

# Sachiko: a Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story

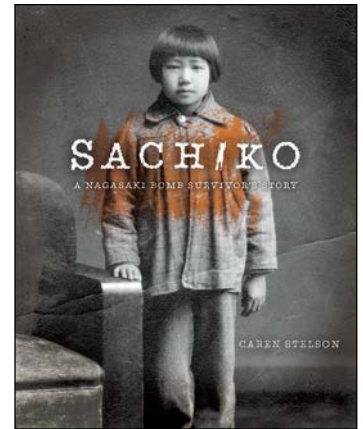
by Caren Stelson, 2016, Carolrhoda Books

## PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION OF THE BOOK

"August 9, 1945, began like any other day for six-year-old Sachiko. Her country was at war, she didn't have anything to eat. At 11:01 a.m., she was playing outdoors with four other children. Moments later, those children were all dead. An atomic bomb had exploded just a half mile away.

In the days and months that followed, Sachiko lost family members, her hair fell out, she woke screaming in the night. When she was finally well enough to start school, other children bullied her. Through it all, she sought to understand what had happened, finding strength in the writings of Helen Keller, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr.

Based on extensive interviews with Sachiko Yasui, Caren Stelson shares the true story of a young girl who survived the atomic bomb and chronicles her long journey to find peace. Sachiko's story offers readers a remarkable new perspective on the final moments of World War II—and their aftermath."



## ABOUT CAREN STELSON

As a child, Caren Stelson loved reading, especially historical fiction and biographies. She says that her favorite book will always be *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Caren has read the novel multiple times as a young reader and as an adult. On each reading, she finds something new to admire in Lee's craft and the skilled delivery of the story. Currently, some of the authors Caren most enjoys reading include Kate DiCamillo, Russell Freeman and Karen Hesse (who write for young readers), and lately Elizabeth Strout (who writes for adults). Caren also loved writing as a child. She tells aspiring writers that it is important to first be readers and read widely. Secondly, when it's time to write, write the truth as you see it.



Stelson majored in history in college, and later earned a master's degree in education and a master of fine arts degree in writing for children and young adults. She went on to become a teacher, writing consultant, and the writer and editor of educational materials.

Her interest in Sachiko Yasui began with her father, a veteran of World II. Though he never talked of his experiences as an infantryman fighting the Nazis in Germany, Stelson knew that these experiences had impacted him deeply. As a little girl, she woke up to his nightmare screams that reverberated through her bedroom walls. Later in life, Caren returned to these memories of her father and began a deeper study of war, particularly World War II's impact on child survivors. She traveled to Germany to visit World War II battle sites and lived in Bath, England, where she interviewed adults who as children had survived WWII. When Caren first met Sachiko Yasui on her visit to the Twin Cities in 2005, Caren knew she had to tell Sachiko's story.

In addition to her work as an author, travel and research are among Caren's current passions. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband, Kim, and has two grown children, Aaron and Beth.

## EXTENSION

Discuss with your group why it is important for a writer to first be a reader. Then discuss why reading is important in general.

**A NOTE FOR TEACHERS:** The following questions and activities support the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

## BEFORE YOU READ

1. Before you begin reading *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story*, examine the **book's cover and its parts**: look at the photo on the cover, read the material found on the back of the cover, read the publisher's description of the book on the inside of the jacket, read the title page and table of contents at the front of the book, and browse the book's back matter (glossary, notes, acknowledgements, bibliography, resources, index and author's note) at the end of the book. Based on your examination, what do you expect to find in the book? Do the cover and front and back matter make you want to read the book? Explain.
2. *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story* is an example of a **narrative nonfiction** book, specifically a biographical **memoir**. Look up definitions of nonfiction and memoir at <http://literarydevices.net> or <http://www.dictionary.com> or <http://www.merriam-webster.com>. When you are done reading the book, be able to explain what makes it an example of nonfiction and a memoir. Why is it **biographical** as opposed to **autobiographical**? With your group, come up with a list of books that you have read, or know of, that can be considered nonfiction and/or memoirs.

It should also be noted that *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story* is an example of an **authorized** work. Caren Stelson worked closely with the subject of the book, Sachiko Yasui, and had her permission to tell this story. How does this knowledge add to the book's reliability and authenticity?

