



Assemblies for the UN International Day of Peace

21 September



ASSEMBLY 3: SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND CRANES



<http://twoforone.edublogs.org/2009/07/24/sadako-and-the-thousand-paper-cranes>

This assembly tells the true story of Sadako and the thousand cranes and celebrates the UN International Day of Peace.

Please note: Students may feel very sad about Sadako's story, please think about this beforehand and reassure students by pointing out that we are still talking about Sadako more than 50 years after she died. She has not been forgotten. She made a huge difference and encourages people all over the world to work towards peace.

1. Read the following story:

Sadako Sadaki was only 2 years old when the bomb was dropped on August 6 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 leukaemia – 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 leukaemia 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

2. **I'm telling this story today** (21 September) because it is the UN International Day of Peace (21 September). Today, people all over the world will make cranes. Many, many people will visit Sadako's statue. Thousands of cranes will lie at its feet.
3. **Special activities and celebrations will take place over the weekend**, including festivals, concerts and a moment of silence at mid-day in every time zone. Peace Day marks our personal and planetary progress toward peace. It has grown to include millions of people in all parts of the world. Anyone anywhere can celebrate Peace Day. It can be as simple as lighting a candle at mid-day, or sitting in silent meditation.
4. **International Day of Peace is also a Day of Ceasefire**— personal and political. It is an opportunity to make peace in your own relationships – at home and in school - as well as for those fighting in larger conflicts to stop the violence. Of course, one day of ceasefire is only the beginning. The goal is to create lasting peace on all levels – personal, local and global. By showing that 24 hours of non-violence is within our reach, we set an important example. Peace is possible.
5. **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.** What will you do?

Adapted from Sadako's Cranes for Peace, see: <http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/peaceed/sadako-pack.pdf> .
For more information on the UN International day of Peace, see: <http://peaceoneday.org>

<http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org>

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