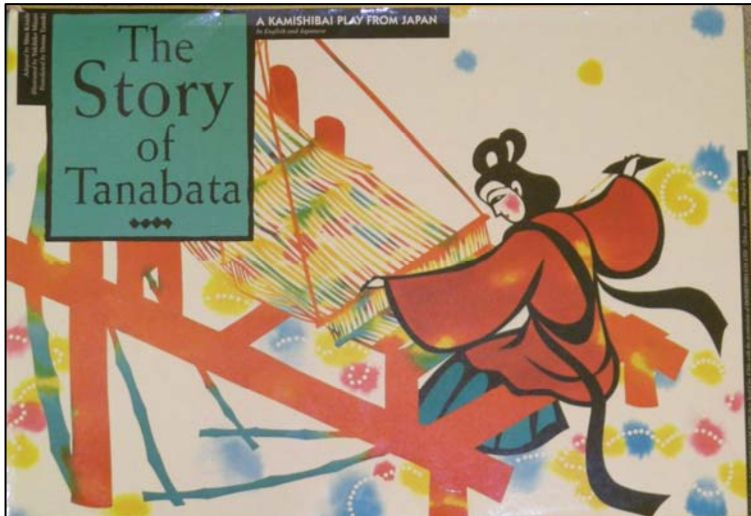

Telephone *Tanabata*

By: Noel Gannett, Blanca Carbajal-Rodriguez, Michael Carlson, and Leah Ebel with Wendy Blasingame, Christine Cervera, Brenda Gates, Stacey Mandel, Karen Munch, and Gail Stine

Featured Children's Literature: *The Story of Tanabata,* adapted by Shin Kitada

Objectives:
1. Students will understand and apply the concept of cultural borrowing.
2. Students will become familiar with the genre of Japanese *kamishibai* storytelling and use the format to tell a story.
3. Students will learn about the changes in the *Tanabata* story as it traveled from China through Korea to Japan.

National Content Standards:

History

K-4 History Standards Topic 4: The History of Many Cultures Around the World; Standard 7a: The student understands the cultures and historical developments of selected societies in such places as Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe (Benchmarks: Illustrating or retelling the main ideas in folktales, legends, myths, and stories of heroism that disclose the history and traditions of various cultures around the world and Explaining the customs related to important holidays and ceremonies in various countries in the past)

Geography

Geography Standard 5: Students know that people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.

Geography Standard 10: Students know the characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Reading and Writing

Reading Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Writing Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Writing Standard 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

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Visual Arts
Visual Arts Standard 4: Students understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Plan for Assessment:

1. Students will write their own version of the *Tanabata* story using their own cultural background and/or state as the story setting. A rubric is provided.
2. Students will be able to define *cultural borrowing* and recognize cultural borrowing in the United States.

Notes:
This literacy-based lesson is planned for use with a third- or fourth-grade class. The lesson is expected to take eight to ten 45- to 60-minute class periods to complete. To modify the lesson for younger students, (1) have students work in small groups, (2) write the story as the class dictates it, or (3) pair the class with another older class to write and illustrate the story. Students will require prior knowledge of how to analyze story structure and the elements of a story (setting, characters, problem, and solution). For second language learners, the teacher will need to introduce some vocabulary (e.g., weave, Milky Way, cattle herder). The teacher also should be sensitive to students' beliefs about Santa Claus. This lesson recognizes Santa Claus as a legend.

Teaching this lesson requires some understanding of the Japanese festival *Tanabata*. The lesson traces the cultural borrowing of the Chinese legend that is the basis for the festival. The story of the oxherd and weaver princess traveled from China through Korea and was imported into Japan in the Nara period (710-794 CE). The story attempts to explain the positions of the stars Altair and Vega across the Milky Way in the summer sky. The *Tanabata* festival (*Qixi* festival in China; *Chilseok* festival in Korea) takes place on the seventh day of the seventh month. Different areas of Japan observe either the solar or lunar calendar dates and have different customs around this holiday. Most people celebrate by writing wishes on small pieces of paper and hanging them on bamboo. These wishes are often something that the writer hopes to achieve, such as being a faster runner or doing well in school. Wikipedia provides details about the Tanabata festival, along with photos (see **Resources and References** section).

If you are not familiar with the *kamishibai* storytelling format, a little practice prior to teaching the lesson may be beneficial. Originating in Japan, this form of entertainment was popular during the early Showa era (1926-1989). *Kamishibai* practitioners sold candy and narrated stories from a stage on top of their bicycles to neighborhood children. In this form of storytelling, the "*kamishibai* man" reads from 12 or 16 illustrated story cards. The text appears on the back of the previous illustration, as the cards are drawn out and placed at the back of the stack as the story is told. For a visual reference see the **Kamishibai Man** video clip (provided). In the case of *The Story of Tanabata* featured in this lesson, the text is provided in both English and Japanese. An excellent "How to Use" guide can be found on the Kamishibai for Kids website listed in the **Resources and References** section. The teacher's guide that accompanies *The Story of Tanabata* also has information to help you with this storytelling format.