As mentioned in the "About the Author" section above, Caren tells young writers that it is important to tell the **truth** in their writing? What is truth? Is the truth of a particular event different for each of us? Think about all of the things, over seven decades, that may have shaped the telling of Sachiko's story:

- memories and how they might change over time and in the retelling of them
- the language barrier (Caren does not speak Japanese, and Sachiko does not speak English, so all of their communication was done through an interpreter) and what can be lost and changed in translation
- cultural differences
- the relationship that developed between Sachiko and Caren, etc.
- Caren's own experiences

Discuss all of the factors that can shape the truth of a story. Would this story have been different had someone other than Caren Stelson written it? Explain.

3. The title of the book tells us that it is "A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story." It begins in August of 1945, just prior to the end of World War II. Discuss with your group members what you **already know** about:
  - the relationship between the United States and Japan during World War II
  - Japanese wartime conditions
  - the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941

- the incarceration of Japanese Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor (Executive Order 9066 was signed on February 19, 1942)
- the United States' planned invasion of Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor
- the development of the atomic bomb
- the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945)
- the Japanese surrender (September 2, 1945)



4. High quality works of nonfiction require diligent **research** by an author. Reread the "Author's Note" on pages 114-116 where Caren details what led to the writing of *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story*, and the process that she used in researching the book. What inspired Stelson to learn more about Sachiko Yasui and to write about her? You will see that Caren used both **primary and secondary resources** in researching the book. Look at the definitions of primary and secondary resources found at: <http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/primarysecondary>. Which type of resource does Caren rely most heavily upon in *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story*? Explain. Look again at the bibliography and list of resources at the back of the book. Find one example of a primary resource and one of a secondary resource. You may need to do some further investigation to make this determination.

## AS YOU READ

1. In the preface to *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story*, Caren tells the reader about the event that inspired her to write Sachiko Yasui's story. Caren's personal interest in World II led her to Lyndale Park Peace Garden in Minneapolis in 2005. When she eventually met Sachiko Yasui, it became a **life changing moment** for her. There are many small and large moments in our lives that inspire us to learn more, dig deeper, and take action.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT-HBI2TVtI> View this video for examples of some inspiring small moments. What were some of the specific small events that inspired the individuals in this video to take action? What action did those moments inspire? Read the following story for an example of a big moment that inspired many people to take action: <http://www.startribune.com/shoulder-to-shoulder-strangers-came-to-the-rescue-of-a-suicidal-woman-in-st-paul/389017491/>. Obviously, hearing Sachiko Yasui speak made a lasting impression on Caren Stelson. Do you think what happened in the *Star Tribune* story will have a lasting impact on both the victim and on those who helped to save her? Explain.

Can you think of a moment, small or large, that inspired you to learn more, dig deeper, or take action? Share this experience with your group.

2. As you read *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story*, prepare a **timeline** of at least ten of the most significant events in Sachiko's life. Include both the date of the event and the event itself. Be able to defend your choices of significant events in Sachiko's life.
3. On page 9, we find a scene in which Sachiko's younger brother is given the family's **one egg** at mealtime. Why do you think Toshi is given the egg?
4. Caren Stelson successfully gives the reader both the **big picture** of what was happening in the world in 1945 (the pages with a gray background), while juxtaposing that information with an **intimate picture** of what day to day life was like in Japan during World War II for one family (the pages with a white background). Most readers are probably somewhat familiar with the big picture of World War II from the perspective of **American history**, but not from the perspective of **Japanese history**. Why is it important for the reader to know the intimate story of Sachiko and her family?

5. Examine the following statement found on page 14: “World War II was a conflict over **power, politics, people, territory and resources**. But it was also a struggle about **race, ethnicity, and culture**.” Discuss each of these words as they relate to World War II (reread pages 11-15 if necessary). Now think about current events. Are there domestic and international conflicts today that pertain to each of these ideas? Give examples.
6. Why did many American citizens have **anti-Japanese sentiments** prior to World War II? (p. 14) How did World War II, and particularly the bombing of Pearl Harbor, intensify these feelings? How, on the other hand, did Japanese citizens view Americans during World War II? Why did they have **anti-American sentiments**?

As a result of these sentiments, war **propaganda**, like the political posters found on page 15, appeared. At <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/propaganda> “propaganda” is defined as: “information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.” Besides political posters, what were some other ways in which propaganda was spread during World War II? Compare and contrast the two posters found on page 15. What role does **racism** play in this propaganda?

### EXTENSION

Do a digital image search for “World War II propaganda.” Find at least one example of an American propaganda poster or cartoon that seems to promote racism against the Japanese and, thus, fear. Then find an American World War II anti-Nazis propaganda poster. Can you find any examples of both Japanese and Nazi World War II anti-American propaganda? Compare and contrast these items. See examples below.



