

Thinking About Peace and What I Can Do Now, After Reading the Book “*itsuka no yakusoku 1945*” (Someday’s Promise 1945)

Daiichi Elementary School, 4th Grade Kiito Yonekura

I was really touched by the fact that Suzu-chan experienced the war. I was impressed by how little by little she tried to remember the past, and I just couldn’t put the book down.

I have never experienced war like Suzu-chan. But recently I have wanted to learn more about war and research it. A lot of questions came to my mind, like why the war happened and what life was like during the war.

This summer I went to Himeyuri Tower. There were photos of each of the many Himeyuri girls on the wall. There was a video playing of interviews with a woman who survived the war. Apparently, her friends were found by the American military in a dark cave, and when she heard a loud noise and turned on the light, she found that all her friends were dead. Everyone lived with the fear and anxiety of not knowing when their lives would be taken, and that it would not be unusual if their lives were taken at any time. They said they wanted to convey the horror of this war and its terrible reality to those of us who are living today.

Suzu-chan’s words, “War is a terrible thing, and it is completely different from now. Now is a very peaceful time. We should do what we can to make sure that war disappears and peace lasts forever,” overlapped with the words of the Himeyuri people. War makes people suffer. It takes away happy lives and loved ones. I knew that war was scary and painful but reading the book and visiting Himeyuri Tower made me realize the true horror of war.

Even now, war is happening somewhere in the world. I strongly hope that war will disappear from the world as soon as possible. There are very few people who experienced the war 79 years ago. As I read the book, I thought a lot about what we can do now as people who have never experienced war. I think what I can do is to tell people how horrible and frightening war is, and that war is something that can destroy this peaceful and happy life in an instant. If we continue to tell people this, I think it will be the first step towards living in peace.

Thank you Suzu-chan for teaching me such an important thing.

War Should Not Happen

Daini Elementary School, 4th Grade An Matsunaga

Do you know that Japan is the happiest place in the world right now? Wars are happening overseas. Russia and Ukraine have been at war since around 2022.

Compared to Japan, there are many children overseas who cannot afford to eat. We shouldn't take it for granted that we can eat. Japan is also fortunate to have plenty of food.

On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and three days later, an atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. In Hiroshima, about 140,000 people died. In Nagasaki, about 70,000 people died. In total, about 210,000 people died. Since then, no atomic bombs have been dropped on Japan.

After the atomic bomb was dropped, Japan vowed not to go to war. This is because Japan did not want to see any more people die from atomic bombs or war.

In war, tanks and vehicles are used. In the war between Russia and Ukraine, adults were forced to help with the war and some died. It is very sad.

If asked if the world is a happy place right now, I can't smile and say that the world is happy. That's because there is war. Those of us who were born after the war may be fortunate that we have not experienced war. War is something that should never happen. Just seeing images of war on the news scares me. When I think that war might break out in Japan too, war is something that should never happen.

I studied from the news and books, and I came to the conclusion that war is something that should never happen.

World Heritage of Hiroshima

Daisan Elementary School, 6th Grade Nono Murofushi

During summer vacation, I went to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. I was a little nervous when I entered the museum.

The photo of a girl made an impression on me. She was covered in blood, even in black and white, and the flesh on her right arm was gouged out, and she looked very distressed. Her sad face was as if she was pleading for help. I still can't forget the girl's face.

(I want to help her. I want to help others.)

I have always thought that.

I almost cried, but I continued. There were photos of tents set up as makeshift relief centers and children with bandages wrapped around their burns and wounds, looking like they were in pain. One of the three girls next to me said,

“Poor thing.”

I sympathized with her words.

Going a little further, there was an area where the belongings and wills of those who died in the atomic bombing were on display. A tricycle, a helmet, and somebody's son's lunch completely blackened. There were written messages left behind, saying things such as, “I'm sorry I couldn't help you,” and “It's hot! It hurts!”

The atmosphere in the museum was very heavy, and not a single person was laughing.

(Scary. Why do innocent people have to die? Why do we fight wars?)

All sorts of emotions welled up inside me.

After calming myself down a bit, I looked at the nuclear bomb exhibit. The nuclear bomb used in Hiroshima used a rock called uranium 235, which, when artificially destroyed, releases radiation that is dangerous to the human body.

Nuclear bombs made using this principle killed approximately 140,000 people.

Next, I headed to the Atomic Bomb Dome. The Atomic Bomb Dome was a little smaller than I had expected, but I was overwhelmed to see that it was a building that had been destroyed by a nuclear bomb.

Seeing the Peace Memorial Museum and the Atomic Bomb Dome, I was reminded that war only brings sadness and that nothing good ever comes from it.

