

Kamishibai Stories – The Hedgehog

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The Kamishibai – Application and Use

The original idea of the Kamishibai is to tell stories freely. Use this especially with younger children. Using the story can also be helpful in elementary school for teaching knowledgeable facts and curriculum topics.

1



Mia and Max love to rummage around in the old attic. The children pull a dusty old box into the middle of the room. They're curious to see what's inside, so they open it. Can you see the old dolls and cuddly animals too? "Look! It's my old hedgehog puppet, Holly!" shouts Max, excited. "I missed you so

much, but how did you get in here? You must have been hibernating for a long time." "What's that?" says Mia, reaching for an old, wooden box. She puts it on the floor and opens the lid. Suddenly, the box starts to shudder and shake, and the lid rattles open and closed. A storm swirls up and whirls around the children, whistling and pulling them about. "Oh no! I think we're going to be pulled into the box!" cries Mia. Suddenly, everything goes quiet.



Mia and Max look around in wonder. They aren't in the attic anymore. They are standing on the lawn in front of the house, but everything is much bigger than normal, and the two children are as small as blades of grass. The sun is setting. Max nudges Mia and whispers: "What's that big, spiky thing?" Carefully,

they walk up to the brown bundle of spikes in front of them. A furry face with two small, jet-black eyes looks out at them in surprise. "I'm Holly, of course. Happy New Year to you both!" "Holly?" Max stares at her, amazed. "Now I recognise you! Why did you wish us a Happy New Year?" "Because it's spring, of course!" She stretches. "Excuse me, I just woke up from hibernation. My hedgehog year has only just begun. Would you like to come with me?" she yawns. "Can we?" asks Mia. "Of course, everything is possible in this story box," says Holly.



Fun facts:

- Hedgehogs are nocturnal.
- Hedgehogs live in Europe, Asia and Africa. They are one of the oldest mammals.
- In the UK, we have European hedgehogs. In Africa, you can find African pygmy hedgehogs.
- Hedgehogs are protected in lots of countries.
- They normally weigh between 800 grams and 1.6 kilograms, and grow up to 30 centimetres long.
- Female hedgehogs sleep until April because they go to sleep later in winter than male hedgehogs.

3



“It must have been a long, cold winter. I’ve definitely shrunk a lot!” says Holly, sitting up, stretching her thin arms and spreading out her claws. “I need them for digging up beetles and maggots,” she says, as Mia takes a closer look. Holly tells the children that she is a European hedgehog, and has so many

spikes that it’s hard to count them. Max strokes her tummy carefully. Unlike her spikes, Holly’s tummy is very soft. “Unfortunately, my eyes don’t work very well,” Holly blinks at the children. “I use my wet nose and little ears to get around. By using those senses, I can stay away from danger and find food.” Suddenly, Holly’s tummy rumbles.



Fun facts:

- Hedgehogs lose between 20% and 40% of their body weight during hibernation.
- They have around 5,000 to 8,000 spikes.
- Hedgehogs can’t see very well with their eyes. That’s why they can hear frequencies up to 20,000 hertz with their ears. Because of this, even quiet sounds can startle them.
- Hedgehogs can taste different flavours, such as sweet, sour and salty.
- Hedgehogs have something called a Jacobson’s organ. This is a special organ for smelling. It means that hedgehogs can “smell” with their tongue. They do this by chewing, which makes some frothy spit. This is how hedgehogs check what something is.



“I’m starving! Now that I’ve woken up from hibernation, I could scoff a whole mountain of beetles, caterpillars, worms and earwigs all at once!” “Wooooow!” says Mia. “You have a very strange wish list.” “Shall we help you find some food?” asks Max. “I think I saw some little bugs on the compost heap that

you might like.” “Okay,” says Holly, “But only because I’m so hungry. Usually, I prefer to be alone – although you’ll have to promise not to eat all the food!” “Um... don’t worry, we’re not hungry,” say Mia and Max together. With that, the three go searching. They start at the compost heap, then search along the hedge and through the whole garden.