(from: [Wikimedia Commons](#))



(from: [archives.gov](#))



(from: [joshmcneill.com](#))

7. Describe the **relationship between the United States and Japan today**. Are there continuing ramifications of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? On May 27, 2016, President Obama became the first American president to visit Hiroshima since the dropping of the atomic bomb. His visit was controversial. Read the following series of articles from *The New York Times* that represent various viewpoints on Obama’s visit, and listen to excerpts from Obama’s speech: <http://www.nytimes.com/live/president-obama-hiroshima-japan/>

As Sachiko tells us, “What happened to me must never happen to you.” In his speech at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, President Obama talked about the power of science and technology and said, “...we have a shared responsibility to look directly into the eye of history and ask what we must do differently to curb such suffering again. Someday, the voices of the hibakusha will no longer be with us to bear witness. But the memory of the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, must never fade.”

Discuss these statements. Do you agree or disagree? Explain. Should President Obama have visited Hiroshima? Should he have apologized for the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945? Why or why not?

Compare and contrast this to the current sentiments of some Americans towards Muslims and various cultural groups living in the United States.

8. Author Caren Stelson makes use of **strong imagery** to make Sachiko's story come to life for us. There is **poetry** in her **prose**. For instance, on page 18, she says, "Blink. Blink — Aki's flashlight. Like fireflies longing for each other, light beams flickered and disappeared." This is an example of a **simile** because it uses the word "like" to compare the light beams of the flashlight to fireflies. On page 36, Caren describes the explosion of the atomic bomb at Nagasaki: "Flames like snake tongues licked telephone poles, consumed flattened houses, gobbled anything in their path." **Strong verbs** like "licked" and "consumed" and "gobbled" give the reader a true sense of how the fire moved through the city. There is also a simile in this statement. What is being compared?

As you read, look for at least one example of each of the **poetic devices** listed below. Write down the page number the example is found on, the sentence(s) containing the poetic device, what it means, and why you think the example is effective. Be prepared to share these with your group members.

- simile
- metaphor
- personification
- strong verbs
- symbolism (for example, what might the cicada and the camphor trees described in Sachiko's story be symbolic of?)

## EXTENSION

In order to achieve poetry in her prose, Caren did several things. First of all, she read scientific reports and many hibakusha accounts of the dropping of the bomb on Nagasaki, and then developed a word bank to help her describe the bombing in the book. She also studied Japanese **haiku** (three line poems with a total of seventeen syllables — five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third). Here are examples of haiku written about the dropping of the atomic bombs by Japanese poet, Shigemoto Yasuhiko:

A-bomb blast center  
no human shadows at all  
the winter full moon

— Shigemoto Yasuhiko

The children hunting  
a cicada — not seeing  
the Atom Bomb Dome

— Shigemoto Yasuhiko



Caren tells us in an interview that she recently did for *Booklist* magazine, "Sachiko's greatest hope was always to give young people the strength and courage to surmount the challenges they face in their lives so they can work for peace in their communities and in the world." Brainstorm a list of words that you associate with the idea of **peace**. Use this word list to write a haiku poem about the idea of peace.