From now on, as much as I can, I would like to tell other people about the atomic bomb.

Compassion

Daisan Elementary School, 6th Grade Hironosuke Komatsu

What do you think a peaceful world is? I think it's when there is no discrimination, we sleep in warm futons, and eat delicious food.

So, is the world really peaceful right now?

Japan is a pacifist country and does not wage war, but other countries are different. Take Russia, for example. On February 24, 2022, the Russian army, which had been besieging Ukraine, began its invasion and the war began. And in Ukraine, about 30,000 soldiers lost their lives for their country and their families. It was reported that the number of Russian soldiers who lost their lives exceeded 50,000.

Not only soldiers, but civilians also lost their lives. More than 10,000 civilians lost their lives in Ukrainian territory.

No matter which side wins the war, I don't feel happy at all, only sadness remains. So, war may have merits for a country, but for people, it only has demerits. That's why I think it's important to understand and respect each other's thoughts and to have compassion for each other.

There's not only war, but discrimination as well.

There are many types of discrimination, such as discrimination based on illness and discrimination against black people.

Discrimination can take people's lives. Wars can also occur because of discrimination.

That's why I want discrimination to disappear.

Someone could lose their life because of our feelings, words and actions.

But on the other hand, if we gather together all of you and say things like “Let’s stop war” and “Discrimination is wrong,” I’m sure we can change something.

And if we can change something, I’m sure a brighter future will await the world.

Writing this essay made me realize once again that I want to become a more compassionate person.

The Atomic Bomb Dropped on Hiroshima

Daigo Elementary School, 5th Grade Sakura Suzuki

I went to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where items from the time of the atomic bomb are on display.

The items on display included those worn or possessed by those who were bombed. There were also drawings by survivors. And there were messages left by other family members who survived, along with the remaining items. There were also people whose bodies or remains were not found. According to later explanations, the bodies had turned to charcoal in a single breath. Also, those who survived, with their clothes torn and their skin blistered, jumped into the river in search of water. As a result, many dead bodies were floating in the river.

The damage from the atomic bomb did not end there. When the bomb was dropped, radiation was spread, and those who came to Hiroshima to help after the bombing suffered from leukemia for decades.

Among the photographs on display were those of people with such severe burns that facial features could not be made out and soldiers whose hair had fallen out due to radiation and who had black spots all over their bodies.

There were pictures of people with raw skin running silently outside, and a thirsty woman catching black rain in her mouth. The black raindrops were radioactive. Other exhibits included a white wall still showing traces of black rain, and the stairs of the Sumitomo Bank Hiroshima branch, which had turned whitish due to the intense heat rays, and a stone with a human figure left behind where a person had been sitting, turned black like a shadow. There were also pieces of keloid scars that had been removed, which had been caused by burns.

I went to the museum to bring to my eyes the damage caused by the atomic bomb and objects from the time of the bombing. The exhibits are designed to avoid being too grotesque, so I think the actual things were much worse. “Barefoot Gen”, which I read some time ago, was based on the author’s own experiences when he was six years old, so I think the tragedy was even worse than what was on display.

The atomic bomb should never be used again. The number of victims is decreasing every year, but I still think it’s important for us young people to continue to tell future generations

about that tragedy.

My visit to Hiroshima this time reminded me once again how important it is to face tragic history without turning a blind eye. It also made me think that I hope that war will go away from now on.

They can't say "I'm home" or "Welcome home"

Katahama Elementary School, 6th Grade Ayumu Miyawaki

I don't know about war. When I see stories about wars in other countries on the news, I always hear "X people died. X people were injured." It's so scary that I can't watch it.

"Japan is peaceful, isn't it?", I said to my mom.

Then, in the short video I was watching, a suicide note from a kamikaze pilot came on. I learned that all the kamikaze pilots were young. The youngest one was 16 years old.

"16 years old means that in four more years I'll be the same age. It's impossible. I wouldn't be able to go. I don't want to."

I thought it was good that I wasn't born in Japan at that time.

A kamikaze pilot is a special attack force that crashes an aircraft or torpedo into an enemy ship with people on board. The pilots are "kamikaze pilots." I looked up the word "kamikaze" and realized that kamikaze pilots can't come back when they go to war. It was a matter of fact that they would die. They knew they would die, and the people who sent them off did so knowing they would never come back.

I had thought it was natural to say "bye" when leaving and get "take care" in response.

On returning you say "I'm home," you'll get "welcome home."

But in an era when it wasn't a given that people would return, I learned that the greetings "I'm home" and "welcome home" can be difficult.

The kamikaze pilots wrote letters before they went out on missions. Whatever they wrote in those letters, they were meant to be "wills."

