

ACTIVITY: "Sadako & the Thousand Paper Cranes" GRADES 3-8

STEP 1 - PRESENT THE STORY OF SADAKO

Use the summary of the story on the back of this sheet. If you have more time, use more from the original story or one of the video versions of the story - ON A PAPER CRANE is a 27-minute animated cartoon adaptation of the story produced in Japan by Peace Anime no Kai and available from Dokuri+su Eiga Center Co., Taiyo Bldg 7F, 16-2 Shimbashi 3-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105, Japan.

STEP 2 - DISCUSS THE STORY

Encourage students to share their feelings about the story as well as ask questions. Discuss what they admire about Sadako and what they can learn from her story.

STEP 3- INTRODUCE AND MAKE THE PAPER CRANES (OPTIONAL)

Ask the students what the paper cranes meant to Sadako and especially what did the last one mean to her. Add insights from the story on the back as appropriate. If time allows, have the students make the cranes. Pair students who are better at this with those who need more help.

STEP 4 - DECIDE HOW TO BE LIKE SADAKO

Brainstorm ways you and your students can be peacemakers like Sadako and ask each person to decide what one thing they will do to be like Sadako. If the students are making paper cranes, have each person write on the wings of their paper crane a word or phrase expressing their action. If they are not making paper cranes, have them write their decisions on individual strips of colored paper and make a "WE WILL BE PEACEMAKERS WHEEL" with these strips pasted on as the spokes of the wheel.

STEP 5 - OPTIONAL: DECIDE WHAT (ELSE) TO DO WITH THE PAPER CRANES

Since the paper cranes have a number of possible uses, share those on the back with your students and see if they have other suggestions. Decide which one(s) to do and encourage the students to follow through.

CHECKLIST FOR THIS ACTIVITY:

- The story of Sadako and the directions for making paper cranes.
- If needed, at least 2 pieces of square paper for each student to make cranes.
- If needed, a large WE WILL BE PEACEMAKERS WHEEL and strips of paper

The Story of Sadako and the Meaning of the Paper Crane "A Challenge from Francis the Clown"

Sadako Sasaki was 2 years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on her city of Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. She wasn't killed, but her grandmother and several friends were. As a young girl, she was an extremely fast runner. But at age 11, she collapsed after a race and was eventually admitted to the hospital where she learned that she had contracted leukemia from the radiation of the atomic bomb. A friend told her about the Japanese legend of the paper cranes. If you make 1,000 cranes, your deepest wish is granted. Since the crane is a symbol of a long life, her friend thought if Sadako made 1,000, maybe she would be cured. Sadako worked for months, completing more than 600, but realized that she was dying. On her last crane (#644), she said she wanted to write "Peace" on its wings, so that it would fly over the whole world telling children and adults everywhere to work for peace, so that no other child would have to die as she was.

I sense that this 12-year-old girl realized at the end of her life that her life had more meaning to it, that she was not just doing something that would make her well but would have some meaning for others. Who could have guessed how widely her story would spread and what an impact her life would have. Her classmates finished the 1,000 cranes and took a collection around Japan to build a 30-foot arch in the Peace Park in Hiroshima with a statue of Sadako on top, with a crane over her head. Children and adults all over the world continue to make the paper cranes as a symbol of their commitment to work for peace. I make the cranes in this spirit and distribute them in public places as well as in church and school programs.

As I work with persons with AIDS, as a hospice volunteer with children who are dying, and as a prison volunteer, I see an even richer meaning to the cranes. Each of us has a limited time in life to make a difference. We each have a little "light" that is meant to shine on others. For each person, the circumstances are different and the recipients of our light are different. But no matter what those circumstances or how old we are, we each have a little light to share by what we do and how we do it, and especially in how we can reach out to others and touch their lives in some positive way. I give away the cranes and/or teach others to make them in this spirit, hoping that the crane will be a reminder to each of us that our life has meaning beyond the limitations we experience here and now, that each of us does make a difference, that each of us can dispell a little of the darkness around us with the light of our caring heart, eyes, and hands. If we give ourselves to whatever it is that we can do or be, even in a limited capacity, that light will live on. We will live on. Let's make a splash, even if it's only a little one, with our lives, as long as we are given the opportunity.

Action Possibilities on Sadako & the Paper Cranes

- Paper cranes as symbols of global reconciliation can be given to people from other countries, particularly people (once) regarded as "enemies" — e.g., people from Japan and the former Soviet Union. "Peace" could be written on the wings on both English and the other language.
- Paper cranes as symbols of a general commitment to peace and a reminder to pray and work for peace can decorate our own homes and classrooms, be part of Christmas tree decorations, or be given to friends as an invitation to them to work with us for peace.
- Paper cranes can be part of commemorative observances of the bombing of Hiroshima on or near August 6 and other commemorations of the victims of wars and other violence, such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day, September 11.
- Paper cranes as symbols of reconciliation can be given to persons with whom we want to establish a better relationship or as a sign that we want to heal a broken one. That person's name might be put on one wing, with "peace" and/or "I'm sorry" on the other.
- Floating lantern ceremonies on rivers and lakes are a Japanese rite to honor and comfort the souls of the dead. Many of the A-bomb's first victims sought refuge in Hiroshima's rivers, only to die there. The floating lanterns symbolize these burnt bodies. For a video and instructions for making lanterns and organizing a school or community event, contact the International Peace Lantern Exchange Project (P.O. Box 2999, La Crosse, WI 54602; 608-787-0801).
- New Mexico students organized a 5-year campaign (1990-1995) to get children around the world to help design and fund a Children's Peace Sculpture as a memorial to Sadako in the US. Contact the New Mexico Council of Churches, 124 Hermosa SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108, for information on the sculpture and the process. See also Phillip House, ITS OUR WORLD TOO (Boston, MA; Little, Brown, & Co; 1993) for an account of this amazing campaign.

Other Resources on Sadako

- Books include Eleanor Coeur's SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES (available from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960)
- A 40-minute reader's theatre version of the Sadako story that could be done by grades 5-8 is available from the Institute for Peace and Justice, for \$2.00 (includes mailing).
- The Peace Resource Center at Wilmington College (Pyle Center Box 1183, Wilmington, Ohio 45177) has a wonderful "Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Collection" of written and AV resources, including several presentations on Sadako and the children of Hiroshima.
- The Prairie Peace Park (www.peacepark.us) near Lincoln, Nebraska, has a wonderful memorial to Sadako and AV presentation on her and Samantha Smith.