



Sadako and the thousand paper cranes

Sadako Sadaki was only 2 years old when the atomic 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.