5 THE GOLDEN CRANE

The next morning Sadako woke up slowly. She listened for the familiar sounds of her mother making breakfast, but there were only the new and different sounds of a hospital. Sadako sighed. She had hoped that yesterday was just a bad dream. It was even more real when Nurse Yasunaga came in to give her a shot.

"Getting shots is part of being in the hospital," the plump nurse said briskly. "You'll get used to it."

"I just want the sickness to be over with," Sadako said unhappily, "so I can go home."

That afternoon Chizuko was Sadako's first visitor. She smiled mysteriously as she held something behind her back. "Shut your eyes," she said. While Sadako squinted her eyes tightly shut, Chizuko put some pieces of paper and scissors on the bed. "Now you can look," she said.

"What is it?" Sadako asked, staring at the paper.

Chizuko was pleased with herself. "I've figured out a way for you to get well," she said proudly. "Watch!" She cut a piece of gold paper into a large square. In a short time she had folded it over and over into a beautiful crane.

Sadako was puzzled. "But how can that paper bird make me well?"

"Don't you remember that old story about the crane?" Chizuko asked. "It's supposed to live for a thousand years. If a sick person folds one thousand paper cranes, the gods will grant her wish and make her healthy again." She handed the crane to Sadako. "Here's your first one."

Sadako's eyes filled with tears. How kind of Chizuko to bring a good luck charm! Especially when her friend didn't really believe in such things. Sadako took the golden crane and made a wish. The funniest little feeling came over her when she touched the bird. It must be a good omen.

"Thank you, Chizuko chan," she whispered. "I'll never part with it."

When she began to work with the paper, Sadako discovered that folding a crane wasn't as easy as it looked. With Chizuko's help she learned how to do the difficult parts. After making ten birds, Sadako lined them up on the table beside the golden crane. Some were a bit lopsided, but it was a beginning.

"Now I have only nine hundred and ninety to make," Sadako said. With the golden crane nearby she felt safe and lucky. Why, in a few weeks she would be able to finish the thousand. Then she would be strong enough to go home.

That evening Masahiro brought Sadako's homework from school. When he saw the cranes, he said, "There isn't enough room on that small table to show off your birds. I'll hang them from the ceiling for you."

Sadako was smiling all over. "Do you promise to hang every crane I make?" she asked.

Masahiro promised.

"That's fine!" Sadako said, her eyes twinkling with mischief. "Then you'll hang the whole thousand?"

"A thousand!" Her brother groaned. "You're joking!"

Sadako told him the story of the cranes.

Masahiro ran a hand through his straight black hair. "You tricked me!" he said with a grin. "But I'll do it anyhow." He borrowed some thread and tacks from Nurse Yasunaga and hung the first ten cranes. The golden crane stayed in its place of honor on the table.

After supper Mrs. Sasaki brought Mitsue and Eiji to the hospital. Everyone was surprised to see the birds. They reminded Mrs. Sasaki of a famous old poem:

Out of colored paper, cranes

come flying into

our house.

Mitsue and Eiji liked the golden crane best. But Mrs. Sasaki chose the tiniest one made of fancy green paper with pink parasols on it. "This is my choice," she said, "because small ones are the most difficult to make."

After visiting hours it was lonely in the hospital room. So lonely that Sadako folded more cranes to keep up her courage.

Eleven ... I wish I'd get better.

Twelve ... I wish I'd get better ...

Comprehension Check 5

本文の内容に合うものには○を、合わないものには×をつけなさい．

1. Chizuko visited Sadako the day after Sadako went into the hospital. ( )

2. Chizuko told Sadako that one thousand paper cranes would make her healthy. ( )

3. Sadako found that folding a crane was easy. ( )

4. Masahiro hung the golden crane from the ceiling. ( )