<http://lernerbooks.blogspot.com/2016/08/q-with-author-caren-stelson.html>

9. In the chapter entitled, "The End of the World," Caren describes Sachiko's experiences when the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. What circumstances led to **Sachiko's survival**, both in the short term and the long term? Compare and contrast this to the fate of her family members, including her uncle. Draw a family tree that includes each of Sachiko's family members in order of age. Trace each family member's journey. Note the year in which they died and the way in which they died. What do we learn about the power of nuclear weapons from the fate of each of these individuals?
10. When the Japanese surrendered, Caren tells us on page 45 that, "The war was over. Over. Japan had surrendered unconditionally. The U.S. military would occupy the nation. After two thousand years, Japan would face for the very first time an occupying enemy on its own soil. Who knew what horrors might come next?" In what ways were these "**horrors**" and "**fears**" realized, and not realized, by the Japanese people? Explain and give examples to support your ideas.
11. When Sachiko's father says on page 47, "'The **past** is useless now,'" what does he mean? Is he correct? Explain. Give examples of other times and events in history in which the past had proven useless.
12. On this issue of **survival**, Sachiko's father tells his ailing son, Aki, "...the person who survives puts all his strength together to live. You need not escape this world." (p. 48) What did he mean, and why do you think he spoke these words to his son? Is there truth in his words? Explain.
13. The **short and long term effects** of the bomb and the radiation it emitted are detailed on pages 52 and 53. Do you think American leaders would have made the decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had they known the long term ramifications of their decision? Explain. What does this teach us about the significance of thorough and long term **research**? Can you think of other man-made developments that had negative consequences which could have been avoided had more thorough and long-term research been done (cigarettes, for example)? How did issues of safety, economics, and power impact the development and use of these products?
14. Respond to the **conditions of the Japanese surrender** discussed on pages 58 and 59. Did these conditions display a lack of democracy? For example, freedom of religion is guaranteed in the United States Constitution, yet the Japanese state religion of Shintoism was banned. Why was it banned? How do you feel about this? Can you think of other examples where the freedom of religion has not been realized by certain groups in America? Also, how did school for Japanese children change after the surrender? Do you agree that these changes were necessary? Why or why not? Why did the occupying forces ban any mention of the atomic bomb and its ramifications? What were the pros and cons of this ban?
15. Describe Sachiko's continued relationship with her older brother, **Ichiro**, even after his death. Why do you think this occurs?
16. **Grandmother's bowl** is an example of what is called an **endowed object**. Note that Caren first mentions it on page 9, which gives it more meaning when Sachiko's family later finds it in the remains of their home, and even more meaning when Sachiko shows it to Caren many years later during one of their interviews. What do you think is the significance of finding grandmother's bowl? What could it have symbolized at the time, and what might it symbolize today?

Can you think of any possessions that a member of your family owns that have special significance? Ask an adult (caretaker, parent, teacher, grandparent, aunt or uncle) if he or she has any such possessions. If he or she does, ask to see them, and ask him or her to tell you the story behind these items. Where did the items come from? Why are they significant?



# 和平 Peace

(From: <http://www.clipartbest.com>)

17. Sachiko's father taught her that, "Hate only produces hate," (pp. 68-69) and encouraged her to read the works of **non-violent** philosopher and activist, **Mohandas K. Gandhi**. How was this philosophy useful to Sachiko in her life? Can you think of contemporary examples of situations that demonstrate the truth in both Sachiko's father's, and Gandhi's, philosophies?

## EXTENSION

Learn more about **Mohandas K. Gandhi**:

- Visit <http://www.mkgandhi.org/main.htm> (this website has as its mission, "...the noble cause of spreading the word of Mahatma Gandhi...the greatest man of 20th century").
  - Check out <http://www.history.com/topics/mahatma-gandhi> (this website includes an article about Gandhi's life, videos, pictures, and speeches).
  - Go to <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mohandas-Karamchand-Gandhi> (this Encyclopedia Britannica entry includes an article, images and a video).
  - Read books like: *Gandhi: An Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth* by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1925), *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas* by Mahatma Gandhi (1962), *Grandfather Gandhi* by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus (2014), and *Who Was Gandhi?* by Dana Meachen Rau (2014).
18. Why do you think Sachiko's intelligence led to **bullying** by her peers? (p. 71) In your experience, is the bullying of smart students a common occurrence? Why? How did Sachiko deal with the bullying? Was it effective?
19. In the chapter, "A Path to Peace," Sachiko's mother encourages her to write in order to "find your mind." How can written and spoken **words** be used both as weapons and as healers? As Sachiko later learns, "Every word is precious." (p. 91) How does this message play out, both literally and figuratively, in Sachiko's life?
20. On the third anniversary of the bombing, August 9, 1948, a commemorative service was held to, "honor the dead and give hope to the living." Discuss the statement found on page 73: "The crowd at the hypocenter whispered the names of their dead and tried to **forgive**. Try to forgive whom? Themselves? One another? Forgive all those who had survived for not being able to save all those who perished?" Who do you feel may have needed to forgive and/or be forgiven for all of the losses that occurred in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Explain.
21. In what ways was **Helen Keller**'s visit to Nagasaki in 1948 inspirational for Sachiko and the people of Nagasaki? With your group members, come up with names of other individuals who, "...surmounted [their] own disabilities, found light in darkness, hope in despair," (p. 77) and provided inspiration for others trying to overcome obstacles.

