

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

Prologue – This story is based on the life of a real little girl who lived in Japan from 1943 – 1955. She lived in Hiroshima when the United States dropped an atom bomb on the city to try to end WWII. 10 years later she died because of radiation from the bomb.

Chapter 1 – Sadako loved to run. One morning in August of 1954, she ran outside and saw that it was a beautiful day. She went back in where her sister and 2 brothers were sleeping. She poked her brother to wake him up and said “Get up lazy! It’s Peace Day!!” Sadako wanted to hurry and go to the carnival, but her mom reminded her that Peace Day was about remembering those who died when the atom bomb was dropped. Sadako’s mom reminded her that her own grandmother died the day that the bomb was dropped.

Chapter 2 – Sadako ran to her friend Chizuko’s house. They were best friends! The two girls ran and Sadako’s mother and father laughed because Sadako ran everywhere. Her father was very proud of her because she was a very fast and strong runner. When they arrived at Peace Park, the walls had pictures of all of the people who had died from the bomb. Sadako didn’t want to look at them. She told Chizuko that she remembered the day of the bomb. She said there was a BRIGHT LIGHT and then heat that prickled her skin.

Chapter 3 – In the fall, Sadako ran home and yelled “I’m home!” She was so excited! She had been chosen to be in the relay race for her class and she knew if they won, she would be on the team when she went to Jr High the following year. Her father was very proud of her. Sadako practiced running everyday. Finally the day of the race arrived and Sadako became nervous. The race started and she ran as fast as she could...

Chapter 4 – Sadako felt like her prayers had worked because she felt healthy and strong, but one day, she was running at school when she fell to the ground. She could not stand up. Mitsue ran home to let her father know what had happened. He left his work and took Sadako to the hospital. The Dr examined her and then met with her parents in private, but she heard the word “Leukemia” and that scared her.

Chapter 5 – The next morning, Sadako woke up and hoped that yesterday had been a bad dream, but it was not. She was in the hospital and a nurse came in to give her a shot and told her that she would get used to getting shots. Later, Sadako’s friend Chizuko came in with a surprise for Sadako. It was a gold piece of paper. She cut it into a square and then folded it until it was a paper crane. She reminded Sadako of the old story about the crane. If a sick person folds 1000 paper cranes, then...

Chapter 6 - Everyone was saving paper to fold into cranes. The nurse saved papers from medicine and her brother Masahiro hung all of the birds that she folded.

Several months went by and sometimes, Sadako felt almost well. She understood that she had leukemia and that some people did recover, but the Dr said she still had to stay in the hospital. She never stopped hoping that one day she would get well. Sadako had folded over 300 birds so far. Sometimes, she got too tired to be able to fold paper cranes and she would just look out that window.

Chapter 7 – June was very rainy. The sky was dark and gray and rain drops dripped from the trees. Sadako was weak and pale. Her class sent her a doll to try to cheer her up. Her mom brought all of her favorite foods wrapped up in a bundle but it didn't do any good because Sadako couldn't eat it because her mouth hurt. Sadako was upset because she made her mother sad, but her mother tried to comfort her.

Chapter 8 – July....last week Sadako seemed to be getting better. She was able to go home and be there for the O Bon celebration. It is a celebration to allow the spirits of those who had died to come back and visit their loved ones. The house had been cleaned and Sadako was happy. For several days, friends and family came to visit. Sadako became very tired again and her mother was very sad because she didn't have much energy like she did in the past.

Chapter 9 – Sadako became more and more weak. She wondered about what would happen when she died. She wondered if she would live on a heavenly mountain? Did it feel like falling asleep? Sadako couldn't think about anything else. Around the middle of October, Sadako became so tired she couldn't even fold a paper bird. The doctor told her to just rest and she could make more birds tomorrow.

Chapter Discussion Questions

Chapter 1 – What is a special celebration that you look forward to every year? Maybe July 4th? Your birthday? Or maybe some other day. What do you like to celebrate? Describe it.

Chapter 2 – Do you have a best friend or someone you are very close to? It could be a classmate, a friend, or even a family member. What is it about that person that makes them a good friend? Describe the qualities of a good friend.

Chapter 3 – Have you ever been really excited about something? Were you so excited that you just had to tell someone? What were you excited about and who did you tell? If you haven't experienced that, what is something that you think

Chapter 4 – Lots of people believe in different symbols, or various things that bring them good luck. Some people think the number 7 is lucky, or a horseshoe, etc. Some people some clothing is lucky. Do you have anything that you feel makes you lucky? Maybe it's just something that makes you feel good. What is it and why do you think it's lucky or makes you feel good?

Chapter 5 – Can you make anything out of paper? Sadako’s friend showed her about making a paper crane. Can you make one? Can you make something else? Describe how to make either a paper crane or something else out of paper. Even if it is folding paper to play a game like football, how do you fold it and what do you do with it after you’ve made it.

Chapter 6 – Have you ever been so tired that you just couldn’t do anything? If so, what caused you to be so tired? If you haven’t, have you ever seen someone else be that tired? Why were they tired?

Chapter 7 – How does it make you feel when the weather is bad for a long time? Some people like the cold, some people prefer when it’s hot. What do you like best? Why do you like the weather like that?

Chapter 8 – How do you think Sadako felt about going home for the O Bon celebration? Was she happy? Was she sad? Happy...why? Sad...why?

Chapter 9 – Sadako wondered if she would go and live on the Heavenly Mountain when she died. What do you think the Heavenly Mountain may look like in Sadako’s mind?