

Teach Peace Pack

Assembly: Sadako and the thousand cranes



Aim: to explore the human cost of war and see how children, so often the innocent victims, can work together for peace.

Planning/Preparation: You may want to display an image of Sadako during the assembly.

This assembly is most effective if it is followed up in the classroom with the making of origami cranes carrying the children's messages of peace.

Some children may find the content of this assembly upsetting, so be aware of the need for sensitive follow up.

1 Introduction

Explain that you are going to tell the children a story. The story is about a girl called Sadako. It is a sad story, but it also a story of courage and hope

2 Telling the story

Sadako Sasaki was only two years old when the bomb was dropped on 6 August near her home by Misasa Bridge in Hiroshima, Japan. Sadako was blown out of the window and her mother ran out to find her, suspecting she might be dead, but she found her daughter alive. Whilst Sadako, her parents and her brother escaped to safety, lots of other people were killed. Nearly the whole city was destroyed in seconds.

When Sadako was in Year 6 she was in a PE lesson when she suddenly fainted. She soon opened her eyes again, but everyone was very worried about her, so the next day Sadako had to see a doctor and have lots of tests. When the

results were ready, Sadako's father went to meet the doctor. It was bad news. The doctor said that Sadako had a type of cancer caused by the bomb. She was very ill and would have to go into hospital. She might only have one year to live. Sadako was confused – it had been 10 years since the bomb went off! Sadako's parents were heartbroken. They could not bear the thought of losing Sadako. They also did not want Sadako to feel scared about going to hospital, so her mother made her a kimono – a special Japanese dress. The material had pictures of cherry tree blossom, and it helped Sadako to feel better about being away from her friends and family.

One day, Sadako's friend Chizuko came to visit. She gave Sadako a bird made from folded gold paper. "The bird is called a crane" said Chizuko. "There is an old legend, that if you make one thousand of these, then you can make a wish." As soon as Chizuko had said these words, Sadako knew that this was what she must do. "I will make one thousand cranes! Then maybe I will get a wish." The two girls were excited and began folding immediately. Sadako was slow to start with, but it was not long before she could remember every fold and the pile of paper cranes began to grow. Sadako looked everywhere for paper to make new cranes. News spread throughout the hospital about her task and patients sent her their old newspapers and wrapping paper and the nurses sent her wrappers from packets of medicines.

Every day, she tried hard to sit up enough to fold her paper but this got harder and harder, until one day she folded her last crane. Number 644. Sadako died with her family at her bedside. The cancer had killed her. Sadako's body did not hurt any more.

At Sadako's funeral, her parents gave out the paper cranes to her school friends. They were pleased, but felt deeply shocked and upset by Sadako's death; it seemed so unfair. They talked to each other about how they felt, then someone had the idea of making a statue to tell people about Sadako, and all the other children who had died because of the bomb. The children agreed that this was a good idea. It was not long before school children from all over Japan were sending donations. Eventually, enough money had been raised, and a memorial statue of Sadako was put up. Sadako's friends stood around it. They felt proud of Sadako. Written on Sadako's statue are the words: *This is our cry, This is our prayer: To create peace in the world.*

3 Conclusion

This is sad story, but it is also one of courage and hope, for Sadako has inspired children all over the world. Children from many, many different countries learn to make the paper cranes. Sometimes they write their wishes for peace on their wings. Thousands of paper cranes are taken to the statue of Sadako in the Hiroshima park in Japan, and lie at its feet.

The peace cranes can never give Sadako her life back, but each of us can think of one thing we can do to make our family, friends, class or the wider world a more peaceful place. *Ask the students: What will you do?*

Follow up activities/resources:

- For other activities about Sadako, to learn how to make your own paper cranes, and for your free peace education pack, see www.cnd.org/education.

Cranes can be hung on strings and make a beautiful school display.
- Read *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, by Eleanor Coerr, 2004.
- Watch a short film or animation about Sadako, there are lots available online.
- Learn about other stories of children affected by war, such as: *Gervellie's Journey: A Refugee Diary* by Anthony Robinson and Annemarie Young, 2010. This is part of a series of Refugee Diary books: *Mohammed's Journey (Iraq)* *Hamzat's Journey (Chechyna)* and *Meltem's Journey (Turkey)*.
- Discover the message of peace and good will sent out by the young people of Wales annually on the Day of Goodwill, 18 May, (the date of the first peace conference in the Hague in 1899), to young people around the world. See www.urdd.cymru/en/humanitarian/peace-goodwill.
- Join the movement in support of International Day of Peace on 21 September – find ideas for action and share your plans for peace day to help inspire other around the world. Visit: www.un.org/en/events/peaceday.