In the letters, they wrote things like "I'm feeling cheerful," "I'll smile," and "I have no regrets," but I wondered, "Why?"

I didn't understand at all. They were about to die. In spite of that they were going to die?

I think there were things they wanted to do in life. They wrote letters hiding those feelings. It was painful to read them. By the time these letters reached their recipients, they had already gone out on missions. I wondered how the recipients must have felt. Thinking about that made it even more painful and difficult.

"Japan is a peaceful country, isn't it?"

I talk about this as though it's just an everyday topic, but I realized once again that the peace we have in Japan today is due to the people of the past who risked their lives to protect

it.

Today, I learned a little about kamikaze pilots.

I've heard that "Only those who have experienced it can understand the pain and misery of war," but I understand that "No one is happy who goes to war."

Lives are Taken by War

Kanaoka Elementary School, 5th Grade Aoi Shimosato

There is no war in Japan right now, where we live. However, in other countries, war is happening, and people are suffering. Recent news reports have been about the war between Ukraine and Russia. In Ukraine, schools and houses are being destroyed, and soldiers and civilians from both countries are being caught up in it, and many lives are being lost. I feel very sorry for the civilians being caught up in it.

Japan is at peace now, but I learned from watching "Grave of the Fireflies" that Japan also suffered a lot from war in the past.

In "Grave of the Fireflies," there were fires rising everywhere. Also, there was little food, people could not spend time with their families, and some people were homeless.

"I have a home. Mom and Dad cook for me. I can be with my family. I'm glad I was born in this era."

However, I know that if I was born in the past and there was a war, I wouldn't be able to say such things. Because there were people fighting to protect their families. I think many of those who survived the war lost their money, their homes, and their families. Just imagining it makes me feel very sad. No one would have fun in such a world. Even the lives of those who value life and try to live are taken away by war. Everyone should know that such wars are wrong. But war will never end.

Why do we wage war? Why do wars exist even if they take away the lives of those who try to live?

I don't understand the feelings of those who start wars. It is very sad that war will never end as long as there are people who want war. I prefer a peaceful world. I feel happy when my family and friends smile. If people all over the world could get along, surely there would be no wars and the world would be peaceful. I hope for such a peaceful world.

"War" to me is a scary act that takes the lives of those who try to live. Even now there are wars in other countries. I want a world where everyone can live happily and there is no war. I want my family and friends to live happily and with smiles on their faces.

A Peaceful World

Ooka Elementary School, 5th Grade Iori Itakura

What does “peace” mean?

I think peace means all of these things in our daily lives: being able to spend time together with a smile, getting along without fighting, eating delicious food to your heart’s content, having a home where you can sleep in peace, and being able to play a lot with your favorite friends.

I spend every day peacefully, but sometimes I see news about wars in other countries on TV. When I see that, I feel sad and wonder why people can’t get along with each other.

My grandparents tell me that there used to be wars in Japan too, many people died and houses were destroyed. They said they had nothing to eat, and it was very difficult. Just thinking about it makes me sad. I hope that such sad things won’t happen, and that everyone can live happily and get along with each other.

As for something close to home, I think it’s important for everyone to get along at school. Even if we have different opinions, I think it’s fine as long as we listen carefully to what the other person has to say and discuss things together. And when I do something wrong or make a friend feel bad, I want to be able to apologize properly.

To make the world a peaceful place, I think it’s important for each of us to be careful about small things. For example, smiling when greeting people, cherishing our friends, and caring for the Earth by not littering or wasting things. I think we can create a peaceful world if we all work together to do even small things.

And for peace, I think it’s important to take considerate action yourself. I think there are many things we can do, such as reaching out to people in need and picking up trash. I want to continue doing what I can for peace, one thing at a time, so that everyone can spend their days with a smile on their face.

What is Peace?

Ashitaka Elementary School, 5th Grade Kenta Tsuchiya

I have never thought about peace before, so I would like to take this opportunity to write about peace in my own way.

First of all, when I thought about what “peace” is, I thought it was “a world without discrimination, where all human beings are equal, and where war is eliminated from the world.”

I think the reason I can live a life without any inconveniences now is because there were people who fought for Japan even to the point of losing their lives in World War II, even

though Japan lost.

I don't know the details of what kind of battles were fought in the war, but when I looked it up, I found out that there was something called a "kamikaze unit."

I was shocked to learn that the kamikaze units were made up of young people.

The planes crashing into enemy ships and the torpedoes called "kaiten" were really shocking. I realized that at that time, the Japanese military had a strategy that disregarded human lives.

During the war in Okinawa, there was something called a "junior guerrilla unit," and there were kids my age there. I was speechless.

