

Japanese Storytelling with Magical Mask, Music, and Mime

Kuniko Yamamoto, Storyteller

Read the following performance overview to students:


“At the Kennedy Center, you will see a performance by Kuniko Yamamoto (pronounced KOO-nee-ko Yah-mah-MO-toe). She will tell Japanese stories and folk tales using music, masks, and **mime**. Also, she will often use origami (or-ih-GAHM-mee)—the art of paper folding—and magic tricks as she performs. Many of her stories teach lessons. Other stories are just for fun.”

mime—acting without speaking; the silent use of movements and gestures to communicate actions, feelings, and environments

Cue
sheet
FOR TEACHERS

Welcome to *Cuesheet*, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed to help teachers prepare students to see *Japanese Storytelling with Magical Mask, Music, and Mime*.

This *Cuesheet* introduces various aspects of storytelling as well as pertinent vocabulary in bold.

 marks activities you may want to do with your students.

FYI

For Your Information comments provide background information for teachers.

Resources

You may want to...

Go online:

To read about Japan
jin.japan.org/kidsweb

To learn more about
Kuniko Yamamoto
kunikotheater.com

To learn more about origami
paperfolding.com

Read to your students:

McDermott, Gerald.
The Stonecutter. NY:
Penguin Putnam, 1978.

Sakade, Florence and Kurosaki,
Yoshisake, illustrator. *Japanese
Children's Favorite Stories*. Tokyo:
Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1990.



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Cuesheet/Japanese Storytelling with Magical Mask, Music, and Mime

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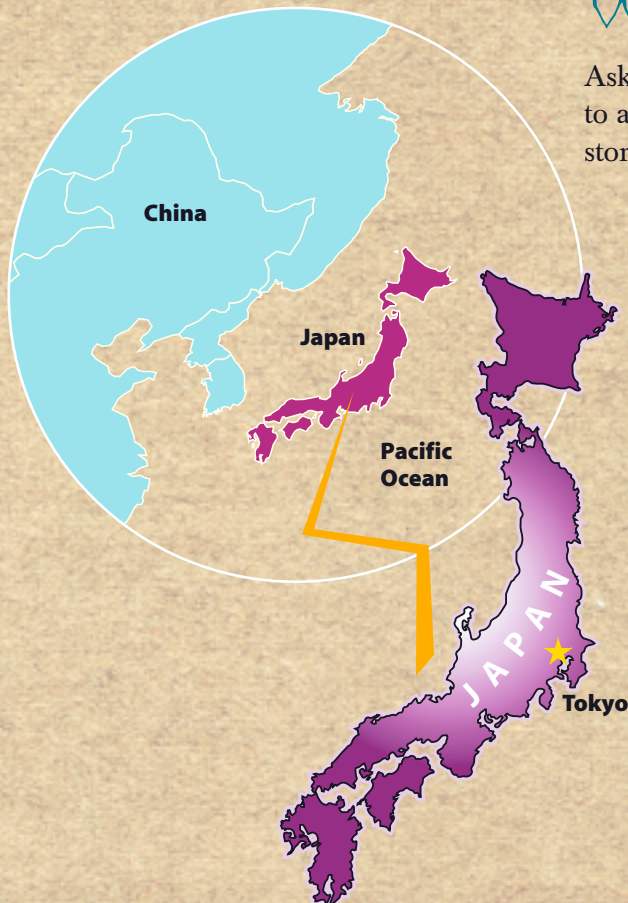
Getting Ready To See

Japanese Storytelling with Magical Mask, Music, and Mime

Geography and Culture

Japan

Explain to students that Kuniko Yamamoto is from Japan. Help students locate Japan on a classroom map. Japan is an island country in the Pacific Ocean off the mainland of Asia. It is close in size to the state of California. Japan is small and crowded with more than 120 million people. Compare that to the United States with a population of 290 million people in all 50 of its states.



Many years ago, Japanese people wore colorful robes tied with sashes called kimonos (kim-MOH-noze). Today, the Japanese wear kimonos only for special occasions. Kuniko's costume in this performance is a kimono.



Kimono

Oral Language

What Is Storytelling?

Ask students if they have ever listened to a storyteller. If not, explain that storytellers do not read stories aloud—they tell stories from memory. If some students have heard storytelling, ask them to describe it. Explain to students that people have always told stories. Long before television or books, storytelling was a way for older family members to pass on information to children. The stories that Kuniko Yamamoto will tell are tales that Japanese people have told for many years.

