

Something That Never Goes Away

Harahigashi Elementary School, 6th Grade, Aira Imoto

There is one thing in our world that never disappears: war.

To put it simply, I hate war. War creates many victims.

But no one knows when war will break out. No one knows which country might attack another. Still, I don't believe anyone truly wants war. Once war begins, countless innocent people die.

Yet war continues somewhere in the world even today. I always wonder:

Why does war happen?

Why is it necessary?

Why must people suffer?

Whenever war happens, only sadness increases. I cannot understand phrases like “a war for peace” that some politicians say.

If someone starts a war without thinking of the consequences, I will never forgive them.

Taking lives, injuring people, and causing deep sorrow—I cannot forgive that.

I absolutely hate war. I hope it never happens again. But even if a few people feel this way, the world will not change. Everyone must understand how terrible war is. If we all raise our voices, I believe our message will reach the leaders of many countries.

If people around the world can unite, I believe we can create a peaceful world without war.

A Thousand Dolls

Daiichi Junior High School, 1st Grade, Reika Suzuki

I wake up to the sound of my alarm clock in the morning. Without thinking, I get out of bed. I eat breakfast as usual and talk with my family. To me, these things are everyday life. They are happiness. They are peace.

One of the opposites of peace is war, and today marked the eightieth anniversary of the atomic bombing—Atomic Bomb Day.

I thought I should talk about this with my family. But when I really stopped to think about it, I realized that I actually knew nothing concrete about war. When I said this to my family, they replied,

“Then let's go to Ōfuna Kannon Temple.”

And so, I was given a precious opportunity to learn about war and the atomic bomb—to see them, to feel them, and to think about them.

When we arrived at Ōfuna Kannon Temple, a statue of the Ōfuna Kannon, over twenty-five meters tall, stood before us. With a perfectly clear blue sky behind it, the statue looked beautiful, with a gentle, soft expression, as if it were warmly welcoming us. After gazing at the towering Kannon from outside, we went inside the statue.

Inside the Kannon, it was so dark it was hard to believe how bright it had been outside. The cries of cicadas nearby and the rustling of leaves were gone. In front of me stood row after row of more than a thousand small wooden figures. Feeling a little frightened, I looked more closely at them. Each figure had a different face, body shape, and size. From each expression and the grain of the wood, I could sense kindness, sorrow, and pain. I was filled with emotions I couldn't put into words.

These people did not simply die. They were lives that could have continued if not for air raids and the atomic bomb. I felt anger and deep sadness toward what had taken away their lives. Among the more than a thousand figures were children and students—people the same age as me—who had been sent to war as soldiers. I wondered what kinds of dreams and hopes they had held, and what they felt and thought in the very moment their lives were taken. As I imagined myself living in that time, my chest filled with regret and sorrow. Still holding those feelings, I stepped outside. Spread out before me was the town of Ōfuna. Looking down from the hill, I wished that this townscape would go on and on forever.

Through the thousand figures, I began to see the true meaning of “peace.” Perhaps peace is not simply a world without war, but a world where each individual life and everyday moment is protected, and where we can live without having to worry about that protection. Yet at the same time, I felt that we must not take this for granted. We must remember the tragedies of the past, cherish the people close to us, and continue to find and protect small pieces of peace in our daily lives.

The next morning, I turned off my alarm, slowly got out of bed, and said to my family,
“Good morning,”

just as I always do. But somehow, it felt a little different from all the mornings before.

Thinking of the thousand wooden figures, I will keep connecting small acts of peace today as well.

Continuing to Share Peace

Daiichi Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Mayumi Susuyama

Do you know the dates August 6, 1945, and August 9, 1945? These are the dates on which atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

At 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, “A sudden flash of light appeared, and in an instant the city of Hiroshima was destroyed by the blast, the heat rays, and radiation. Flames spread and

burned the city to the ground, and black rain fell on the devastated streets. By the end of 1945, approximately 140,000 people had become victims.”

Can you imagine this situation? At the very least, I cannot truly feel the pain and suffering of the people who lived through it at that time. No matter how much pain I might experience, I do not think it could ever compare to what they endured. Even so, even if I cannot fully understand it, I strongly feel that I must learn more about this tragedy of war and continue passing it on to future generations.