## EXTENSION

### Learn more about **Helen Keller**:

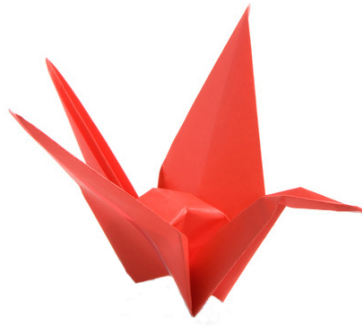
- Read *The Miracle Worker* (a play by William Gibson), *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller (an autobiography), or *Miss Spitfire: Reaching Helen Keller* by Sarah Miller (a novel from the perspective of Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller's teacher)
- Visit <http://www.afb.org/info/about-us/helen-keller/biography-and-chronology/biography/1235> (the American Foundation of the Blind "...sees a world where people with vision loss have equal access and opportunities to excel at school, at work, and in their communities").
- Though Keller is known for her work as an **activist** in Japan, most in the United States know little about this aspect of Keller's life. This article, published in the *International Socialist Review*, states: "Helen Keller is one of the most widely recognized figures in US history that people actually know very little about...she was a serious political thinker who made important contributions in the fields of socialist theory and practice..." <http://isreview.org/issue/96/politics-helen-keller>
- Read more about Keller's social activism at: <http://www.biography.com/people/helen-keller-9361967#social-activism>

22. Caren tells us on page 85 that "**hibakusha**," the survivors of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, "...would live with the effects of the atomic bomb for the rest of their lives." What are the four types of "explosion-affected people" that Caren tells us about? Discuss the specific long-term emotional and physical ramifications of Sachiko's experiences and that of the other hibakusha, as well as how they coped. For more information about the effects of radiation on the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, look at the studies from the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission.

## EXTENSION

Investigate the effects of radiation on others who have been exposed through the testing of nuclear weapons, contact with contaminated areas, medical experimentation, nuclear power accidents, etc. Share your findings with your group. Compare and contrast the experiences of these survivors to those of Sachiko. Your study might include:

- Chernobyl, Ukraine
- Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania
- Fukushima, Japan
- Kyshtym, Russia
- Kramatorsk, Ukraine
- Nye County, Nevada



23. In what ways did the United States **assist** the Japanese, particularly the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, at the end of World War II? Discuss whether or not this assistance was adequate and why. Compare and contrast this to the assistance provided to Europeans after World War II through the Marshall Plan or the European Recovery Program: <http://marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/history-marshall-plan/>. Why might the United States have been willing to provide more assistance to Europeans than to the Japanese after World War II?
24. With your group members discuss Gandhi's belief that, "Everyone's life was made small and ugly by **prejudice** and discrimination, whether that person realized it or not." In what way was this lesson learned both by Gandhi and Sachiko? Discuss contemporary examples that support this belief.

25. Discuss Sachiko's conclusion as she followed **Martin Luther King Jr.** and the American Civil Rights Movement that, "Unless racism and poverty were eliminated, true world peace could not be achieved." (p. 99) Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

### EXTENSION

Learn more about **Martin Luther King Jr.:**

- Read the graphic novel series *March*, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell.
- Read picture books like *Martin's Big Words* by Doreen Rappaport, *Who Was Martin Luther King Jr.?* by Bonnie Bader, and *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King Jr.
- Read *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, edited by James M. Washington.
- Visit the King Center website for more information and suggested reading:  
<http://www.thekingcenter.org>.

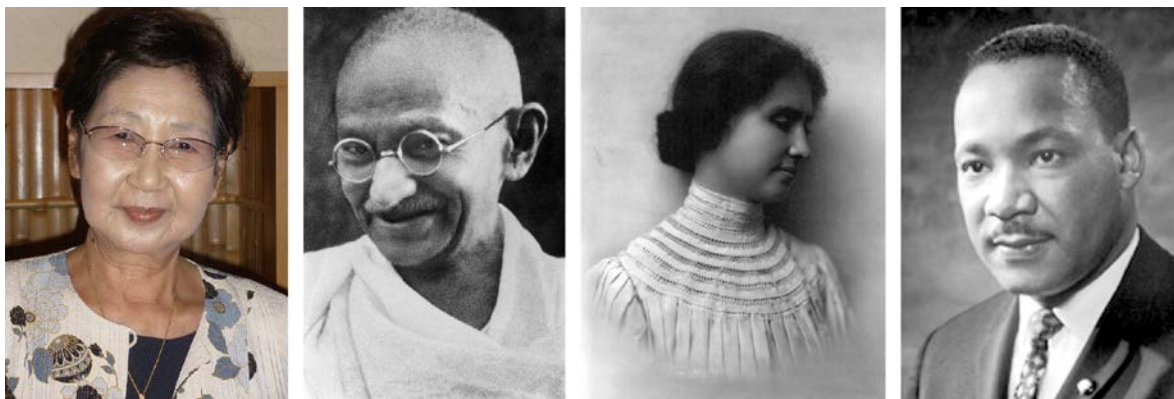


Photo of Sachiko Yasui used with permission; photos of Gandhi, Keller, and King are Creative Commons.

26. Sachiko, Gandhi, Helen Keller, and Martin Luther King, Jr., are all examples of individuals who have proven that one person can make a difference. They were "teachers of peace" and **activists**. Compare and contrast their words and teachings.

What is one contemporary issue that you feel strongly enough about to become an activist for? Share this with your group. Explore ways in which you can be an activist for this cause. Consult an official website that deals with this issue for ideas.

### EXTENSION

Read about six teen activists who literally changed the world at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/18/teenagers-changing-world-malala-yousafzai>

27. With the **development and testing of nuclear weapons** by several countries in the late 1950's and early 1960's came the realization that a nuclear war could mean the destruction of the world as we know it. (p. 102-103) How did this knowledge impact many hibakusha, and eventually Sachiko?

We know that currently nine countries possess over 15,000 nuclear weapons. (p. 116) Nuclear tensions exist between the nine nations who currently possess nuclear weapons – the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea. Read the following fact sheet from the Arms Control Association: <https://www.armscontrol.org/>. What are your thoughts on this knowledge?

28. Break down the word “**history**” —his story. Does it matter from whose perspective the events of history are told? Explain. Can history be manipulated to benefit or hinder certain individuals or groups? Explain. How did the occupying United States forces try to manipulate history after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why do you think the planning of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings exhibits in both Japan and the United States was so controversial? (pp. 108–109) On page 116, author Caren Stelson tells us that in doing her research for *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story* she, “...spent hours reading about World War II in the Pacific, unlearning and relearning history. Wartime censorship and propaganda have skewed our understanding of why the United States chose to drop the atomic bomb.” Discuss this statement.

Can you think of more examples in which history has been manipulated and has, perhaps, changed our view of the world? For instance, most of us know the story of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912 when over 1,500 people died. However, most of us know little or nothing about the sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff in 1945 when over 9,000 individuals lost their lives. Do some exploring. Why do you think we know so much about one event and not the other? Why is it important for all humans to tell our stories, and for us to know and learn from history?

### EXTENSION

Discuss and/or write about the following statements about history from well-known figures:

- Caren Stelson: “Young people are our future; they need to understand the past.”
- Martin Luther King Jr.: “We are not makers of history. We are made by history.”
- Martin Luther King Jr.: “History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”
- Mohandas K. Gandhi: “A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”
- George Santayana: “Those who do not remember history are condemned to repeat it.”
- Maya Angelou: “History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”
- Napoleon Bonaparte: “What is history but a fable agreed upon?”
- Winston Churchill: “History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.”
- Mark Twain: “The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice.”

29. When Sachiko Yasui found her voice in 1995 and decided to finally speak about what she and her family experienced when the atomic was dropped on Nagasaki, she wrote:

“Every word is precious.  
One word can make you feel loved.  
One word can hurt. One word can make you cry.  
One word can break your heart.  
One word can do so much damage.  
One word can do so much good.  
Even one word can lead people.  
One word can protect world peace.  
Every word is precious.”



Choose one of the lines from Sachiko's poem to write about. Tell about a personal experience that you have had that demonstrates the truth of this statement. For instance, talk about a time in which you, or someone in your life, wrote or spoke a word or words that resulted in something positive or negative. Share your writing with the group. Collectively, what do the experiences that your group members wrote about teach you?

30. How would you answer Sachiko's final questions: **"What is peace? What kind of person should I be?"** Discuss with your group members.
31. Compare and contrast Sachiko's experiences as a survivor of the bombing of Nagasaki to the stories of other **hibakusha** of both Nagasaki and Hiroshima. In what ways are their experiences similar, and in what ways are they not? What do we learn from their testimony? Why is it important that their testimonies be preserved? You can find more first person accounts at:
- <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima> (Perhaps one of the most well-known accounts of the dropping of the atomic bomb is a piece called "Hiroshima" by John Hersey, which was published in 1946. You can read the original piece, which was published in *The New Yorker*, here. This is an example of a **secondary resource**.)
  - <http://www.hiroshima-remembered.com/history/hiroshima/page14.html> (This site includes the first person stories of three survivors of the Hiroshima attack – **primary resources**.)
  - <http://www.sbs.com.au/hiroshima/> (This **primary resource** is Junko Morimoto's personal account of what she experienced at the age of thirteen when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.)
  - [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/28/world/asia/survivors-recount-horrors-of-hiroshima-and-nagasaki.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/28/world/asia/survivors-recount-horrors-of-hiroshima-and-nagasaki.html?_r=0) (On the occasion of Obama's visit to Hiroshima, this **secondary resource**, *The New York Times*, recounts several Nagasaki and Hiroshima survivor stories.)
  - If you search YouTube for "first person accounts of Nagasaki and Hiroshima," you will find several hibakusha telling their stories (these are **primary resources**.)

## EXTENSION

Explore the survivor testimonies of another significant event from our history. For instance:

- Read, view, and listen to the stories of **Japanese Americans relocated and incarcerated during World War II** at: <http://www.tellingstories.org/internment/>. This archive project was put together by high school students at Urban School of San Francisco. These testimonies are considered **primary resources**.
- Listen to and read the oral testimonies of **Holocaust** survivors at the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum's website: [https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media\\_list.php?MediaType=oh](https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_list.php?MediaType=oh). These Holocaust stories are considered **primary resources**.
- Read Samuel Granillo's account of surviving the **Columbine** massacre at the *Huffington Post*: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/13/samuel-granillo-columbine\\_n\\_3039714.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/13/samuel-granillo-columbine_n_3039714.html). This article is a **secondary resource**, and the video interview with Samuel Granillo is a **primary resource**.
- Read first-hand accounts of **9-11** from survivors at: <http://11-sept.org/survivors.html>. You will find both **primary and secondary resources** here.

Do you notice any similarities in the testimonies of the survivors of the event you chose to explore and Sachiko's experience, or the experience of the other survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? What is to be learned from their stories, and why is it important for us to preserve and be witness to their experiences?

## AFTER YOU READ

1. In the “Before You Read” section you were asked to define **narrative nonfiction** and **biographical memoir**. What makes *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story* by Caren Stelson an example of narrative nonfiction writing and a biographical memoir?
2. Now that you have read, analyzed, and discussed *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story*, what of your **prior knowledge** was reinforced, and what **new knowledge** and understanding do you have of the relationship between the United States and Japan during World War II, Japanese wartime conditions, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the incarceration of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor was bombed, the United States’ planned invasion of Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the development of nuclear weapons, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and the Japanese surrender?
3. Explore again Caren’s **notes, bibliography, and resources** at the end of *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story*. For at least one online **primary or secondary resource**, look at the **quality and reliability** of that resource. For instance, for a website, you could consult the “About Us” section to determine who put the website together and any biases that the creators of the website may have. Take a look at the RAD CAB website: <http://www.radcab.com>. Discuss with your group members the relevancy, appropriateness, detail, currency, authority, and bias (RAD CAB) of the online resource. Give the resource a “thumbs up” or a “thumbs down” for its quality.
4. Share your **timeline** of the significant events in Sachiko’s life with your group members, explaining why you chose the events that you did. Compare and contrast your choices with those of your group members. Add or delete events at the completion of your discussion as you see fit.
5. As a group, define each of the **poetic devices** you were asked to find examples of: simile, metaphor, personification, strong verbs, and symbolism. Share the examples that you found throughout *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story* with your group.
6. Reread the “Acknowledgements” section on pages 134-135. You may have heard the expression, “It takes a village to raise a child.” In what ways does it take a “village” or community to write a book? How might you use this knowledge in your own writing process?
7. When a book is published, professional journals provide editorial **reviews** to help readers determine if they may wish to read and/or to purchase that particular book. Below is a review of *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story* from a professional review journal called *School Library Journal*.

Note that the review includes:

- a brief summary of the book (without giving too much away)
- who the book might be appropriate for
- how the book is packaged and how the material is presented
- comments about the quality of the writing of the book
- an overall thumbs up or thumbs down for the book (books given “starred” reviews are seen as exceptional)



**“STARRED REVIEW** — Gr 5-8 — Sachiko Yasui was just six years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on her hometown of Nagasaki. On August 9, 1945, she went from playing house with her friends to burying them. Yasui also lost a brother that day and would lose many more family members because of radiation sickness. Growing up, she was ostracized for her status as hibakusha, a bomb survivor. Despite her trauma and the bullying she faced, Yasui endured. She sought out inspiration from the likes of Helen Keller, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. Their works allowed her to make peace with the events in her life. Stelson recounts hearing Yasui speak at a ceremony to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This event would spark a long and intimate process in which Stelson repeatedly met with and interviewed Yasui in order to tell her story. Frequent historical notes provide context to the events happening in the narrative: Japan’s role in World War II, the issue of racism in the war, President Truman’s ultimatum, the effects of radiation sickness, the U.S. occupation of Japan after the war, and more. Back matter includes a glossary of Japanese terms used in the book and detailed maps of where events took place. **VERDICT** This sensitive and well-crafted account of a Nagasaki bomb survivor is an essential addition to World War II biography collections for middle school students. —Deidre Winterhalter, Niles Public Library, IL”

Discuss with your group, whether you agree or disagree with the Diedre Winterhalter’s assessment of this book. Then write your own review of *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story* by Caren Stelson. Your review should be one paragraph in length. Be sure to include all of the elements listed above.

## **FOLLOW UP**

### **EXTENSION**

**Origami paper cranes** are a symbol of **peace** in the Japanese culture.

In 2011, students, staff, and community members at Fredonia State University in New York folded an eight foot paper crane. Read about their project here:

[http://www.fredonia.edu/news/ArchivesSearch/tabid/1101/ctl/ArticleView/mid/1878/articleId/3420/8\\_ft\\_paper\\_peace\\_crane\\_folded\\_in Marion Art Gallery Friday.aspx](http://www.fredonia.edu/news/ArchivesSearch/tabid/1101/ctl/ArticleView/mid/1878/articleId/3420/8_ft_paper_peace_crane_folded_in_Marion_Art_Gallery_Friday.aspx) .

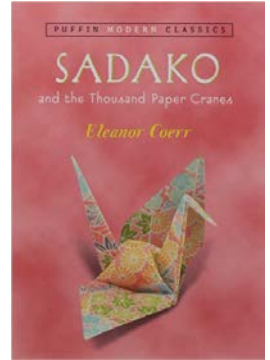
With your group, learn how to fold origami paper cranes. Find detailed instructions for folding an origami paper crane at: <http://www.origamiway.com/origami-crane.shtml>. You can also find several video tutorials on YouTube that will teach you how to fold an origami paper crane, such as: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyC7pkTdE0>.

Once you have the technique down, design a piece of artwork using paper cranes (a sculpture, a mobile, etc.) to symbolize peace. Be sure to ask your teacher if there are size limitations.



## EXTENSION

Read *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr, a work of fiction based on actual events. Sadako Sasaki was a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima at the age of two. When she was twelve she developed leukemia as a result of exposure to radiation. While hospitalized, she spent her time in the hospital attempting to fold one thousand origami paper cranes because Japanese legend says that an individual who folds one thousand paper cranes will be granted a wish and Sadako's one wish was to live. Though Sadako died before her goal was reached, friends and family finished the job, and the one thousand origami paper cranes were buried with Sadako.



How is folding paper cranes like being a peacemaker?

It takes time.

Sometimes you make mistakes.

Sometimes you have to start over.

It's better when you work with others.

—Dr. Walter Enloe, professor of education,  
Hamline University recounting a 4th grade  
student's response to folding origami cranes

Curious students and teachers interested in thoroughly researching Sadako's story beyond Eleanor Coerr's story, will be interested in these titles:

- *Children of the Paper Crane: The Story of Sadako Sasaki and Her Struggle with the A-Bomb Disease*, by Masamoto Nasu and translated by Elizabeth W. Baldwin, Steven L. Leeper and Kyoko Yoshida, published by M.E. Sharpe, Inc. (An East Gate Book), 1991, is a well-researched account of Sadako's story and deserves recognition.
- Takayuki Ishii's nonfiction account, *One Thousand Cranes: The Story of Sadako and the Children's Peace Statue*, Random House, 1997, is also an important contribution to the understanding of Sadako's story and message.
- Dr. Walter Enloe and a team of teachers, writers, and Avalon Charter School students in St. Paul, MN, have written *Sadako's Vision: Children of the Paper Crane*, published by Tertium Quid Press, St. Paul, MN, 2011. Not only is Sadako's story shared in this small paperback, but Dr. Enloe describes the 1,000 Crane Club, a student driven project, capturing the vision of Sadako's message for peace. In part because of the 1,000 Crane Club, ten million folded cranes from all over the world, mostly folded by children, arrive in Hiroshima every year.