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Materials:

1. *The Seventh Sister,* by Cindy Chang, illustrated by Charles Reasoner
2. "The Cowherd and the Spinning Girl" in *Chinese Children's Favorite Stories,* by Mingmei Yip
3. *The Story of Tanabata*, adapted by Shin Kitada
4. Copies of **Story Structure Worksheet**, **Story Map Worksheet**, and **Rubric: Writing a Kamishibai Story** (provided) for all students, plus one large copy of the **Story Structure Worksheet** for use in making a class chart (you may enlarge or simply copy on the board or on chart paper)
5. ***Chilseok* Play** (provided)
6. **Images for *Chilseok* Puppet Play** (provided) (Optional: If you wish, you may use these images to make simple puppets by printing the images on card stock and gluing each card to a large craft stick or a paper bag that could be slipped over the hand; use of puppets in reading the *Chilseok* play is recommended if you have a large number of second language learners in your class)
7. **Kamishibai Man** video clip (provided)
8. Chart paper
9. Map of Asia showing China, Korea, and Japan
10. *Kamishibai* stage, two wooden sticks, hard candy, small drum (Optional for lending authenticity to the *kamishibai* storytelling)
11. For each student or student group's use in making their *kamishibai* stories: glue stick; scissors; pencil; draft paper; markers, crayons, or colored pencils, and/or paint brushes and water colors; five sheets of 8.5 x 11 card stock; and 9 x 12 manila envelope with an 8x10.5 inch rectangle cut out from the center of each side of the envelope (if possible, laminate the envelopes for more durability)
12. Computer, LCD projector, and screen

Implementation:

Introduction to Cultural Borrowing

1. Play the game Telephone with the class. Have the students sit in a circle or divide into groups and line up in rows. Whisper the phrase "*Tanabata* is a festival celebrated in Japan" into the ear of the first child. Have the students pass the phrase on by whispering what they heard into the ear of the person next to them. Continue around the circle or down the rows. Have the last student say aloud the phrase that was whispered in his/her ear and compare what they heard with the original phrase. Generally, the phrase is distorted as it is passed along.
2. Tell students that the game illustrates an important idea they will learn more about in this lesson—that things change as they move from person to person or place to place. Ask students: What do pizza, Pokémon, soccer, and Santa Claus have in common? (*They are all things popular in the United States that were borrowed from other cultures: pizza from Italy, Pokémon from Japan, soccer from England, and Santa Claus from a historic bishop in what is present-day Turkey*.) Explain that this is called cultural borrowing.
3. Develop the Santa Claus example further by sharing how the Turkish figure of St. Nicholas, a bishop known for giving gifts to poor people, was borrowed into Northern European cultures and mixed with the figure of Odin and the celebration of Yule.

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4. Remind students of the Telephone game. Ask: Was the message I whispered to the first student transferred to other students exactly as I said it? (*No, people changed it. If it passed down several rows, it may have changed in different ways depending on the path of individuals it took*.) Explain that most cultural borrowing is like this, adaptive rather than direct—people change the thing or idea they borrow to make it fit their own needs and wants. In our increasingly fast-paced, high-tech global society, there is the potential for less of the origins to be lost when an idea is borrowed into another culture. However, adaptation still occurs; as an example, although the images of Pocket monsters from Japan might be the same in the United States, many of the characters' names are changed to make sense to an English-language audience.
5. With the class, create a definition of *cultural borrowing*. Help students develop the following points in their definition
   - Cultural borrowing is the act of using ideas, customs, and/or social behaviors from another culture.
   - Cultural borrowing can also include patterns of speech, actions, and artifacts that are characteristic of another culture.
   - In many cases, cultural borrowing is *adaptive*, meaning the borrowing culture changes the idea being borrowed to suit its own cultural background.
6. Have students suggest more examples of cultural borrowing. If they need guidance, suggest that they think about music, food, language, games, and toys. Begin a running list, entitled "Examples of Cultural Borrowing," on a piece of chart paper and add to it throughout the lesson.
7. Show a map of Asia. Point out China, Korea, and Japan, or have your students label the map. Discuss the fact that many aspects of Japanese culture came from China, often via the Korean peninsula. For example, the Japanese adapted the Buddhist religion (which originated in India and spread to China, then to Korea, and finally to Japan) to mesh with their native religion of Shinto. The Japanese use Chinese characters as the base of their written language.
8. Explain that over the next several days, the class will look at a story that explains the position of two stars on July 7 and how the story has been culturally borrowed in East Asia.