Because there were people who had no choice but to become victims of that war, I learned that we should not waste our lives. There is no war in Japan now, but I think that we must do our best when we become adults to ensure that war never happens again.

I think what I can do now is to get along with my friends, talk a lot with my parents, and learn a lot at school.

Around the world, as in Japan, there are children who live away from their parents, and I realized that I am in a truly happy environment.

I have an older sister who is four years older than me.

My sister has Down Syndrome. Her emotions are very clear. We can't have a proper conversation, but because we are family, I can understand to some extent what she is trying to communicate.

I want to treat people with disabilities like that equally, without showing any qualms.

So, although there may be no end to the thoughts about "peace" once you start thinking about it, I wanted to demonstrate it through my actions to the best of my ability now.

I don't Know War

Ashitaka Elementary School, 5th Grade Natsumi Yamaji

I don't know war.

War is supposed to be fought to protect one's country, but it harms both one's own country and the enemy country.

I've always wondered why people are so keen to fight when they might lose their friends. So I watched war movies like "The Tower of the Island Guardian" and "Aircraft Carrier Ibuki".

The first one I watched was "The Tower of the Island Guardian". "The Tower of the Island Guardian" is a movie about an air raid in Okinawa. The scariest thing about the air raid was when bombs fell from the sky and many people died. All kinds of people, like people shopping and people selling things, were lying on the ground bleeding in an instant.

When I saw people bleeding, I was too scared to watch any further. It was too shocking and sad, and I got scared.

A few days later, I watched “Aircraft Carrier Ibuki”. The story of the “Aircraft Carrier Ibuki” was about the Self-Defense Forces fighting to protect Japan from other countries that were coming to attack. In the film, the word “battle” was used instead of “war.” Battle refers to “A battle in the name of self-defense.”

The Prime Minister said, “Japan is a country that does not wage war.” “Japan has the power to wage war, but we will never wage war.”

I wondered if that was really true.

I think war and “battle” are the same. That’s because in both cases, at the very least, missiles were fired at the enemy that was coming.

We are mobilizing to defend our country. But I thought that if we take one wrong step, war will start. So no matter what happens, we should not take revenge, but think about how we can make each other happy and act accordingly.

No matter how hard it is, even if it’s sad, even if we have to make sacrifices, it’s important to stay strong at all times.

No one wishes to become unhappy.

Right now, Japan is at peace. People from other countries also come to Japan to travel. We can study as if it were the most natural thing in the world. We can also eat well.

I would be happy if such peaceful days spread throughout the world.

The world is one, and we are all friends.

Peace is the best

Ashitaka Elementary School, 5th Grade Kanna Kumagai

Peace is good

I want to live in peace forever

I don’t want war

I want it to end soon

There’s nothing good about it

I want peace

Peace is good

Happiness is good

I want to live happily forever

I don’t want war

I want people to understand soon

There's nothing good about it
I want to be happy
Happiness is good

Peace is best
I've been living in peace forever
There's no more war
There's nothing good about it
I want more people to know about peace
Peace is best

Happiness is best
I've been living happily forever
There's no more war
Because it shouldn't be done
I want happiness to continue forever
Happiness is best

Wishing For Peace

Ashitaka Elementary School, 6th Grade Kanta Sugiyama

I'm happy now. I can play soccer, which I love, and I can go to school. I'm with my family.

Right now, wars are happening in other countries. I feel very sad when I see on the TV news how missiles have fallen on houses, schools, hospitals, etc., destroying them to pieces, and when I see people who have been injured or lost their families.

There are no wars in Japan now, but my grandfather experienced them. He fought on horseback in China. He had big hands and a big body, so I think he was cool. I was very scared when I heard that many of his friends had died.

After the war ended, when he was going home by train and passing through Hiroshima, he thought it was strange that he could see the sea, which he shouldn't have been able to see. He was very surprised when he found out the next day when it got light out that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. That's the story I remember most from my grandfather.

When I was in the first grade, I went to the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Dome and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. There were pictures of burnt people and burnt lunch boxes, and I was so scared that I didn't look at them much. After that, I started to get scared just hearing the word war.

What do you think should be done to eliminate war? I think it would be better to eliminate things like missiles from the world. I think peace would come if countries could get along with each other.

Even now, as I write this essay, people are dying in wars. I would hate to think of my family dying. I think we are very lucky to be alive now, with our loved ones close by. I really want to cherish the present.

It may be impossible to make the whole world get along, but I hope that the current peaceful Japan will continue forever. And I sincerely hope that one day the whole world will become a peaceful world without war.

