, appears to have been invented by the Neolithic period (ca. 4,500-2,200 BCE) where it was used to decorate pottery jars with sweeping linear patterns. By the Han dynasty (206 BCE-CE 220), both wall paintings and writing on strips of bamboo laced together to form books exhibit proficiency and expressiveness with the extraordinarily resilient Chinese brush and ink.</p> <p>Chinese writing is composed of block-like symbols, which stand for ideas. Sometimes called "ideograms," the symbols more often are referred to as "characters." These characters, which evolved from pictograms (simplified images of the objects they represent), were modified over time to represent more abstract concepts. Calligraphers soon codified and regularized these symbols, designing each one to fit into an imaginary square, whether it is composed of one or 64 strokes. Furthermore, writers draw each of the strokes of a character in a particular order, essentially from left to right and from top to bottom. This information is essential for readers trying to decipher cursive script styles where some or all of the strokes are joined together (See Appendix A).</p> <p>Calligraphy, the art of "beautiful writing," developed rapidly, soon yielding several forms of script. The clerical and regular scripts are made up of short, separate strokes that could be written easily with brush and ink. As the joy of writing took hold, calligraphers invented more styles, including the running and cursive scripts where they joined some or all of the character's dots and lines that they wrote separately in the more formal styles ( See Appendix A and B).</p> <p>In writing, the Chinese seek to balance the size and relationship of one stroke with another and one character with another. Creating harmony between density and sparseness, top and bottom, left and right become second nature to the practiced calligrapher. This training in formal relationships and the use of the fluid ink and resilient brush led naturally to the translation of the art of writing to the art of painting.</p>

## Calligraphy Tools

Reader's Notes	
	<p>The Chinese call the tools that were essential for writing and painting the Four Treasures—brush, ink stick, ink stone, and paper. Each of these is special to the evolution and methods of writing and painting.</p> <p><b>Chinese brushes</b> are constructed in a special way that allows them to come to a sharp point for fine lines yet be fat enough for wider strokes. They are capable of holding enough ink for a few long continuous strokes or many short ones. To make a brush tip, one or several kinds of animal hair may be used including rabbit, wolf, goat, badger, and even the whiskers of mice. This brush tip is usually inserted into a hollow bamboo tube, but sometimes into more elaborate handles of jade, lacquer, or gold. The size of the brush—as well as the quantity and textures of hair used—varies according to the line type the painter desires to produce. Brushes vary in size from tiny, fairly stiff wolf-hair brushes for outlining to immense, resilient brushes for producing large calligraphic scrolls.</p> <p>The next important material for the calligrapher and painter, <b>paper</b>, was invented in China during the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE-CE 9). Early calligraphers carved records in stone, cast them in bronze, or wrote them on bamboo strips or silk, but all of these materials were too expensive or too big and bulky for China's exploding documentary and literary output. Calligraphers and painters first made paper from rags, but eventually used many kinds of vegetable fiber including tree bark, grass, hemp, and grain husk.</p> <p>In addition to brushes and paper, the artist needed a medium, in this case <b>ink</b>. Chinese artists make ink from soot mixed with glue and formed into hard sticks. The finely ground soot produces the color while the glue both holds the stick together and acts as an adhesive to bind the ink to the paper or silk. Pine soot—from the inner wood of the tree—produced the best all-around ink, but other kinds of soot and various animal glues have been used.</p> <p>To use the <b>ink stick</b>, painters must grind it with water on a fine grained stone. The <b>ink stone</b> became one of the Four Treasures of the scholar. The quality of the stone's grain was of the greatest importance, but stones were treasured also for their color and beauty. They were cut and carved so that they had a flat surface for grinding, perhaps with a slight lip around the edge, and a depression to hold the water and ground ink. Sometimes they were decoratively carved as well.</p>

Appendix A



*Running Cursive*, c.1682, by Fu Shan (1607—1684/85). Hanging scroll, ink on twill-weave silk. The Palace Museum, Beijing.

## Appendix B

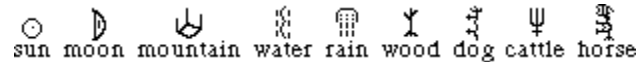


*Formal Chinese script, created for the Taichung City Da Dun Cultural Exchange Exhibition by Tai-Le Cheng, professor at the National Taiwan Normal University Department of Fine Arts.*

## Handout A

### Calligraphy Fun Facts

- It was said that Cangjie (Ts'ang Chieh), the legendary inventor of Chinese writing, got his ideas from observing animals' footprints and bird claw marks on the sand, as well as other natural phenomena. He then started to work out simple images from what he conceived as representing different objects such as these.



- Calligraphy and the Chinese language date back nearly 5,000 years. It is one of the oldest languages on the planet.
- The Chinese language has no letters or alphabet. Instead, it uses pictures and combines words and meanings to form whole new ideas.
- The art of Calligraphy uses “The Four Treasures” — the ink brush, the ink stone, the ink stick, and paper.



- China has a national award for the best artist in calligraphy. The prize is called the Wang Xi Zhi Award, named after China's most famous calligrapher.
- Calligraphy is so peaceful and relaxing—because it focuses the mind and body—that Chinese calligraphers live longer lives than other Chinese people.
- Pablo Picasso said that if he had learned calligraphy first, he never would have become a painter. He would have studied calligraphy instead.

## Handout B

### Chinese Numbers

One Yi (sounds like "yee")	一
Two Er (Sounds like "are")	二
Three San (Sounds like "sahn")	三
Four Si (Sounds like shih)	四
Five Wu (Sounds like "woo")	五
Six Liu (sounds like "leo")	六
Seven Qi (sounds like "chee")	七
Eight Ba (sounds like "bah")	八
Nine Jiu (sounds like "joe")	九
Ten Shi (sounds like "shih")	十

To hear the pronunciations:

<http://www.wonderhowto.com/how-to/video/how-to-count-to-ten-in-mandarin-chinese-276334>

## References

Retrieved November 17, 2009 from [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) website:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/607592/Tsang-Chieh>

Retrieved November 20, 2009 From [Chinese Calligraphy](#) website:

[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.art-virtue.com/basics/Pics/1\\_Four\\_Treasures\\_small.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.art-virtue.com/basics/1-treasures.htm&usq=\\_\\_CcyT3JA2pOXTwwgxVM3xuQVzFys=&h=378&w=464&sz=35&hl=en&start=7&um=1&tbnid=JLsOlh393mfotM:&tbnh=104&tbnw=128&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%2522The%2BFour%2BTreasures%2522%26ndsp%3D18%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26um%3D1](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.art-virtue.com/basics/Pics/1_Four_Treasures_small.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.art-virtue.com/basics/1-treasures.htm&usq=__CcyT3JA2pOXTwwgxVM3xuQVzFys=&h=378&w=464&sz=35&hl=en&start=7&um=1&tbnid=JLsOlh393mfotM:&tbnh=104&tbnw=128&prev=/images%3Fq%3D%2522The%2BFour%2BTreasures%2522%26ndsp%3D18%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26um%3D1)

### Online video clips for calligraphy

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEN0CzGv5-Y&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLAMx58SOAg&feature=fvw>

### Counting in Chinese

<http://www.wonderhowto.com/how-to/video/how-to-count-to-ten-in-mandarin-chinese-276334/>