I was born in Hiroshima sixty-six years after the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. I was told that my great-grandfather was sent to war as a soldier. I was also often taken by my parents to war-related sites such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Himeyuri Monument. When I saw the exhibits that conveyed the horrors of war, my imagination would run wild, I would feel sick, and I truly hated being taken to such places. However, now I think that no matter how unpleasant or uncomfortable it is, this is something we must all learn at some point in our lives.

As I thought about continuing to pass on the tragedy of this war, I realized that there is a major challenge. That challenge is that “young people today have little interest in war.” Just as I was reluctantly taken to learn about it, I think many people see learning about war as something bothersome or troublesome.

My great-grandfather went to war, but miraculously survived and returned home. However, I was told that he was no longer the same person he had been before he left. Perhaps he suffered from guilt - having killed others and having survived while so many of his comrades died in battle. Even after the war ended, there were still people who continued to suffer. I believe this was true not only for the defeated side, but also for American soldiers on the winning side. After returning home, my great-grandfather never spoke about the war on his own. It may be that he lived on while enduring memories so painful that I myself would want to turn away from imagining them. That is how unbearable war must have been to remember. For storytellers as well, speaking about the loss of beloved family members and friends must be extremely painful. Eighty years have passed since the end of the war. The time during which we can hear such precious firsthand stories is now very limited. I hope that this opportunity will encourage people to learn about war and to understand it more deeply.

“Please rest in peace, for we shall not repeat this mistake.”

These words are engraved on the Peace Memorial, expressing prayers for the victims of the atomic bomb and a vow never to repeat the mistake of war. This is not someone else’s responsibility—it is something we ourselves must take responsibility for protecting. We can only hear directly from atomic bomb survivors now. We must make it a reality that peace will continue forever.

After the War and Beyond

Daini Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Shihomi Yamamoto

Do you know how many years it has been since the end of the war this year? This year marks 80 years since the end of the war. What happened eighty years ago is something I cannot imagine, and to be honest, I used to think it had nothing to do with me. My great-grandmother is now ninety-nine years old. Eighty years ago, she was nineteen. I had thought that Japan being peaceful was simply normal, but even now, there are countries in the world suffering greatly because of war. When I learned that my great-grandmother had experienced the war and thought about it again, I realized that it was not something unrelated to me either.

Recently, I watched a movie. It was about a modern high school student who time-slips back to the wartime period. Through the movie, I felt the fear of not knowing when bombs would fall, the hardship of escaping from them, and the severe lack of food during the war. Compared to today, there was very little to eat, and people could not eat their fill. Meals mainly consisted of potatoes. Bathing was also restricted. Because soap could not be used and sometimes even boiling water was impossible, people could not bathe at all. They lived every day in fear, not knowing when bombs might be dropped. Men went off to fight as soldiers, carrying the anxiety that they might never see their loved ones again. Even if someone precious died, those who were left behind still had to go on living, and I felt that I would not be able to endure such pain. Just from watching the movie, I could feel the suffering of having to sacrifice so much for the country and of having so little food. If I felt this way, I believe that those who actually experienced it must have suffered far more deeply and painfully. It is hard to believe, but it really happened.

In addition, the hardships did not end with the war itself—they continued even after the war was over. Innocent Japanese people were accused of crimes and subjected to Siberian internment. Siberian internment refers to Japanese soldiers and civilians being taken by foreign armies to detention camps in Siberia and forced to perform hard labor. Winter in Siberia is an extremely cold world where temperatures can drop below minus thirty degrees Celsius. At minus thirty degrees, eyelashes freeze, and even soap bubbles freeze instantly. In such conditions, Japanese people were forced to cut down forests and perform heavy labor such as mining. They were given black bread and soup, but the portions were very small, so they shared what little food they had with others in the same camp. Being forced to work in extreme cold without enough food is painful just to imagine, but I believe the reality was far harsher. Because of this lifestyle, some people suffered from malnutrition, and many died within about a year from hunger or cold. Poor sanitation also led to illness, and some lost their lives that way as well. The people in the camps were suddenly taken to Siberia and separated

from their families and loved ones, so they tried to communicate through letters. However, letters could not be sent unless they passed inspection, making communication extremely difficult. Being forced to work in the cold with almost no food or clothing, and not knowing when they would be able to return home, was a life that continued for about eleven years after the war. Although the war ended in 1945, Siberian internment continued until 1956. Looking at what happened after the war, I realized that people were not able to return to a stable life for quite some time, even after the fighting had ended.