A Book That Stays in My Heart

Ashitaka Elementary School, 6th Grade Keigo Sato

The anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has come again this year. Every year, I casually watch ceremonies broadcast on TV, but this year was different. That's because I was in the 6th grade and learned about pacifism in social studies. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution establishes pacifism, which renounces war, does not possess military forces, and does not recognize the right to wage war. In other words, it means not waging war, not having an army, and not even recognizing the right to wage war.

Needless to say, the reason why Japan has created such strict laws against war is because Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed during World War II, making Japan the only country in the world to have suffered enormous damage from nuclear bombs.

I, of course, didn't know anything about war or nuclear bombs. But as I learned more, I learned that a nuclear bomb is a terrifying weapon that emits a violent blast, heat rays, and radiation the moment a single bomb explodes.

When I was in a lower grade at school, I borrowed a picture book called "Hiroshima no Pika" from the city library and read it with my mother. Even now, several years have passed, I still vividly remember the picture on the cover, which resembled a burning red flame. The story's protagonist, Mii-chan, and her family were eating breakfast on August 6th when the nuclear bomb was dropped. She jumped into the raging fire to save her father, but he had a hole in his stomach. Many people were dead in the river, and those who were still alive had blistered faces and were desperately searching for water. Even after some time had passed, shards of glass continued to come out of Mii-chan's ears. Mii-chan did not grow any bigger, even as the years passed. Although fragmentary, stories and scenes like these come to mind.

It's a little late, but I connected the story of "Hiroshima no Pika" to the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima. With just one bright flash, approximately 140,000 people in Hiroshima lost their lives. When I first read the book, I just thought it was a scary story, a frighten-

ing picture book, but learning about nuclear bombs has made me feel strongly that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

I don't know about war, and I wasn't exposed to the atomic bomb. However, I live in Japan, the only country in the world to have been hit by an atomic bomb. I am sure I have many, many times more opportunities than people living in other countries to see, hear, and feel the reality and horror of the bombing. That is why I believe we must learn more and convey to the world that nuclear weapons must never be made.

I have yet to be able to be the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima or the Peace Memorial Park in Nagasaki. I would love to visit and see them for myself.

War is Horrible

Ohira Elementary School, 4th Grade So Shigematsu

I don't know anything about war. So I went to the Shimizu Town Fukushi Center with my mother and cousin to see the "War for Peace Exhibition." There were panels about war on display. In addition to the war itself, the panels also had stories of people who suffered from postwar aftermath and discrimination. My mother read the panels to me. I was very scared when I heard what she said.

When I saw the photos of people with burns from the atomic bomb, I felt a little scared and disgusted. And as I looked at the photos, my sadness grew.

The panel that left the biggest impression on me was about a first-year junior high school student named Shigeru. He was exposed to radiation when he went out to do some work with a lunch box made by his mother.

When his mother went to look for him, she found him dead, holding his lunch box under his stomach. The lunch box that Shigeru couldn't eat was completely burnt black. I think he wanted to eat his mother's lunch and go home. I think he held on to the lunch box until the very end. It made me sad to think about it. Not only those who died, but also those who survived were discriminated against and suffered psychologically after the burns and illnesses. I felt sorry that children about my age were exposed to radiation. I would hate to be in that position now, but I feel happy now. Because, although there was not much to eat during the war, now I can eat as much as I want, and although my father had to go to war, I feel happy that now we can all be together as a family.

After studying about war this time, I strongly felt that I don't want war to happen and that it should not happen. I hope that the wars happening in the world will end soon and everyone will be happy.

I will continue to remember that there was a war and cherish each and every day.

What We Must Not Forget

Ohira Elementary School, 4th Grade Ritsuho Iizuka

“Everyone is going for the sake of their country. There’s no way we can say no.”

My great-grandfather spoke sadly as he recalled that day at Numazu Station. It was exactly the same as the scene in “One Flower” that we studied in Japanese class, where Yumiko’s father goes off to war.

(I wonder what kind of determination my great-grandfather had to go to the station when he didn’t really want to go.) I wondered.

I have a 100-year-old great-grandfather who knows about the war. He’s so energetic you wouldn’t believe he’s 100 years old, and he tells me lots of stories from the past that I don’t know. But when he talks about the war, his smile disappears. Then, looking into my eyes, he starts talking slowly, slowly. The more I hear about how horrible the war was, the more painful and sad I feel.

I thought I would ask my great-grandfather, who has endured such terrible experiences that are unimaginable in this day and age, if he lives a peaceful life now.

He replied, “We are so blessed now. When you were young, we had so many hardships. Everyone was struggling just to survive.”

Hearing this, I was taken aback. Because I had never thought that my life now is so blessed.