Instruction: Reading and Analyzing "The Cowherd and the Spinning Girl" and **The Seventh Sister**

1. Read aloud "The Cowherd and the Spinning Girl" in *Chinese Children's Favorite Stories.*
2. As a whole class, fill in a class chart of story structure (setting, characters, problem, and solution), while students fill in their **Story Structure Worksheet**.
3. On the map of Asia, identify where the story came from. Tell students you are going to read another version of the story. They should listen carefully to fill in their **Story Structure Worksheet**. Remind them they are listening for setting, characters, problem, and solution. Read aloud *The Seventh Sister* to the class.

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4. Have students fill in the **Story Structure Worksheet** and add *The Seventh Sister* to the class chart.
5. Discuss similarities and differences in the first two stories and why they occur. Record students' ideas in the "Comparison" column of the class chart. Allow them to copy into their **Story Structure Worksheet**.
6. Ask if there are any examples of cultural borrowing in this story. Add any new ones to the "Examples of Cultural Borrowing" list.

Instruction: Reading and Analyzing* the *Chilseok Play

1. Point out the Korean peninsula on the map. Introduce the *Chilseok* play, reminding students that they will be filling in their worksheets on the parts of the story as they did for the previous two stories. Assign roles and, as a class, dramatically read the ***Chilseok* Play** from Korea. As an option, you may use puppets created from the **Images for *Chilseok* Puppet Play** in telling the story. (Puppets would provide visuals to help second language learners better understand the vocabulary and the story.)
2. As a whole class, fill in a class chart of story structure (setting, characters, problem, and solution) while students fill in their worksheet.
3. Discuss the similarities and differences between the stories, putting particular emphasis on setting, characters, problem, and solution. As you discuss, record the findings in the "Comparison" column of the class chart and have students fill in their **Story Structure Worksheet**.
4. Ask for any new examples of cultural borrowing and add any new ones to the class list.

***Instruction: Reading and Analyzing* The Story of Tanabata**

1. Review the story and responses from yesterday on the *Chilseok* play and where the Korean peninsula is on the map of East Asia.
2. Ask the class what they are noticing about the various stories. Discuss any similarities and/or differences they have noticed. For this step, focus the discussion on story content rather than the format of the stories (i.e., book, play).
3. Next, have the class reflect on the different forms of stories they have read thus far (i.e., books and a play). Discuss different kinds of storytelling and give examples (e.g., puppets, oral storytelling, African storytelling with instruments, story songs). Point out that reading from a book is not the only way to tell a story. Note that stories were passed down orally before they were shared in written form. Remind students of their experience in the Telephone game. Discuss: What might happen to stories that were passed orally from one culture to another?
4. Introduce the class to the final story, *The Story of Tanabata*. Tell them that this version is from Japan; review where Japan is on the map of Asia. Explain that this version of the story is in a distinct Japanese storytelling format called *kamishibai*. Pass out the cards of *The Story of Tanabata*. Lead an inquiry discussion, asking: What do you notice about the cards? (*Text is on the back. Picture on the front doesn't match the text on the back. The Japanese is written vertically and read right to left. English is horizontal and read left to right.*)

5. Show **the Kamishibai Man** video clip of a *kamishibai* storyteller presenting *The Story of Tanabata* in Japanese. Discuss with students: How did the *kamishibai* man use the cards? What storytelling elements did you observe?
6. Using the *kamishibai* cards, dramatically tell the story of *Tanabata*, sliding the cards to the right and placing them at the back of the set. To add authenticity, use a traditional *kamishibai* stage (mounted on a bicycle); dress-up as a *kamishibai* man; announce the beginning by clapping together two wooden sticks called *hyoshigi* (as shown in "Kamishibai Man" video clip); "sell" or pass out hard candy; and/or use a small drum to add sound effects while reading.
7. Complete the class chart as students fill in their **Story Structure Worksheet**.
8. Use the completed **Story Structure Worksheet** and class chart as the basis for a debriefing discussion on all four stories. Discuss the similarities of the four stories. Ask students: What aspects (characters, setting, problem, solution) are constant? What are some recurring themes in all the stories? Start a list of these similarities. Discuss the differences in the stories: What changed as the story was passed from China, to Korea, to Japan? How does this illustrate that adaptation is part of cultural borrowing?

