2 PEACE DAY

When the family started out, the air was already warm and dust hung over the busy streets. Sadako ran ahead to the house of her best friend, Chizuko. The two had been friends since kindergarten. Sadako was sure that they would always be as close as two pine needles on the same twig.

Chizuko waved and walked toward her. Sadako sighed. Sometimes she wished that her friend would move a bit faster. "Don't be such a turtle!" she shouted. "Let's hurry so we won't miss anything."

"Sadako chan, go slowly in this heat," her mother called after her. But it was too late. The girls were already racing up the street.

Mrs. Sasaki frowned. "Sadako is always in such a hurry to be first that she never stops to listen," she said.

Mr. Sasaki laughed and said, "Well, did you ever see her walk when she could run, hop, or jump?" There was pride in his voice because Sadako was such a fast, strong runner.

At the entrance to the Peace Park people filed through the memorial building in silence. On the walls were photographs of the dead and dying in a ruined city. The atom bomb --- the Thunderbolt --- had turned Hiroshima into a desert.

Sadako didn't want to look at the frightening pictures. She held tight to Chizuko's hand and walked quickly through the building.

"I remember the Thunderbolt," Sadako whispered to her friend. "There was the flash of a million suns. Then the heat prickled my eyes like needles."

"How can you possibly remember anything?" Chizuko exclaimed. "You were only a baby then."

"Well, I do!" Sadako said stubbornly.

After speeches by Buddhist priests and the mayor, hundreds of white doves were freed from their cages. They circled the twisted, scarred Atomic Dome. Sadako thought the doves looked like spirits of the dead flying into the freedom of the sky.

When the ceremonies were over, Sadako led the others straight to the old lady who sold cotton candy. It tasted even better than last year.

The day passed too quickly, as it always did. The best part, Sadako thought, was looking at all the things to buy and smelling the good food. There were stalls selling everything from bean cakes to chirping crickets. The worst part was seeing people with ugly whitish scars. The atom bomb burned them so badly that they no longer looked human. If any of the bomb victims came near Sadako, she turned away quickly.

Excitement grew as the sun went down. When the last dazzling display of fireworks faded from the sky, the crowd carried paper lanterns to the banks of the Ohta River.

Mr. Sasaki carefully lit candles inside of six lanterns --- one for each member of the family. The lanterns carried names of relatives who had died because of the Thunderbolt. Sadako had written Oba chan's name on the side of her lantern. When the candles were burning brightly, the lanterns were launched on the Ohta River. They floated out to sea like a swarm of fireflies against the dark water.

That night Sadako lay awake for a long time, remembering everything about the day. Masahiro was wrong, she thought. The spider had brought good luck. Tomorrow she would remind him about that.

Comprehension Check 2

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1. Sadako and Chizuko had been good friends since they were little. ( )

2. Sadako walked quickly through the memorial building as she didn't want to look at the frightening pictures. ( )

3. The mayor made a speech after hundreds of white doves were freed from their cages. ( )

4. Sadako's father lit candles inside of five lanterns. ( )