7 HUNDREDS OF WISHES

June came with its long, endless rains. Day after day the sky was gray as rain spattered against the windows. Rain dripped steadily from the leaves of the maple tree. Soon everything in the room smelled musty. Even the sheets felt clammy.

Sadako grew pale and listless. Only her parents and Masahiro were allowed to visit her. The bamboo class sent a Kokeshi doll to cheer her up. Sadako liked the wooden doll's wistful smile and the red roses painted on its kimono. The doll stood next to the golden crane on Sadako's bedside table.

Mrs. Sasaki was worried because Sadako didn't eat enough. One evening she brought a surprise wrapped in a furoshiki bundle. It contained all of Sadako's favorite foods --- an egg roll, chicken and rice, pickled plums, and bean cakes. Sadako propped herself up against the pillows and tried to eat. But it was no use. Her swollen gums hurt so much that she couldn't chew. Finally, Sadako pushed the good things away. Her mother's eyes were bright as if she were going to cry.

"I'm such a turtle!" Sadako burst out. She was angry with herself for making her mother sad. She also knew that the Sasaki family had no extra money for expensive food. Tears stung Sadako's eyes and she quickly brushed them away.

"It's all right," Mrs. Sasaki said soothingly. She cradled Sadako in her arms. "You'll be better soon. Maybe when the sun comes out again ..."

Sadako leaned against her mother and listened to her read from a book of poems. When Masahiro came, Sadako was calmer and happier. He told her news from school and ate some of the special dinner.

Before Masahiro left, he said, "Oh, I almost forgot! Eiji sent you a present." He dug into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of silver paper. "Here," he said, giving it to his sister. "Eiji said this is for another crane."

Sadako sniffed the paper. "Ummm! It smells like candy," she said. "I hope the gods like chocolate."

The three burst out laughing. It was the first time Sadako had laughed in days. It was a good sign. Perhaps the golden crane's magic was beginning to work. She smoothed out the paper and folded a bird.

Five hundred and forty-one ...

But she was too tired to make more. Sadako stretched out on the bed and closed her eyes. As Mrs. Sasaki tiptoed out of the room, she whispered a poem she used to say when Sadako was little:

"O flock of heavenly cranes

Cover my child with your wings."

Comprehension Check 7

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. When Sadako grew pale and listless, Mitsue and Eiji were not allowed to visit her. ( )

2. Sadako was very happy to eat her favorite food which her mother brought her. ( )

3. Sadako knew that her family had no extra money for expensive food. ( )

4. Mitsue sent Sadako a piece of silver paper through Masahiro. ( )