I suddenly wondered how much my great-grandfather must have had to endure, losing his precious family and time to the war. I also heard him talk about how he used to rub the soles of his feet together to keep warm from the cold. He now talks about it as if it were something from the past, but I feel that at the time he must have been risking his life to survive, and had no time to grieve.

Nowadays, more and more people are unaware of the war. I was one of them, but I started to research war through my schoolwork. Although the internet and books contain information about the war, I learned that the stories of those who experienced it are more meaningful than any other information, and that every word they say has meaning.

Just as I realized when my great-grandfather told me, I want everyone to realize that our current lifestyle is not something to be taken for granted, and that we are extremely blessed with it. We live convenient and free lives now, but we must never forget that this lifestyle was made possible by the hardships of those who overcame difficult times. I also believe that if people who do not know about war can live each day with gratitude, it will lead to a peaceful future. I feel it is important to continue to share the true voice that I heard from my great-grandfather with many people.

Towards a Peaceful World

Ohira Elementary School, 4th Grade Hana Matsumoto

In Japanese class, we studied “One Flower.”

“Just give me one. Just one.”

To little Yumiko, who wanted a rice ball, her father says “I’ll give you just one. Take good care of this one flower...” He then goes off to war, handing her a single cosmos flower. I think he wanted her to accumulate small happiness, which is rare, and turn it into great happiness.

While studying this story, I was researching the war and found out that my great-grandfather had gone to war, and I talked to my grandfather about it.

In 1944, when my great-grandfather was 15 years old, he became a naval aviation preparatory trainee in Hiroshima, where he underwent flight and naval training. Then, on August 14, 1945 (the day before the end of the war), he received the order to depart, and left Nobeyama, Nagano Prefecture. The Special Attack Units set out with a “desperate” strategy, only carrying enough fuel for a one-way trip.

My great-grandfather learned of the end of the war while refueling at Yoshidahama Airfield in Matsuyama. Some of his comrades, unable to believe that the war was over, flew away. But my great-grandfather flew off from the airfield, saying, “I’m not going to throw away my life that we’d been so lucky to have been saved,” and returned to Nobeyama.

Some may think he ran away, but I think my great-grandfather was right.

At school, we learn about peace from our teachers, but my great-grandfather got in a Zero fighter loaded with bombs and was taught by his teacher how to ram into enemies. I realized he had received a completely different education than us. And I realized that war is truly terrifying.

My great-grandfather used to say that peace is being able to eat your fill, sleep in peace, and receive a proper education.

This year, the Olympics were held in Paris. Athletes from every country fought with all their might, and when the games were over, they hugged each other, high-fived each other, acknowledging and encouraging each other for their hard work. The ultimate goal of the Olympics is said to be human development through sport and world peace.

Even now, there are countries in the world that are at war. Many people are saddened by watching the news on TV. I hope that we can create a peaceful world where we can all work hard toward one goal, regardless of nationality, just like the athletes competing in the Olympics.

Thinking About War From the Perspective of the Paris Olympics

Ukishima Elementary School, 6th Grade Aya Kubota

This year, the Paris Olympics were held in France. Compared to the last Tokyo Olympics, which was held during the coronavirus pandemic, there were many spectators and Paris was very lively. Japanese athletes have been active and won many medals, so expectations are high for the future.

Now, as for the Paris Olympics, problems are occurring around the world. These are human rights issues and war. At the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, a new performance was held that incorporated LGBTQ, regardless of gender. I think this is a wonderful initiative that has realized the diversity that is currently being considered in the world. However, a problem occurred in the women's boxing match that followed. There was controversy over the International Olympic Committee's decision to allow two athletes who failed the gender test at last year's World Championships to participate, and the fact that these two athletes had male genitalia. There are strong opinions on both sides of whether they can participate and whether they cannot, and if I were a judge, I would be very confused. Under the current standards for participating in sports, race is irrelevant, but when it comes to gender, I feel that discussion is needed on how to judge it.

I think that the inability to accept such "differences" is what leads to conflicts and wars between people. I think that stopping the trend of regarding being different as a bad thing and trying to marginalize the weak will create a world free of pain and conflict for everyone.

While the Olympic Games are being held in full swing, Russia's attack on Ukraine and the war between Israel and Iran are still ongoing. As a result, some athletes have had to go to war and some have been unable to participate in the Olympics. When I heard the stories of these athletes, I felt that it was unforgivable. War is a futile thing that ruins all the dedicated efforts and lives of athletes.

In order to prevent such disarray, there is a system called the "Olympic Truce." It is called "*Ekecheiria*" in Greek, which means "to join hands." It seems that a truce resolution was called for in preparation for the upcoming Olympics, but it did not come to fruition. If the Olympics are truly to be called a festival of peace, then I hope that an Olympic truce will be realized, creating an environment in which all athletes can unleash their efforts and potential.