Both the war and Siberian internment were hardships and suffering beyond anything I can imagine. That is why I want everyone to know about them, to continue passing these stories on, and to create a world where such things never happen again. I truly feel that the life we live now is peaceful, precious, and something to be grateful for. I want to cherish these feelings and carry them with me.

What I Can Do

Daisan Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Ayari Akiyama

Why is it, I wonder—
under the same sky,
that such different lives exist?

While we are laughing together,
on the other side of the screen
children are crying.

The scenes shown on the screen
make my heart sink heavily.
What is “peace,” I wonder?
Is it someone’s kindness?
Or is it the quiet where there is no conflict?

Even though they did nothing wrong,
even though they committed no crime,
why
do such sad things happen?

What can I do?
There must be something.

I cannot wipe away the tears
I see through the screen,
but perhaps I can cherish
the people who are close to me now.

Kindness will surely spread.
If each person becomes aware of it,
it will connect us all,
and in time,
grow into something greater—
into true peace.

Please,
may a world where everyone, everywhere, can smile together
come to us
as soon as possible.

Wishing for Peace

Daisan Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Riria Goto

My grandmother, who is ninety-three years old this year, is a very gentle person. I grew up learning many things from her stories about the past, but among them, the stories she told me about the war are deeply engraved in my memory.

My grandmother was the eldest of five siblings, and she said she spent her childhood taking care of her younger brothers and helping with household chores. The most shocking part of her stories was the fact that almost every meal consisted of sweet potatoes. In the morning, boiled sweet potatoes; at lunch, sweet potatoes simmered until they were sweet; and in the evening, rice mixed with sweet potatoes. Every meal included them—this was simply everyday life at the time. When I asked her whether she ever got tired of eating sweet potatoes every day, she replied, “Back then, just being able to eat something made us happy.” Hearing those words made me realize once again how fortunate we are to be able to eat proper meals every day.

She also told me about times when air-raid sirens sounded while she was on her way to school, and she had to take shelter in a nearby air-raid bunker. She described her experiences in such vivid detail that even someone like me, who has never experienced war, could imagine the harsh reality of those moments. She said that while fleeing together with a close friend, she suddenly turned around and saw a devastated scene spread out behind her. Her

friend had fallen behind and was killed. Hearing this made me think deeply. If I were living a life constantly next to death, would I be able to accept the loss of a close friend? I don't think I could recover. The idea that someone I saw every day could suddenly be gone is unbearably painful. When I think about that friend's parents, my heart feels as though it might break. After the war, my grandmother graduated from school and eventually got married. Listening to her stories made me keenly aware that being able to eat every day and simply being alive are never things to take for granted. That is why I now feel strongly that I want to eat every meal without waste and live each day carefully and with gratitude.

When I think about the word "peace," I feel it is deeply connected to the wars that are still continuing around the world. On television, scenes from the war in Ukraine or environmental devastation in conflict zones are shown again and again—images so painful that I want to turn my eyes away. One scene I saw recently showed a mother speaking through tears. She said, "I don't want my child to suffer, but there is nothing I can do about the war." Hearing this, I felt deep sorrow and wondered if there was anything at all that could be done.

Through my grandmother's experiences of war and the conflicts still ongoing in the world today, I have begun to think seriously about the importance of communication. To prevent the tragedy of war from being repeated, I believe it is essential to remain calm, listen carefully to others' opinions, and express one's own thoughts through dialogue. This applies not only to relationships between nations, but also to our everyday lives. Even small disagreements or conflicts close to us can grow into deep divisions if we let our emotions take control.

I believe that building relationships in which we respect others' opinions and communicate our own calmly and clearly is the first step toward a peaceful society. Because communication is something we engage in every day, I want to be more mindful of it and put this belief into practice from now on.

About the Numazu Air Raid

Daisan Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Arata Kidokoro

I wanted to learn about a war that felt close to home, so I first decided to talk with my father. In doing so, he told me many things about the Numazu Air Raid. Intrigued, I decided to research it in greater detail myself.

The Numazu Air Raid occurred on July 17, 1945, and resulted in the deaths of as many as 274 people. It is said that all of the bombs dropped were incendiary bombs. Traces of this air raid still remain on Mt. Kanuki, which overlooks Numazu City. At a park halfway up the mountain stands the Memorial Peace Tower, where memorial tablets for those who died in the war are enshrined. One reason Numazu was targeted is believed to be the presence of military supply factories; however, judging from U.S. military reports, there appears to have

been no particularly strong strategic reason for an active attack. Curious about this, I asked my father for his opinion. He said, “They were probably using Mount Fuji as a landmark to return to their base, and Numazu was a convenient place to lighten their fuel load before heading back.” I thought, “That makes sense.” Indeed, lightening the aircraft would have made the return to base easier, and carrying out an air raid could also serve as a demonstration of national power.

