



TECHNICAL SHEET

KAMISHIBAI

The word Kamishibai could be translated as “a paper theatre”, and it corresponds to the ideogram 紙芝居 which is composed of 紙 (Kami) meaning paper, while 芝居 (Shibai) means theatre.

WHAT IS IT?

The ancient **KAMISHIBAI** technique, which originated in 12th century Japan, occupies a special place among the various narrative techniques. Images, in addition to orality, play a fundamental role for this tool. It probably emerged as narrative support for the illiterate population, who, thanks to the flow of images that emphasise the salient narrative moments, were able to better understand the story.

The Kamishibai makes use of a small wooden theatre (butai), a structure that frames the boards on which the story is depicted; however, it is not strictly necessary, and the boards can also be used without it.

The Kamishibai is composed of a series of illustrated boards that are shown to the spectators. On the opposite side, the storyteller can read the written text and find a small reproduction of the picture they are showing, so that the text and pictures are always synchronised. An important aspect in this type of narration is also the possibility to improvise by adding sounds, noises, changing your voice, and creating suspense before sliding the next board. Like a book or a picture book, the colourful images rich in detail reinforce the storytelling, allowing the listener to immerse themselves into the tale.

The slow, suspension of time that this tool can convey is inclusive for all children.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

This narrative form, halfway between reading and theatre, is a kind of three-dimensional book theatre that engages both audibly and visually.

The teacher, making use of the easy-to-construct theatre will make the various scenes flow as the narration proceeds (please note that we've also included a sheet that shows you how to construct this).

Thanks to the theatre, the scenes are framed, which attracts the children's attention even more. However, it will also be possible to narrate using only the illustrated boards, sliding them over each other, creating moments of suspension and curiosity thanks to the indications given. In addition to the text, there are indications on the back on how and when to slide the scene. The teacher can thus remove the image quickly, to reveal the new situation immediately, or slowly, according to the type of emotion the story requires. Because of the simplicity with which it can be used, it is one of the most engaging tools, capable of fostering concentration in children. This is why, at a later stage, the teacher can invite their students to use it.

This second activity is in fact an excellent support for improving self-confidence, narrative, and synthesis skills, by virtue of the fact that the story is divided into sequences that become a reference point for the children's memory.

HOW TO USE IT

This tool has also entered Western culture for some time now, so schools and libraries have been making use of it. There are also specialised publishing houses that release stories every year using this particular narrative form. It is presented in its original format as a small theatre that can be easily transported and placed on a table or desk in the school, so as to create a small scenic space to increase the involvement between the storyteller and the audience, just as it has been done in Japan since ancient times. The Kamishibai has a wooden or thick cardboard structure in which the illustrated boards (normally 10-16 boards) are placed. On the back of each picture is the text and



the picture of the board that the spectators are seeing, as well as the number of the board. On the last board, which is the one facing the narrator, there are the indications for the first board, i.e. the one the spectators are seeing.

When the storyteller pulls it out, they must insert it into the slot at the bottom of the others, since the text and indications of the second scene are on it (covering the last board), thus sliding them from front to back.

Normally the boards are A3 format, which allows everyone to see them well, however, the teacher can also use smaller A4 formats, having the children sit closer together, perhaps on comfortable cushions.

Kamishibai is suitable for children of all ages and abilities!

TECHNICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Although it is indeed a very simple and straightforward tool, it is advisable for the teacher to know the story well. We recommend rehearsing it before presenting the Kamishibai to the students, especially so that the teacher can learn the moments when it is necessary to run the boards, but, above all, it's imperative that they master the way to create anticipation, suspense, amazement or perhaps even fear...

In the classroom, the teacher will create the appropriate environment for the storytelling and the type of Kamishibai they have decided to use.

Without the structure

The teacher could arrange the children to sit on the floor on comfortable cushions, while taking a chair for themselves so that everyone can see the boards well. As soon as silence has been created, the storytelling will begin. The children will watch the first scene. You can choose to read or narrate orally, but keep in mind what happens in the first scene. As soon as you have finished narrating or reading the first scene, slide the board away, (slowly or quickly depending on the story) placing it at the bottom of the others so that you can read what happens in the second scene. Proceed in this way



until the end. The boards can also be slid halfway through if the scene requires it, e.g. to slowly reveal the presence of a character or a detail that has great relevance to the story.

With the structure

While the same narrative rules apply, if the teacher has the structure, they can use the desk as a support point and arrange the children in front to sit on chairs. The main difference is (as we have already mentioned), that this kind of theatre frames the boards by attracting more attention.

When removing the boards, they must be inserted into the structure, by following the same procedure as described above.

HOW TO BUILD THE THEATRE

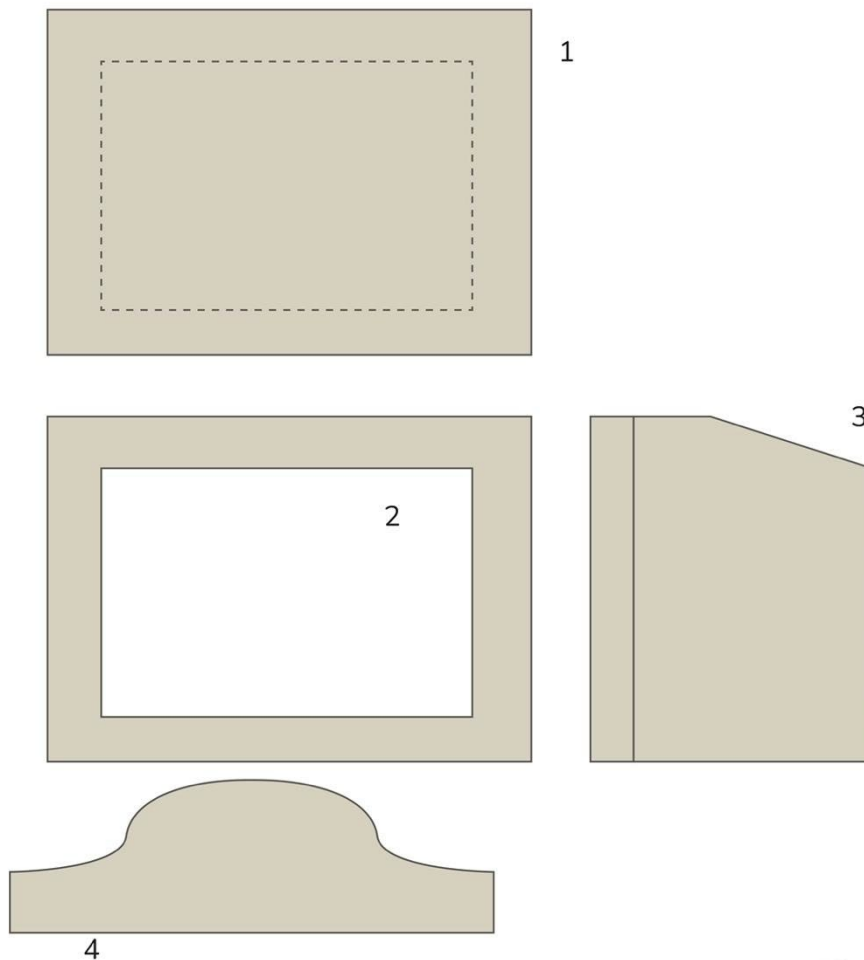
MATERIAL

You will need one or two sheets (50x70 cm) of wooden paper, about 3,4 mm thick.

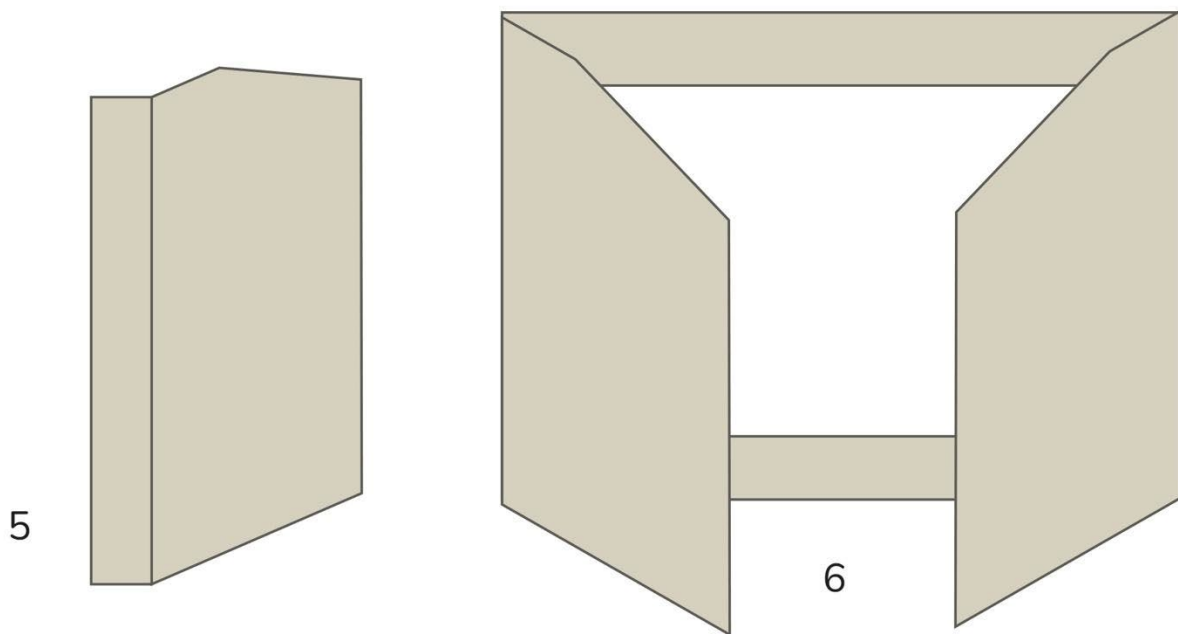
Alternatively, cardboard boxes large enough to cut out all the pieces necessary for the construction of the theatre (butai) will also be fine.

The instructions we are giving you are for A4-sized boards; however, you can use A3 for your stories and thus adapt the measurements of the theatre to this situation.

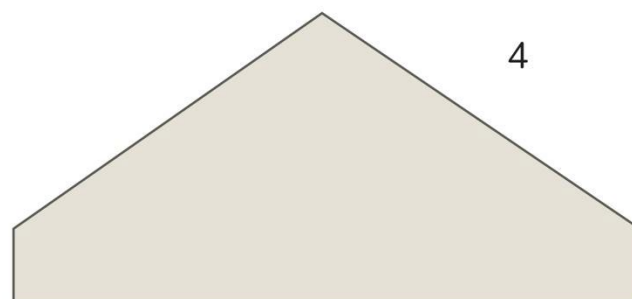
Also get a box cutter and hot glue.



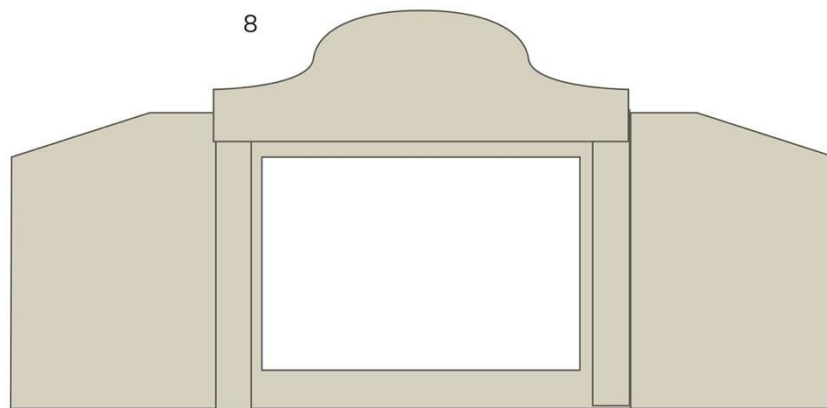
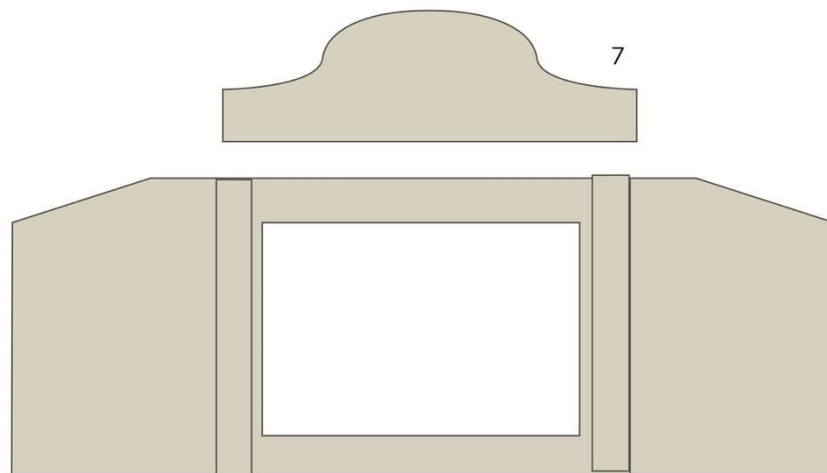
1. Cut out two 40x30 cm rectangles, in which you will draw a frame about 5 cm from the edge (fig.1).
2. Cut out and temporarily set aside one of the two cut-out frames (fig.2).
3. In two rectangles of equal size (22 cm wide and 30 cm high), shape the doors to close the theatre. Fold the outer side to create a strip 2 cm wide and 30 cm high (fig.3). You will use this band to glue the door behind the frame (fig. 5 and fig. 6).



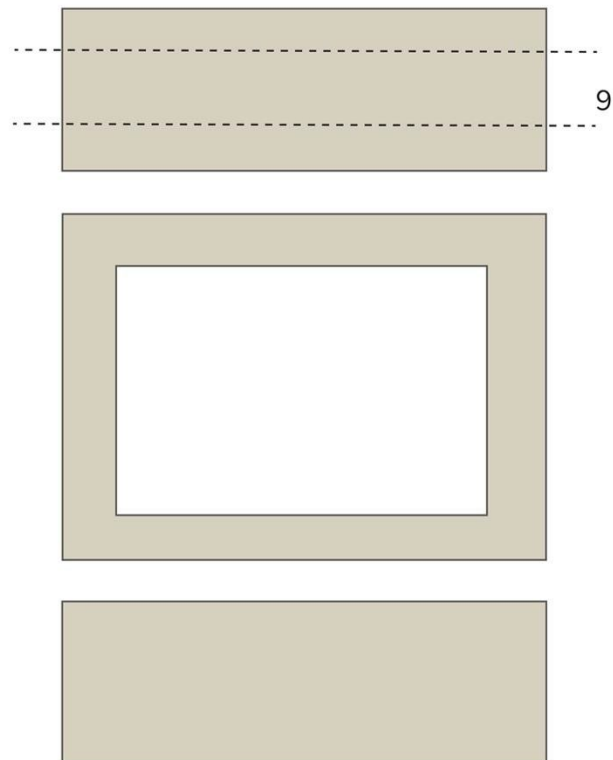
4. Shape the "pediment" of the theatre. To simplify, you can also draw a simple triangle (fig. 4).



5. Glue the pediment into the back of the frame. Use hot glue or alternatively double-sided adhesive tape (fig. 7 and 8).



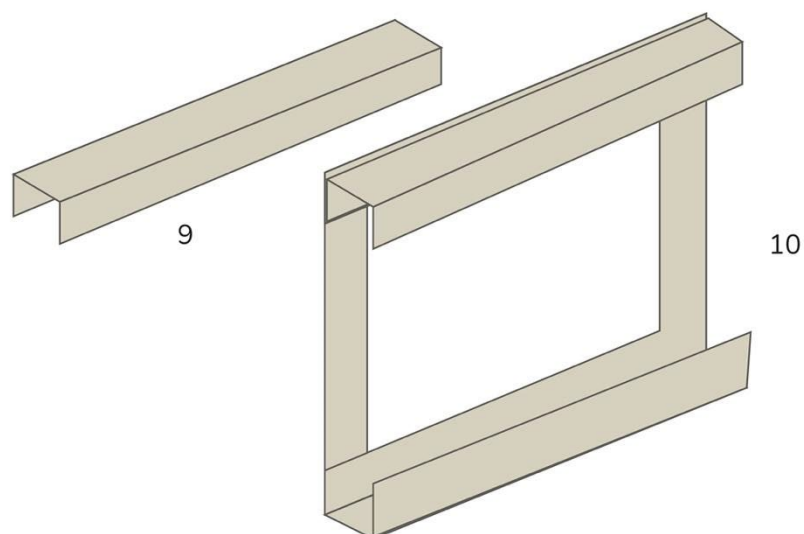
The first part is completed. We must now turn our attention to the construction of the backside, i.e. the space in which the boards are to be placed.

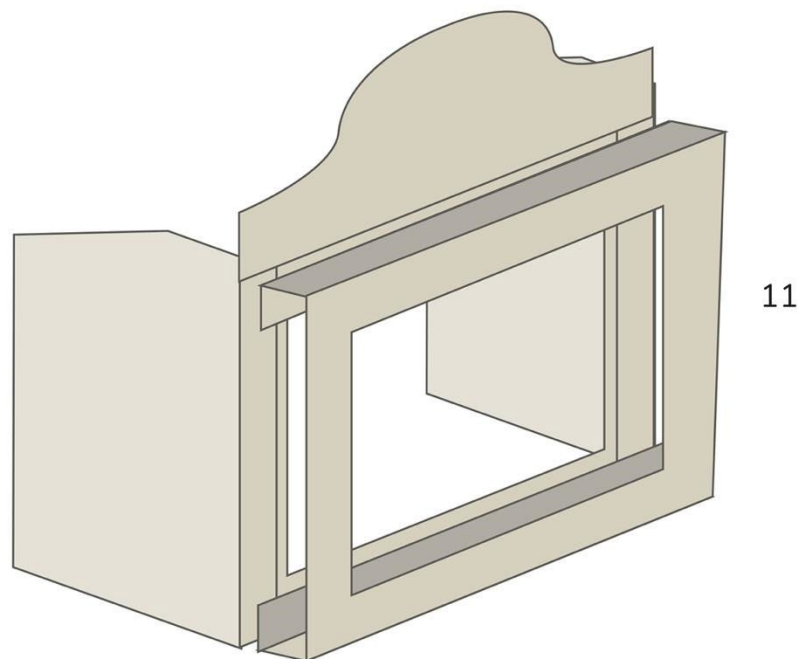


Cut two equal rectangles of 10x40 cm.

Make folds (fig. 9) so that the edges are about 3 cm high and the base 4 cm wide, (as in the picture below).

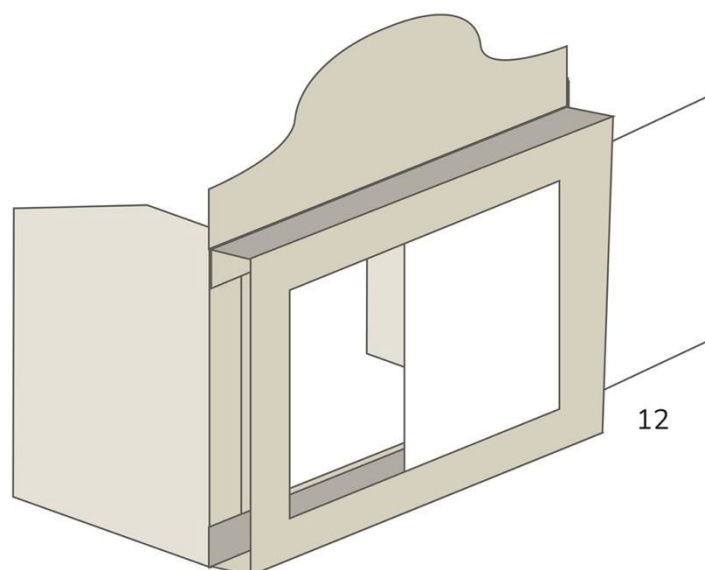
Glue both rectangles behind the remaining frame (fig.10). They will form the space in which to insert the story boards.

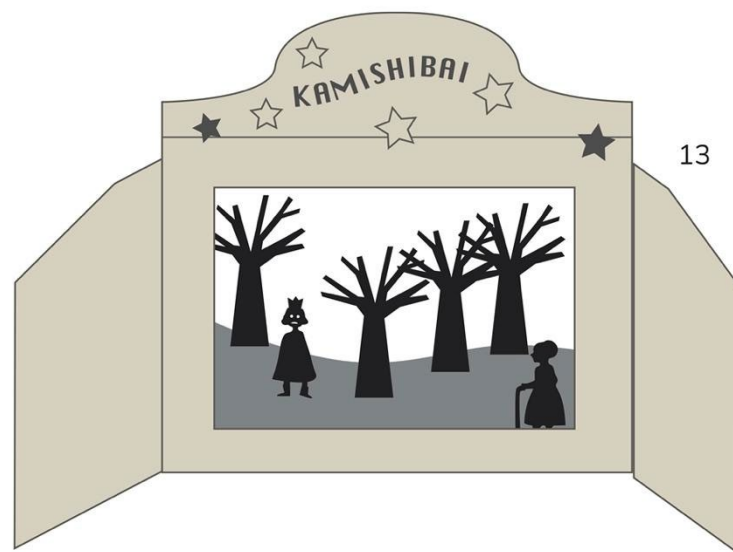




Glue the frame behind the previously created theatre structure (fig.11).

The theatre is ready, insert the boards (fig.12).

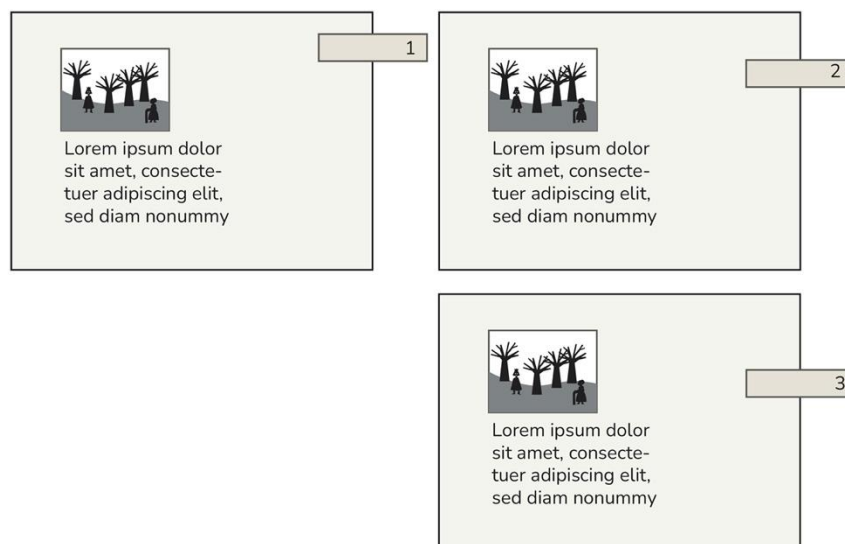




(fig13) Let the story begin!

THE ILLUSTRATED BOARDS

Normally this is not necessary, since as previously explained, it involves sliding the front board behind the others. However, to simplify its use, especially for children or those who are using it for the first time,



it might be useful to apply paper tabs on which to write the number relating to the picture. Apply the tabs in steps, i.e. in different positions. This will allow the storyteller to choose the right tab to slide on.



BENEFITS OF KAMISHIBAI FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDERS

Kamishibai is an excellent tool for children that struggle with confidently participating during storytelling and oracy activities. This is because the structure of the tool allows the storytellers to conduct the activity behind the boards while reading the text to the listeners. As such, it is instrumental in helping children overcoming their fears, and, ultimately, linking oral expression with more positive emotions and experiences. Opening the doors of the Kamishibai theatre creates an intellectual and emotional separation for children between the real world and the story world, which is the basis for the 'positive filter' that allows students to become more secure in their self-expression.

The magical atmosphere created by this colourful and expressive type of theatre tool is also conducive for capturing attention and strengthening focus during storytelling. This is due to the fact that the spectators listening to the story are only able to observe one picture at a time - the picture that is in the first position -, therefore, their attention is constantly being triggered with the shift of the order of the pictures as the story progresses.

Using dramatisation to tell a story also targets memory retention, as pupils remember more events and facts about stories when presented in dramatic form. In addition, dramatisation immerses pupils into the activity - helping them to feel and enjoy the presented characters/events, and furthermore, sharing these same feelings and sensations with the rest of their classmates, building the emotional relating and recognition skills of pupils who struggle with feeling like outsiders in groups.

It is important to note that, just like story cards, the changing illustrations not only depict different chronological events in the story, but they also contain helpful descriptions at the back. Therefore, the children that act as storytellers are supported throughout the activity with this ready-made framework around which to work, giving structure to their readings and preventing confusion and insecurity.



Another important note for adapting this tool to the needs of pupils with specific learning disorders is to reveal the images as the story progresses at a slower pace – this will not only build tension throughout the story, but also ensure that pupils are not overwhelmed with ‘quick flash’ techniques.