The Olympics is a divine battle in which lives are at stake. I hope that war, a cruel battle in which lives are at stake, will come to an end, and that we will create a situation in which each and every athlete can take part in the Olympics in a battle that surpasses themselves. With our ideas, I would like to build a world which is peaceful, where everyone can do what they want to do, and where there is equality.

Flames

Ukishima Elementary School, 6th Grade Kenichiro Kurita

Flames are painful and agonizing if used in a different way

War used flames as a weapon

Flames should not be used like that

Flames are meant to illuminate the future

Flames also exist in people's hearts

The flames of hatred and the flames of hope

Which should we cherish?

On that day, the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The flames engulfed the city, engulfed people, engulfed memories

The flames engulfed everything

But the flames of hope could not be extinguished

With the flames of hope in our hearts, we built cities, raised people, aimed for the future,
and created peace

Let's protect the flames of peace

Let's live in the future

79 Years Since the End of the War - Learning About the War

Kadoike Elementary School, 6th grade Shiori Ito

"The 4th Infantry Regiment of the Imperial Guard" is the regiment my great-grandfather belonged to at the end of the war.

My mother told me that my great-grandfather went to war. He died 47 years ago, so I knew very little about him. I inquired about his military history at the Shizuoka Prefecture Health and Welfare Department, and later received copies of various documents. From these, I traced my great-grandfather's footsteps on the battlefield.

My great-grandfather belonged to the Imperial Guard Division and participated in the “Malaysia Campaign” and “Singapore Invasion Campaign” on the Malay Peninsula, and the “Sumatra Campaign” and “Sumatra Defense Campaign” on Sumatra. He was at war for six years. It was difficult to understand what each operation was like, so I started by looking into the overall picture of the Pacific War.

One of the causes of the Pacific War was Japan’s lack of underground resources such as oil. In search of these, Japan invaded countries in the south. Immediately after the war began, weapons and supplies were relatively readily available, and Japan made steady advances with surprise attacks and other such tactics. However, after the United States decided to enter the war and Japan suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Midway, the Allied forces gained control of the seas and air. As a result, supplies could no longer be delivered, and there were shortages of weapons and food, leading to many deaths. I have heard that in order to survive, some soldiers ate raw rats or the dead flesh of their comrades. War hurts people’s bodies. It hurts their minds, too. Some people suffer from mental problems even after they have been demobilized. It can be said that it destroys people’s lives in many ways.

War does not only affect soldiers. The personalities of those who remain in the country also changed. Most people who are kind lose their mental capacity and become demonic. Furthermore, they have to live in pain for decades after the war to rebuild their lives from scratch.

War is about wanting things that a country does not have, and trying to seize them through military force and violence. It is caused by a lack of imagination, where people rush into the use of force without considering what will happen if war breaks out.

My great-grandfather was really lucky. According to my grandmother, when he was traveling by boat, a nearby boat was sunk, and during battle, a bullet hit a person next to him and he died.

Killing one person in war is the same as killing hundreds of descendants who may be born in the future. For example, my grandmother was born after the war, so if my great-grandfather had died in the war, I would not be here. It is a miracle that a person is born. It is because of a series of miracles that we are here today. That is why I want to live my life cherishing every second.

What can I do now to eliminate war? First of all, I want to respect diversity and accept a variety of opinions. I want to acquire critical thinking skills, look at things from various angles, and think for myself. Peace is found in “normality.” I want to cherish “normality.” And I want to continue thinking about what I can do for peace.

What We Can Do Now

Imazawa Elementary School, 5th Grade Shuta Kishikawa

On August 15, 1945, World War II ended. Japan became the first country in the world to be bombed.

At first, I wasn't interested in war, but as I read various non-fiction books, I gradually became interested in it.

I wanted to know more about the war, and since it coincided with my father's visit to his hometown, we went to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. There were a lot of "unbelievable things" there. A completely broken clock had the time when the atomic bomb was dropped engraved on it. There was also glass that had been deformed by the heat of the atomic bomb so much that it was unrecognizable. There were many other unbelievable things, but two things in particular made an impression on me.

The first was a "charred lunch box." Even the rice inside had turned to black charcoal. For me, bento boxes have happy images of being delicious, fun, and making you happy when you eat them, so when I saw them, I felt that war destroys even small happiness.

The second one was "Human Hand Bones and Glass." The guide said that the glass and the hand of someone who died while holding it in their hand had become one due to the high temperature.

It was very painful to see, but from the things left behind, we were able to learn what had happened and what kind of damage had been done.