Fun facts:

- Hedgehogs are insectivores, and eat beetles, larvae and worms.
- Hedgehogs don’t eat fruit. Although lots of people think that they like to drink milk, they actually don’t. They could even die from it.
- In summer, they start to eat more to build up a layer of fat for the winter. Baby hedgehogs have an instinct that tells them they need to build up a layer of fat to survive the winter.
- A hedgehog should weigh at least 500 grams before it hibernates.
- If you find a skinny hedgehog in autumn, you can feed it. You can feed hedgehogs wet cat or dog food, or boiled eggs.
- Hedgehogs live on their own.
- If you want your garden to be hedgehog friendly, you shouldn’t use insect or weedkillers.

5



It's May, and Holly is very excited. "You have the loveliest garden, don't you think?" she squeals. Max doesn't really agree. "Mum says that we have the most overgrown garden in the neighbourhood," he says. "But that's why it's so great!" replies Holly. "There are so many nooks and crannies in the hedge and

between the plants. During the day, I like to sleep. My favourite place is in your log store. In the evening, I go for a walk through your long grass. No one can see me there and there's something delicious to eat around every corner. I also have a drink from your pond at least once per night. Sometimes I squeeze under the fence into your neighbour's garden to see what's happening over there."

Fun facts:



- Hedgehogs need a habitat with hedges, bushes, shrubs and piles of leaves. They find a good amount of food and hide from danger in those places.
- Hedgehogs can travel a long way to find food, visiting lots of gardens. To help them, it's best if there's a gap between the fence and the ground so that hedgehogs can squeeze under it.
- Hedgehogs also need somewhere to drink, but they need to have something to help them climb out in case they fall into the water.

6



In the neighbour's garden, Holly meets a male hedgehog. It looks like they already know each other well, and they do a hedgehog dance together. They spin around in circles together. Max and Mia hide. After a while, the two hedgehogs say goodbye to each other.

The children excitedly ask Holly who the other hedgehog was. "That was Harvey," she answers. "He's a nice male hedgehog that I've known for a long time. I think he's really good at dancing, too. Hedgehog mating season is from May until August every year, which is when I look for a partner. Then I'm busy, building a big nest for my children." It's great that Holly met Harvey the dancer! Holly's babies will be born soon.



Fun facts:

- Hedgehogs are sexually mature from nine months old.
- Hedgehogs mate between May and August.
- Male hedgehogs travel a long way to look for a female.
- Once a male hedgehog finds a suitable mate, he circles her for hours before mating with her. In some countries, they call this the "hedgehog dance" or "hedgehog carousel".
- When they are mating, hedgehogs grunt, hiss, squeal and snarl.



“Oh, how sweet!” cries Mia, her face lit up. “There are five little hoglets!” Holly makes herself comfortable in her nest. “Are we allowed to get closer to the babies?” asks Mia, cautiously. “Of course, but please be careful – they can’t see or hear yet,” explains Holly. “The little ones don’t look much like you

at the moment, Holly,” says Max, gently touching one of the babies’ spikes. “They’re all white and soft.” “Their spikes are soft to start with so that they don’t hurt each other or hurt me when they’re suckling,” Holly tells him. “Soon, the hoglets will explore their surroundings on their own. Hedgehog children grow up much faster than human children.” “Don’t you worry about your children if they don’t stay with their mum for very long?” asks Max. “Yes, lots!” sighs Holly.



Fun facts:

- Hoglets are born after five weeks.
- Lots of hedgehog babies are born in August. There are usually five hoglets in a litter.
- When they are born, baby hedgehogs are tiny and completely naked. They sound like little birds. After about two days, they grow their first spikes.
- Hoglets only start to be able to see and hear after about two weeks.
- They suckle from their mother until they are six weeks old. After that, they start eating solid food. After three weeks, they grow their first teeth.
- After four weeks, hoglets start to explore on their own, and after six weeks, they usually leave the nest.



“There are a lot of dangers that hedgehogs need to look out for, especially young hedgehogs. Foxes, badgers and even big birds can attack us. We protect ourselves by curling up into a ball.”

“It’s good that you live in our garden, then!” says Max. “Yes, but the neighbour’s dog comes in sometimes, and

I’ve even met a robot lawnmower! Luckily I didn’t get hurt,” replies Holly, adding, “When I cross the road, I make sure there are no cars coming. They’re much faster than me. When I walk around at night, I have to be careful not to fall into any holes. My eyes don’t work very well, as I said.” “We can ask dad to cover the holes for you,” offers Mia. “That would be great, as I have to be even more alert now that it’s nearly autumn,” says Holly.