As I spoke further with my father, I learned that my great-grandfather experienced the Numazu Air Raid when he was a student. What shocked me most was that he said many bodies had been buried in the embankment along the Kano River that flows through Numazu, and that, under instructions from the school, he had been made to “dig them up.” When I heard this, I was left speechless. When I researched it, I found many materials that made it difficult to deny that this account was true.

Putting together the information I gathered, it can be inferred that “because there were so many dead, cremation and proper burials could not be carried out in time, and temporary or mass burials were conducted.” It is unimaginable today, but that must have been the reality of burial practices at the time. Along the Kano River, riverbanks and riverbeds were often used as vacant land, so they may have been chosen as temporary burial sites.

Immediately after the war, in some areas work was carried out to exhume bodies for proper memorial services and reburial, and students and citizens were sometimes mobilized for this task. However, many specific details were not recorded, and it is said that there is little documentation confirming that “students and citizens dug up bodies.” That is likely why my great-grandfather told my father that “this fact must not be erased.” I was reminded that precisely because these events do not remain in official documents or records, “individual testimony” becomes all the more important.

My great-grandfather was conscripted into military service and went to war. When I asked, “Did he make it back alive?” my father replied, “He did return alive, but the nail area of one of his fingers was deformed.” He also told me that “a bullet grazed his finger.” It is hard to imagine, but I learned just how terrifying weapons can be if merely grazing a finger can deform it so severely. My great-grandfather has already passed away, but according to my father, he never spoke about the war at all. Perhaps he refrained from telling such stories out of kindness, hoping that war would never happen again and believing that there was no need for us to know about it.

The scar left on my great-grandfather’s finger and the memories of war my father shared are testimonies of personal suffering and pain that do not appear in official records. We tend to treat war as something distant and long past, but through the experiences of my own family, I came to deeply realize that it is not distant at all. I learned that peace is not something given to us by others, but something that must be protected through the memories and resolve of everyone. Perhaps the reason my great-grandfather spoke so little about the war

was that he wished for a future in which there would be no need to know its horrors. Now it is our turn to carry on that baton of kindness. I believe that preserving my great-grandfather's words and memories without letting them fade, passing them on to the next generation, and cultivating empathy for the pain of others beyond differences in nation or position are the first steps toward building a peaceful future.

What One Building Taught Me

Daisan Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Hibiki Mano

When I was younger, I used to wonder, “Does war really exist?” Even when I saw it in textbooks, it felt like something from a distant world, lacking any sense of reality.

However, when I visited Hiroshima during summer vacation and stood in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome, something inside me changed profoundly. Standing quietly beneath the blue summer sky, the Atomic Bomb Dome was larger than I had imagined, and parts of it had collapsed in many places. It felt as though it were silently telling me, “So many lives were lost here.” There were many tourists at the site, yet everyone stood quietly, simply gazing at the building. I, too, was one of them—speechless, standing still.

When I entered the museum, I felt the atmosphere change instantly. In the cold air and silence, I carefully examined each exhibit one by one: a scorched school uniform, a clock frozen at the moment of the explosion, silent letters, glass bottles melted by intense heat. Among them all, what left the strongest impression on me were the stories of the children who were exposed to the bomb. Children around my own age suffered severe burns from the heat rays and blast and died in agony. That reality tightened my chest painfully. I could not help but think, “Why did this happen?” and “What would I have done if I had been there?”

War is not simply about bombs falling. At the Peace Memorial Museum, I learned—not as abstract knowledge, but as something deeply felt—that war robs people of their lives, their futures, and even the precious time they share with their loved ones. War must never happen again. This was no longer just words, but a conviction that came from my heart.

So, what can we do to prevent war? When I thought about this, I arrived at the answer that it begins with cherishing what is close to us. Talking seriously with our families. Making up after conflicts with friends through discussion. Even when opinions differ, accepting the other person's perspective and listening carefully.

If a sense of caring for one another spreads from our immediate surroundings, I believe the world will surely change. At the exit of the museum was a display titled “A Pledge for Peace,” which read, “We will never repeat this mistake.” Seeing those words, I strongly felt that because we belong to a generation that does not know war firsthand, we must carry its memories forward.