Kuniko Yamamoto

characters—the people and animals in a story

props—objects handled by actors on stage

Oral Language/Observation

Storytelling Tools

Explain to students that storytellers carefully choose words to help listeners picture **characters**, places, and events. To make her words come alive, Kuniko Yamamoto uses six storytelling tools:

Voice—She changes her voice to fit the tale’s actions or the character’s feelings. Sometimes she speaks loudly, other times she speaks softly. She also changes how quickly or slowly she speaks. The changes in her voice help listeners picture a story’s characters, settings, and mood.

Face—During her storytelling, Kuniko changes her facial expressions to show different feelings.

Movement—As she tells her stories, Kuniko moves her hands and body to help listeners picture the characters and actions.

Mask—Sometimes Kuniko uses masks to show different characters or to express various feelings.

Music—Kuniko sometimes plays a flute. Recorded music also helps emphasize her actions and the moods of her stories.

Mime—Kuniko silently uses her body, hands, and face in movements and gestures that show feelings, things, experiences, and environments.

Props—Kuniko uses **props** such as long sticks, a large spoon, a pouch, and papers folded into different shapes, to help listeners picture elements of the stories.

Observation

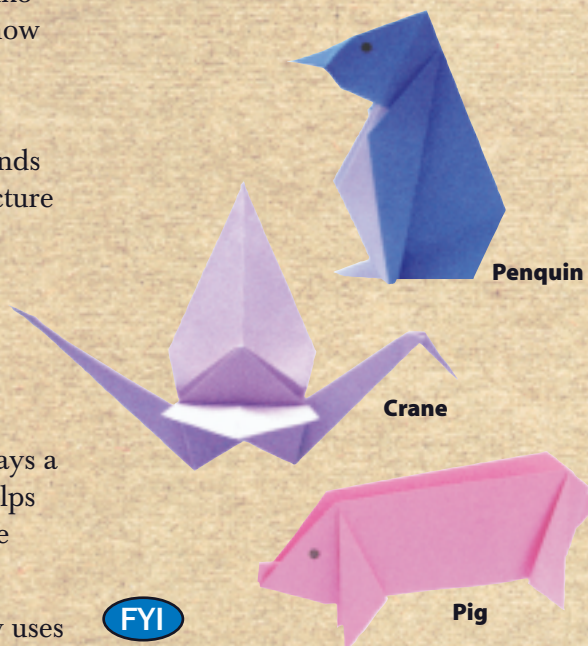
The Teller and the Tools

Invite students to watch for Kuniko’s storytelling tools when she tells about:

- Japan—a country far away across the Pacific Ocean
- a large monster
- a tree losing its leaves and dying
- a woman falling into a large hole
- clouds covering the sun



After the performance, invite students to recall Kuniko’s use of storytelling tools by re-enacting her delivery of the bulleted items above.



FYI

Origami

In Japan, origami, or the art of paper folding, is popular. The word is Japanese, literally meaning to fold (*oru*) paper (*kami*). Kuniko will fold paper into shapes that look like whales, boats, birds, houses, and other objects.

On Performance Day

A Good Audience

Help students understand their important role when attending a storytelling performance. Read and discuss the following:

“In a theater, you are the audience. Being an audience member in a theater is different from watching movies and television. In a theater, the performers are in the same room with you. To do their best, performers need you to watch and listen closely. In this performance, there will also be times when the storyteller asks you to participate with words or movements. In *Japanese Storytelling with Magical Mask, Music, and Mime*, listen and watch for the ways Kuniko Yamamoto uses her storytelling tools to help tell the stories. If you enjoy the storytelling, you may clap when it ends.”

Visiting the Kennedy Center

Reproduce the illustration at the bottom of this page, making sure to cover this written information for teachers so that it is not copied. Distribute the illustration to each student. Ask students to point to the appropriate parts of the illustration as you read the following explanation aloud:

“You will take a bus to the Kennedy Center. The Kennedy Center is named after John F. Kennedy, a popular president of the United States.

“When you arrive, you will walk into the Hall of States. Remember to look up to see the flags from all the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the five U.S. Territories.

“You will ride in an elevator to the Kennedy Center’s top floor. Look for a large banner that says ‘Theater Lab’ hanging on the wall. A person wearing a red jacket—the usher—will show you where to sit inside the theater. You will sit on long, cloth-covered benches arranged in rows that go upwards like big steps.

“Four hundred people can watch a performance together in the Theater Lab. When the lights dim, Kuniko Yamamoto will perform *Storytelling with Magical Mask, Music, and Mime*.”

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