Fun facts:

- Hedgehogs have lots of natural predators such as foxes, badgers and birds of prey. Even cats and dogs can hurt them.
- Humans can also be dangerous for them, with lawnmowers, cars, fertilisers, poisons, holes and high steps that they can’t climb.
- When they are in danger, hedgehogs will hiss or roll up into a spiky ball. This helps to protect them from natural predators, but not lawnmowers or anything like that.
- Hedgehogs can live for up to seven years, but they usually only live for two to four because of the dangers caused by humans.



Bit by bit, the days are getting shorter and colder. Holly sniffs. “Now it’s autumn, I can’t find as much to eat. I’m getting more and more tired. I’m building a nest to hibernate in out of leaves, twigs and grass. I’ll make this one-room hedgehog nest super comfy,” she says. “We’ll help you!” says

Max. “Thank you, that would be nice,” replies Holly. “You can look for building materials,” she suggests. The children go searching, while Holly presses the leaves onto the outer wall by turning in circles and pressing hard. “Everything needs to be pressed tightly together for the nest to work and for it to protect me from the cold and dampness of winter,” explains Holly, panting. “We could build you a house ready for next year!” offers Max. “I would really like that!” replies Holly. “It needs to be somewhere safe though – in a dry, quiet corner.”



Fun facts:

- Hedgehogs start to build their nests when it gets cold, usually in November.
- A hedgehog’s winter nest is made of leaves, grass, bits of plants, paper and twigs all pressed together tightly. They are between 30 and 60 centimetres wide, and the walls can be up to 20 centimetres thick. They protect the hedgehog from the cold and wet.
- You can buy hedgehog houses or make them yourself. You can use twigs, stones or planks of wood. The best place to put a hedgehog house is a quiet, shady corner of the garden. You can find instructions for building one in a book or online.



Holly will hibernate soon. “Will you really hibernate for four whole months?” says Mia, amazed. “What a pity! That means we won’t see each other for a long time!” “I wish humans hibernated, too” says Max. “I thought that everyone hibernated!” replies Holly, surprised. “That’s strange. What else do you do

in winter? It’s so cold!” “Well, we build snowmen and go sledging and...,” lists Mia. “You might enjoy that, too” adds Mia, sadly. “I don’t think it would suit me,” says Holly. “I get sooooo tired in the winter and just want to sleep. I hope you have a lot of fun, though! Then, in the spring, you’ll have to tell me what you’ve been up to.”



Fun facts:

- When the temperature falls below 15°C and there is less food around, a hedgehog’s hormones make it sleepy and it will start to hibernate.
- During hibernation, their body slows everything down as much as possible, including the heartbeat, and the hedgehog gets its nutrition from its layer of fat.
- Male hedgehogs start hibernating before females because female hedgehogs need to spend longer looking after their babies. This means that the mums and their babies don’t have to compete with male hedgehogs for food before they hibernate. In the spring, the males wake up before the females.



“We’ll look forward to seeing you when you’re awake again!” Max tells Holly. “As you know, I have a very busy hedgehog year,” she replies. “Can you help us remember our year learning about hedgehogs?” ask Mia and Max. “We met in the spring and you helped me to find some food. You didn’t like the

look of my food to start with, but a few spiders and beetles never hurt anyone,” shrugs Holly. “Exactly!” nods Max. “Summer is mating time, and you met Harvey,” continues Holly. “Will there be lovely little baby hedgehogs again next summer?” asks Mia, hopefully. “Of course!” winks Holly. “By the time my hoglets are all grown up, it’s nearly autumn already. Then the babies and I search for food by ourselves, as well as a suitable place to stay for the winter.” “We promised that we would build you your next hedgehog house, now that we know how,” says Max, excitedly. “I’m looking forward to it,” says Holly. “But now, children,” she yawns, “it’s time for me to hibernate.” “And it’s time for us to go back to the house,” says Mia. “Sleep well!” call the children, and they wait for Holly to disappear into her nest.

Fun facts:

- Humans should treat hedgehogs as wild animals.
- If you find a poorly hedgehog, you should take it to a vet or a hedgehog rescue centre.



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