

# "Doraemon" in Learning Materials

Shindoh Masaaki



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This year marks the 30th anniversary of the birth of "Doraemon". Until now, over 100 million copies of "Doraemon", consisting of a 45-volume series of comics and 23 full-length comics, have been sold and are widely read by children in Japan. The comics are also widely read in China, Rep. of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. The animated versions of the comic are shown on television and in movie theatres in some of the above countries.

I will first explain the background of "Doraemon", appreciated by many generations of children all over Asia. Doraemon, a cat-shaped nanny robot comes to ten-year old boy Nobi Nobita's house in 1970 from the 22nd century by "Time Machine". Doraemon helps Nobita, who is not good at studying or sports, in various situations. At home, he consoles and encourages Nobita who has been scolded by his mother; at school, he protects Nobita from bullies Gian and Suneo. Doraemon's all-mighty tool is the "4-D Pocket" which is attached to his tummy. From it, he takes out different gadgets to aid Nobita. For example, the "Dokodemo Door" will take people wherever they want to go. The "Small Light" shrinks any object it shines on.

The number of gadgets in Doraemon's 4-D pocket is endless. Some books have even been written to explain all the gadgets that have been used in the comic.

## How Can "Doraemon" the Comic Become "Doraemon" the Learning Material?

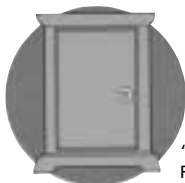
The concept of the comic Doraemon is based on a child's daily life at home and school; however, both the characters and the readers are in a situation where they can enter a totally different world beyond the ordinary. This aspect of the comic enables it to be not just a form of entertainment, but also as means to introduce children to the world of learning. That is, the world view of the comic leads to learning and the comic itself contains elements of a learning tool.

Shogakukan currently has over 150 series of learning materials featuring Doraemon. Their genres range from textbook supplements on arithmetic (how to multiply or divide) and Japanese language (how to write kanji), to reference materials on various fields in natural sciences and social sciences: history, human anatomy, astronomy, and earth science. All of the materials are built upon the element of learning present in the original comic. Information that may not be taught in school can be introduced in an accessible format supported by facts of science, history, or even "outrageous creativity." For example, the readers can use the Small Light to become the size of an insect to observe its body structure.

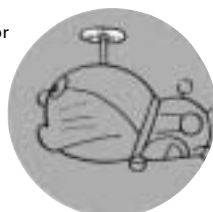


Doraemon with "4-D (Fourth Dimensional) Pocket"

"Dokodemo Door"  
Open this "go anywhere" door  
and enter a new world



"Take Copter"  
Fasten it to yourself somewhere,  
concentrate on the speed and direction,  
and there you go! You're flying.



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They can use the Take Copter to fly and see what the 'bird's eye view' of the world is.

The fact that the story can take place in almost any setting makes it ideal for learning material. We can go to any sort of imaginary or hypothetical world possible. We can travel over time and space, enter another dimension, a futuristic world of science fiction, or a world built on fantasy. We can go deep inside the earth to learn about its structure, or enter a human body to see different organs, explore the universe, travel back to the Age of Dinosaurs, or enter a mirror-image universe.

The original comic is based on the extensive knowledge and research of the author, Fujiko F. Fujio (1933-96). Each episode is supported by research in various fields. A story on dinosaurs, for example, is based on theories about their physiology and the era they lived in. It is not just based on his own imagination. Such characteristics of the work make it possible to adapt it to any hypothetical situation. A 4-D Pocket is nonsense, but tools such as this can create a superb extraordinary world, enabling Doraemon to maintain a child's perspective in any learning situation.

The Time Machine can take children back in time to the Age of Dinosaurs. Dokodemo Door can take them anywhere, from the bottom of the ocean to the jungle, even to a far-away planet. The Small Light could take them beyond the boundaries of the ordinary, going inside a blood vessel to explore human anatomy.

The guide for all the situations is Doraemon. When traveling anywhere, children can trust and place complete confidence in this simple figure composed of overlapping circles. Doraemon's height is 129.3 cm. This is the average height of a Japanese fourth-grader 30 years ago, showing that the comic is drawn from the perspective of a child.

This character and the story set up are very appealing not only to children, but parents and infants as well.

The comic storyline usually begins by the ordinary, everyday world coming into contact with the extraordinary, and ends with everything being "back to normal." Doraemon the learning material grew out of the fantastic world created by "outrageous creativity," that is, the combination of creativity and imagination.

(translated by Ueki Kaori)

## Shindoh Masaaki

Born in 1950. Entered Shogakukan Inc., one of the major publishers in Japan in 1974. After working in book sales field including planning, promotion, sales strategy, etc., he is now in charge of copyright sales. Shindoh Masaaki  
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One of Doraemon's learning series  
"A Guide to Astronomy"