9 RACING WITH THE WIND

As Sadako grew weaker, she thought more about death. Would she live on a heavenly mountain? Did it hurt to die? Or was it like falling asleep?

If only I could forget about it, Sadako thought. But it was like trying to stop the rain from falling. As soon as she concentrated on something else, death crept back into her mind.

Toward the middle of October, Sadako lost track of days and nights. Once, when she was awake, she saw her mother crying.

"Don't cry," she begged. "Please don't cry." Sadako wanted to say more, but her mouth and tongue wouldn't move. A tear slid down her cheek. She had brought her mother so much grief. And all Sadako could do now was make paper cranes and hope for a miracle.

She fumbled with a piece of paper. Her fingers were too clumsy to fold it.

I can't even make a crane, she said to herself. I've turned into a real turtle! Quickly, quickly, Sadako tried with all her strength to fold the paper before she was swept into darkness.

It might have been minutes or hours later that Dr. Numata came in and felt Sadako's forehead. He gently took the paper out of her hands. She barely heard him say, "It's time to rest. You can make more birds tomorrow."

Sadako gave a faint nod. Tomorrow ... tomorrow seemed such a long, long way off.

The next time she awoke, the family was there. Sadako smiled at them. She was part of that warm, loving circle where she would always be. Nothing could ever change that.

Already lights were dancing behind her eyes. Sadako slid a thin, trembling hand over to touch the golden crane. Life was slipping away from her, but the crane made Sadako feel stronger inside.

She looked at her flock hanging from the ceiling. As she watched, a light autumn breeze made the birds rustle and sway. They seemed to be alive and flying out through the open window. How beautiful and free they were! Sadako sighed and closed her eyes.

She never woke up.

Comprehension Check 9

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1. As Sadako grew weaker, she did not think any more about death. ( )

2. Sadako tried to fold the paper but her fingers would not work. ( )

3. Dr. Numata took the paper out of Sadako's hands and made a crane for her. ( )

4. When Sadako awoke, she found the family by her bed and smiled at them. ( )