Kamishibai Lesson – 2nd Grade

Curriculum Connections

- Social Studies
  - SS.2 – The learner will infer that individuals, families and institutions in neighborhoods and communities are and have been alike and different.
  - SS.7 – The learner will analyze religious and other cultural traditions.
  - SS.8 – The learner will apply basic geographic concepts and terminology.
  - Skill Goal I – The learner will acquire information from a variety of sources.

- Reading
  - R.8 – Retells characters, events, setting, problem and solution from fiction.
  - R.9 – Identifies relationships between characters.
  - R.10 – Recalls specific vocabulary and concepts from informational text.
  - R.12 – Confirms and extends predictions, makes inferences and draws conclusions from a variety of text.
  - R.13 – Discriminates between reality and fantasy.

- Media
  - Me.1 – The learner will experience a wide variety of reading, listening and viewing resources to interact with ideas in an information-intensive environment.

Preparation

- CD player
- A CD of traditional Japanese music
- Globe
- Kamishibai stage
- Two claves (you can probably borrow these from your music teacher)
- Two kamishibai stories – The Dragon’s Tears and The Mother Cat
- TV with VCR
- Videotape of a modern day kamishibai man
- New York Times clipping about Scarlett, the cat
- Candy

Procedure

- Have traditional Japanese music playing when the children enter the Media Center. Ask them what kind of music they think this is. They usually give various Asian countries.
- Give them a brief history of kamishibai – that it originated in India and was brought to Japan by Indian immigrants where it became a very popular form of storytelling. Use the globe to show the children where the countries are located.
Teach the students that, in Japanese, “kami” means paper and “shibai” means drama, so “kamishibai” means “paper drama” or, in our culture, “story cards.”

Tell the students how kamishibai gained mass popularity with Japanese children, beginning in the 1920s:

○ “This is how it worked – the kamishibai man would ride into a neighborhood or a village on a bicycle, set up his stage on the back of his bicycle and loudly strike two wooden clappers together like this [strike claves together]. The children would beg their parents for money for the kamishibai man and come running. Does this sound like anything we do today in America? [Ice cream man] In addition to showing the story cards, the kamishibai man sold candy, as well. You didn’t have to buy candy to listen to the story, but those children who did were allowed to sit closest to the stage! The kamishibai man would then tell two or three stories, usually stopping at an exciting moment. Why do you think he did that? [So that the children would return next time]. Let’s listen to a kamishibai story. It is called The Dragon’s Tears and it is a very old, traditional Japanese folk tale.”

Begin reading with the Japanese phrase for “Once Upon a Time” – mukashi, mukashi. End the story with the Japanese phrase for “The End” – oshimai. Have the students repeat the phrases and let them know that they should try to remember them for the next story.

Ask students questions about the story:

○ “Why was the little boy considered different or odd by the villagers?”
○ “Why did the little boy want to see the dragon?”
○ “Why did the dragon transform himself into a boat?”

Turn the stage around and show them what your view of the story is.

“Now that you have heard a kamishibai story, does it remind you of anything? [Expect answers like puppet shows, felt boards and television.] Yes! In fact, when television was first introduced to Japan, it reminded many people of a kamishibai stage. The children first referred to it as denki-kamishibai or ‘electric kamishibai!’ When televisions became commonplace in Japan, kamishibai men and their stories became less popular. However, in the last fifteen years they have become popular once again largely because older Japanese people are nostalgic about their childhood pastime and want to share it with their grandchildren.”

Play the videotape of the modern-day kamishibai man.

“Now many kamishibai stories are very old folk tales, but some are modern stories. Some are fiction – some are true. Because kamishibai is becoming popular again in Japan, more and more modern stories are being written.”

Read The Mother Cat. Ask the children if they remember the Japanese phrases for “Once Upon a Time” and “The End.”

Show them the picture of Scarlett and her owner from The New York Times article. Discuss what became of the Mother Cat and her kittens.

Ask if there are any questions. Tell the children that, in order to make this an authentic kamishibai performance, that you have candy for them [always a crowd pleaser!] Teach them that in Japan, it is customary to bow when you say “thank you” - arigato. They will love bowing and saying “arigato” before the whole class when you give them their candy!