One person's voice may be small, but I believe that when many voices come together, they become a powerful force. In Hiroshima, I learned that the memories of war still clearly remain, and that there are people who continue to pass them on. I realized that war is not simply "a thing of the past," but something that concerns our future.

I truly feel from the bottom of my heart that I am glad I was able to visit Hiroshima. I was able to see with my own eyes, walk with my own feet, and learn things that cannot be felt through books or textbooks alone. Through this visit, I felt the meaning of the word "peace" slowly begin to take shape within me.

From now on, I want to continue valuing my connections with others and protecting "small peace" in the places closest to me. By doing so, I believe I can repay, even in a small way, the precious lives that were lost in Hiroshima on that day.

The War Stories My Grandmother Told Me

Daigo Junior High School, 1st Grade, Rua Nakamura

My grandmother is currently eighty-nine years old. I heard stories directly from her about the war she experienced when she was a child. Those stories were far more vivid than the events I learned about in textbooks, and they left a strong impression on my heart.

When my grandmother was five years old, on December 8, Japan began the war with the United States and Britain. On that day, my grandmother was playing inside a shop, riding a tricycle. Then a voice came from the radio saying, "The war has begun." My grandmother said that she was too young to understand well, but she could sense the atmosphere that "something serious had happened."

Even when she was at school during the war, she could not feel safe. Even during class, if an air-raid warning sounded, they had to quickly gather their textbooks and notebooks, put on their air-raid hoods, and evacuate. One day, while walking home from school, she was actually caught in a bombing attack, and she survived by lying flat under the eaves of a nearby house. When the principal told them the next day, "One student died because a bomb fell on their house," the entire classroom was filled with fear.

Daily life was also extremely difficult. Food and clothing were all rationed, and rice was mixed with barley or sweet potatoes. There were almost no sweets, and my grandmother said that she wore tabi made of cloth instead of socks. Even so, she told me, "People thought the soldiers fighting at the front must have it much harder, so no one complained." I was surprised by the strength of the people at that time.

As air raids became more intense, my grandmother evacuated to Gotemba. At the rural school there, she was helped by kind friends and was able to feel a little more at ease, but that did not mean the fear of war disappeared. One day, they were suddenly attacked by

machine-gun fire, and she said she desperately lay flat on the embankment of a rice field to protect her life.

Then came the night of July 16, 1945. When she went outside after being called by her uncle's loud voice, the southern sky was burning bright red. The town of Numazu was under air attack. My grandmother said she was so terrified that she could not even speak and simply watched the scene. She could see lights fluttering down through the night sky, which she later learned were flares used for bombing.

At that time, my grandmother's father—my great-grandfather—had remained in Numazu. From the evacuation site, all they could do was watch the sky turn red, and she was unbearably worried, wondering, "Is Father safe?" Eventually, when the trains began running again, relatives went to check on my great-grandfather. Fortunately, his life had been spared, and he was living in a small shack built together with people from the house behind his. However, many people had died, and the situation in Numazu had completely changed. Hearing this, my grandmother told me that she felt from the bottom of her heart, "I'm so glad Father is alive."

Then, one month later, on August 15, they listened to the Emperor's broadcast at school. The adults were crying, but my grandmother said that when she heard the words "the war is over," her chest was so full that she could not cry, and instead felt like smiling. The long-lasting, terrifying, and cruel war had finally ended.

After hearing my grandmother's stories, I strongly felt how precious the everyday life I live now truly is. Being able to eat meals without worry, study with friends, and sleep soundly at night—none of these things are ordinary, and I realized that they exist on top of the wishes of those who survived the war.

My grandmother said, "I never want to go through anything like that again." I want to never forget these words and to think about what I can do to protect peace. And I want to make sure that my grandmother's experiences and feelings do not end with our generation, but are passed down and told for a long time to come.

Connecting Peace Through Manga

Daigo Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Yuwa Shigeta

I like books and manga. Books make our imagination expand, and manga show us strange worlds that seem as if they do not exist in reality.

Now, eighty years after the war, the question of how to pass on the memory of the atomic bomb has become a problem. As the number of people who experienced the atomic bomb decreases, how should we, who do not know that day, pass it on?

I watched the movie "Grave of the Fireflies" on television. My grandmother, who was

watching together with me, told me that this movie was based on a book. The scene that left a particularly strong impression on me was the part where the main character and his younger sister, who became orphans due to air raids, were taken in by people they knew and lived with them. While other adults were working for the country, the main character did not go out to work and instead spent time with his sister. The aunt, who did not like this, gradually began to treat the two of them harshly. It is true that not going out to work is wrong, and at that time people were overwhelmed just trying to survive themselves, so it cannot be helped that her attitude became severe. Even so, it made me sad to watch that, even though they were fellow Japanese, there was no helping each other.

Also, triggered by a television special, I read “Barefoot Gen”. Because “Barefoot Gen” is a manga, it has pictures, and I thought it was very good because it makes the situation at the time easier to understand than writing alone. In this manga, scenes of racial discrimination at the time—such as people making fun of those who came from Korea—and scenes of people being cornered by American soldiers and taking their own lives are drawn in detail. What was especially shocking was the story immediately after the atomic bomb was dropped. The main character was safe because of a concrete wall, but very close by, a woman he had been talking to just moments before was dead, with her face melted and ruined. When the main character reunites with his family, his father, sister, and younger brother are trapped under the collapsed house and cannot get out. Unable to rescue them, and being pushed to leave by his father, the main character escapes with his mother, who had survived. Watching him have to abandon and flee from people he loved, who were still alive and right in front of him, made me feel very sad.

The atomic bomb took away, in an instant, the ordinary happiness that Japanese people had taken for granted. I learned from a television special that after the war, in America, people said things such as, “Because the atomic bomb was dropped, the war ended,” and “The atomic bomb was dropped because Japan did not surrender.” From America’s point of view, that may be so. If the atomic bomb had not been dropped, Japan might not have stopped. Even so, I think that the atomic bomb is something that must never exist. People who were blown away by the atomic bomb and became only shadows. People whose eyes were pierced by large amounts of glass and who lost their sight. People whose hair fell out due to the radiation of the atomic bomb. Only Japan knows such people. Even if we have not experienced these sad and tragic memories ourselves, I think it is important to pass them on with hope, wishing for a peaceful future for Japan and for the world.

I like books and manga. Books make our imagination expand, and manga show us strange worlds that seem unreal. However, this time, through books and manga, I learned about the reality called war. Unlike before, when I only looked at imaginary worlds through manga, through manga I was given an opportunity to learn about war and think about it. Now, the number of people who experienced the atomic bomb is decreasing, and opportunities to hear

their stories directly are becoming even fewer. Because of times like this, I think books and manga can become an opportunity to know that reality and think about it. I like books and manga, and I intend to continue thinking about peace without forgetting the war and the tragedy of the atomic bomb that I learned about through books and manga.

Facing War

Katahama Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Sara Takizawa

“War.” Recently, I have been hearing this word more often. Since advancing to my third year, I have had more opportunities to think about war.

On June 23, until now I did not know that this day is Okinawa Memorial Day. What led me to learn this was the television news I happened to be watching without much thought that day. Shown on the television was Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Park. There, something called the Cornerstone of Peace was lined up in rows. On these stones are engraved the names of all the people who died in the Battle of Okinawa and other conflicts. In front of the stones, relatives were putting their hands together in prayer, and some were shedding large tears. Why did so many lives have to be taken? Watching that scene through the television screen made my chest ache.

However, I still do not understand war. No, I felt that I must not think I understand it just because I have seen a little of it on the news; I must learn much more about it.

At that time, during a Japanese language class one day, we watched the live-action version of “Barefoot Gen”.

This story depicts events that took place in the midst of the most tragic war, World War II. Every time an air-raid warning sounded, people hid in air-raid shelters with anxiety in their hearts. They could not eat enough food, and days passed with people repeatedly saying, “I’m hungry.” Then one day, without any air-raid warning sounding, the atomic bomb was dropped. At that moment, a heat wave attacked the people, and when they came to their senses, the surrounding buildings and people were gone. With this single atomic bomb, the ordinary daily life people had taken for granted disappeared in an instant. A moment ago, I said, “this story.” However, these were events that actually happened. Even in natural disasters such as earthquakes, many people feel fear, yet having bombs dropped by human hands and human will is hundreds of times more frightening than natural disasters.

I wanted to hear about experiences of war from someone close to me, so I asked my grandmother about my great-grandmother. My great-grandmother lived in Higashiyama in Gotemba. From time to time, soldiers would come to visit her home. Because there was rice at her house, she would feed the soldiers that rice. However, the rice was brown rice. It was not the pure white rice we eat today. