

# The Phone Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden

*Classroom applications: activities and reflection questions*

*Prepared by:*



**ASIA CENTER**

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Listed here are prompts that you can expand upon for developing your own plans for classroom activities. This is an interactive document, choose a text color and write some notes about the projects and activities that would work for you or jot down some ideas that you developed.

### 1. Reading the illustrations.

#### Project and Activity Ideas

- Just observing the illustrations what do you notice about the story with out the text? What emotions do the images and different colors used convey? What else can you notice? For example, seasons changing etc... There's a marking of the seasons in the book with the hint like the blooming of cherry blossoms in the spring, spring is often thought of a time of rebirth and coming of abundance, there's an opportunity to conduct an activity exploring students understanding, feelings and traditions with changing seasons.
2. The book begins and ends with the same scene. What has changed, what is the same? Why do you think the author and illustrator returned to the same place where the story began?
- Consider conducting an activity on different methods of storytelling, Linear versus Circular. See *What Is a Circular Narrative Style?*  
<https://education.seattlepi.com/write-intro-paragraph-literary-elements-essay-1630.html>
  - Work with students to define the elements of the different types of storytelling and invite them to write or storyboard their own stories in a linear or non-linear way.

### Guided Reading Questions:

1. What happened to Maiko's dad and Mr. Hirota's daughter?
2. Why did Maiko stop talking and when did he start to talk again?
3. There is only one page without text, why do you think the author did that and what do you think the page is trying to communicate?
4. Where in the world do you think this book took place?

### Reflection Questions (These are questions you can prepare your own answers for but also pose to students)

1. What emotions does the book convey?
2. What emotions did you experience when you read the book?
3. Have you ever struggled to share your feelings? Why do you think that is?
4. Have you seen phone booths in real life or in other books or movies?
5. Why do you think Mr. Hirota built a phone booth instead of something else?
6. Why do you think Mr. Hirota was ok with the rest of the villagers using the phone booth in his garden? What does that say about Mr. Hirota and the people in the village?
7. If you could build something for your neighborhood or city for everyone to use, what would you build?

## Additional Reading and Research

NPRs This American Life story about Itaru Sasaki and the real wind phone:

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/597/one-last-thing-before-i-go-2016>

The Phone Booth for Japanese Mourners on Bloomberg:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-10/japan-s-wind-phone-is-a-site-to-meditate-on-life-and-loss>