***Guided Practice: Creating* Kamishibai**

1. Explain to students that they will be writing their own version of the story *Tanabata.* They will borrow the story and adapt it to reflect their own cultural background and/or to be set in their state. Based on the similarities list generated in the debrief of the **Story Structure Worksheet**, outline what constant aspects of the story the students should include. Provide guidance as to story elements they might adapt (clothing, setting, type of bird, type of ruler, etc.)
2. Optional: For further guidance, create and share with the class an example of a parallel story or create a version as a whole class. Discuss the similarities between the other stories and the one you have written.
3. Explain that the students will be borrowing the *kamishibai* format to write their *Tanabata* stories. Go over the logistics of creating a *kamishibai*. They will be writing the text and then doing the illustrations on card stock.
4. Give students some time to think about and discuss with other students their ideas for their version of the story. Give each student a **Story Map Worksheet** to fill in. Any students who are having trouble developing an idea can conference with you or in a small group. For students who need extra support, provide the option to work in small groups and create a group story.
5. When students complete their story maps, review their worksheets and/or conference with them to be sure they are on the right track. When you have okayed students to begin writing, provide each student or group with paper to write a draft of their story. Their story should be a minimum of five paragraphs (beginning, three details, and end). Give time for students to write the drafts of their story.
6. Review the students' drafts and/or conference with them. Once you approve each story draft, provide students or groups with the cardstock to create an illustration of each paragraph of their story. Give students time to illustrate at least five cards (one per paragraph). In a corner of each card, have students number the illustrations in order.

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7. Have students write a final version of their story on the computer or in good handwriting. Have students number the paragraphs in order.
8. See **Extensions and Cross-curricular Activities** for activities for students who finish quickly.

Guided Practice:* Kamishibai *Assembly
1. Once all the students have final story paragraphs and completed illustrations, as a class, assemble the *kamishibai*. Review the *kamishibai* format, specifically reminding students that the text of a scene is on the back of the card showing the previous illustration.
2. Instruct students to paste Paragraph 1 on the back of the last illustration. Survey the class to see that each student successfully completed the first step. Then instruct students to paste Paragraph 2 on the back of Illustration 1. Continue by instructing students to paste Paragraph 3 on the back of Illustration 2, and so on until all of the students' paragraphs have been applied to the illustrated cards.
3. Pass out the 9 x 12 manila envelopes. Give students time to practice reading their stories and sliding their cards, using an envelope as their *kamishibai* stage.

Conclusion:* Tanabata Kamishibai *Presentations
1. Have the students present their versions of the *Tanabata* story, reading them dramatically as if they were *kamishibai* men. If feasible, you might use the props and effects of the *kamishibai* man.
2. After each presentation, have other students analyze how/what the student or group culturally borrowed in their version of the story. Example: "I liked the way you borrowed ______________________ from the (country/story title) version."
3. Optional: Invite other classes and/or parents to see the presentations. Travel to lower level classrooms to present the stories.
4. Use the class "Examples of Cultural Borrowing" list to review with students what they have learned about cultural borrowing and the path that the *Tanabata* story has taken on its travels from China to Japan. Ask: How has the story changed along the way to adapt to the various cultures in East Asia? How has it stayed the same?

Extensions and Cross-Curricular Ideas:
1. Advanced students could read additional versions of the story. For example, they could read and fill out the **Story Structure Worksheet** for one or more of the following versions: *Legend of the Milky Way* by Jeanne M. Lee (additional Chinese version); *The Two Love Stars: The Story of Kyonu and Chingnyo* by Mi-ae Lee or *The Love of Two Stars: A Korean Legend* by Janie Jaehyun Park (additional Korean versions); or "The Princess and the Herdboy" by Florence Sakade (additional Japanese version).
2. Read with the class Allen Say's book *Kamishibai Man* or have advanced students read and share the story with the class to give them more information on the genre of *kamishibai* storytelling.
3. Have students do more research on cultural borrowing and prepare a presentation on what they have learned. They could focus on aspects of cultural borrowing in

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4. Engage the class in studying *Tanabata* in greater detail. Have the class make *Tanabata* decorations to hang from a bamboo sprig (real or made from a piece of rolled up green butcher paper and cut out leaves in the shape of bamboo leaves). Prepare *tanzaku*, small strips of paper on which students write a wish. Refer to the information from *Kamishibai for Kids* that is included in the case of *The Story of Tanabata* cards for *kirigami* designs to fold and hang as well. Learn *Tanabata* songs (see books in **Resources and References**).

Resources and References:

Resources for Use in Lesson

Chang, Cindy. *The Seventh Sister*. Charles Reasoner, illustrator. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Communications, 1996.

Kitada, Shin, adaptor. *The Story of Tanabata: A Kamishibai Play from Japan*. Yukihiko Mitani, illustrator. Donna Tamaki, translator. New York: Kamishibai for Kids, n.d. http://www.kamishibai.com

Yip, Mingmei. "The Cowherd and the Spinning Girl." *Chinese Children's Favorite Stories*. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle, 2005, pp. 27-35.

Resources for Use in Extensions or Cross-Curricular Ideas

Healy, Pete. *Japanese Children's Songs*. San Francisco: Nihonmachi Little Friends, 1982.

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Say, Allen. *Kamishibai Man*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005.

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