What should we do from now on to prevent such things from happening again? I think it is for "everyone to know." This year marks the 79th anniversary of the end of the war, and the number of "hibakusha" who experienced the atomic bombing has become very few. That is why I thought that we, as young people, need to learn about the war. It is an issue that we should not turn a blind eye to, thinking, "It's just a story from the past anyway," or "I don't want to hear about people dying." There must have been many people who died during the war who still wanted to live. Therefore, we must carry the thoughts of those people on our shoulders as we go about our lives.

I would like everyone to think seriously about this again. What should we do from now on?

I want to learn about war so that I don't hurt people in the future, and I want to start by doing what I can, such as trying to understand the opinions of others.

The Horror of War

Sawada Elementary School, 5th Grade Miyu Nakano

This book is the diary of 12-year-old Yeva Skalietska, covering the 67 days since the war between Ukraine and Russia began.

The reason I read this book was because I wanted to know more about the war. I had seen it on the news, but there were many things I didn't understand, and I thought this book would be easy to understand because it was written by a girl about my age.

Yeva's birthday was February 14th. Ten days later, on the 24th, at 5:10 a.m., Ukraine was attacked by Russia. At that time, Yeva was in despair, had a panic attack, and was almost crushed by fear. She went to the basement to evacuate but heard countless explosions. Just reading this scene made me very scared. It's terrifying to think that war could break out in Japan now.

Then, on the sixth day, a missile was fired into the kitchen of Yeva's apartment. In her diary, Yeva wrote that having her house torn to shreds was like having a part of herself torn apart.

After that, Yeva decided to leave Kharkiv in the east, where she was living, and headed west to seek refuge. It must have been very lonely and difficult for her to leave the town she lived in. Then, with the support of many people, including volunteers, she was able to go to Dublin, Ireland, far from Kharkiv, on the 16th day. Yeva says that some of her friends are still in Kharkiv. I don't think I could have made the decision to go so far away so soon. But I realized that if it was to survive, she had no choice.

By the 37th day, she was able to attend school in Dublin, and by the 67th day, she was able to rent a house to live in. Although her life is different from what it used to be, I was glad that she was able to move forward a little.

Reading this book made me understand the horror of war. I am filled with anxiety about how many casualties there will be, and how many sacrifices have already been made. I felt that there is happiness in everyday life. I never experienced it, but apparently they were hit one after the other by loud explosions and the terror of spraying radiation, and when I think about the fact that Ieva, who is two years older than me, experienced the same thing, I realized that war is not something that only happens to other people.

This war is still ongoing. I just hope that it will end soon.

Peace Thoughts in Okinawa

Harahigashi Elementary School, 6th Grade Nanaki Maeda

My grandmother has been helping out with the “wartime experience outreach classes” for elementary and junior high school students in the city for many years. The outreach classes are classes that use diagrams and handmade tools to easily convey the experiences of seven people in Numazu during the war.

The stories they tell include the story of how they barely escaped from the aerial bombing that struck Numazu, the story of how they lived a life of scarcity so scarce that they thought the falling bombs were pencils, and the story of their father who went to war for his country and never returned. My grandmother helps out, so she has heard the same stories dozens of times. Even so, she says that every time she hears them, she starts crying and her heart aches.

I learned that even here in Numazu there was damage from the war and people who suffered sadness.

When I traveled to Okinawa, I went to the Peace Memorial Park at my grandmother’s request. In the garden, there was a monument called “Cornerstone of Peace” that had the names of all the people who died in the Battle of Okinawa engraved on it. I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of items. Among the many names, I found one engraved with “Matsuda Hide’s child.” I learned that even very young children, whose names no one even knows, had fallen victim. I felt very lonely and sad.

Inside the museum, there were various exhibition rooms. My mother, who had been reading the words of those involved in the war,

She said with a gloomy look on her face, “I really understand how difficult it was for ordinary people when the American forces landed.”

When I saw the horror suffered by the residents in small natural caves called *gama*, I felt the horror of people who treat others as enemies and kill them by cruel means, even though they are the same human beings. I realized that war is what distorts people’s ability to make sound judgments.

The first thing we learned in social studies class was the three pillars of the Japanese Constitution, which was created after the war. I feel like I understand a little bit about the meaning of “pacifism” since coming to Okinawa. Cornerstone of Peace are said to have been “carved in the hope of lasting world peace, without distinction of nationality, military or civilian status.” My idea of pacifism is “for people to live equally, regardless of birth, gender, or whether they have a disability. To avoid pointless conflict. To protect each other’s human rights without hurting others.” Conflicts between countries are reported on television almost every day. I want to take more of an interest in the world and form my own opinions on what I learn. I hope to live in a world where no one suffers or experiences sadness because of war.