



1000 Cranes for Sadako

Tia Pliskow

Many people are aware of the story of Sadako Sasaki, the young girl who died from radiation poisoning in Hiroshima, Japan after World War II. Sadako believed that if she folded 1000 origami cranes, she would not die. Currently, children from all over the world fold and send cranes to be strung on the Sadako memorial in Hiroshima.

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Interdisciplinary Connections

I thought teaching the story would be a great way to expand my eighth-grade students' world view. To tie in the leadership element, they would teach the story to the seventh-grade class. This project also integrated and reinforced the twentieth-century American history unit they would be covering in their social studies class later in the year.

Learning to Make Origami Cranes

I introduced the unit by reading aloud the young adult book *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr. The story truly touched students and it marked the first time they had shown real interest in a project.

The following week, I passed out instructions

and demonstrated folding the cranes. To practice, we used regular printer paper cut into squares. Once students mastered the folding, we used origami paper, which can be purchased at any specialty paper or craft store.

Three students emerged with an affinity for paper-folding. This had quite an impact in the classroom, as other students were impressed by their skills and sought them out for assistance. I decided that these three students would take the lead during our presentation to the seventh-grade class.

Later that week I noticed students working on their cranes during their break periods. The small birds were getting a lot of notice throughout the school. So, when the day came to teach the seventh grade, everyone was ready.

Sharing the Knowledge

My class took their roles as teachers seriously. They shared an abbreviated retelling of the Sadako story, and partnered up with the other class to show them how to fold their cranes. The three leaders circulated and coached until each student had created a crane.

After their success in instructing the seventh-grade class, I asked the eighth-grade students if they would like to take the project to other classrooms. We decided to make the paper cranes a school-wide project. Each week throughout the next two months we taught the lesson to every classroom from kindergarten through sixth grade. Soon, the entire school was folding cranes.

In Memory of Sadako

Students wanted to send their cranes to the Sadako Memorial in Hiroshima, Japan. For the rest of that spring, we kept a large box outside my classroom for anyone who wanted to contribute cranes to the project. We strung them as we received them and, in May, sent a box containing about 450 cranes to Japan.

The project not only met my original objectives, but brought together the entire school through art and history. My original instruction to fourteen eighth graders led to students and teachers all over the school learning about one girl's wish and an ancient Japanese art tradition. ☺

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students make connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

WEB LINK

www.sadako.org/sadako/3_Sadako_Homepage.html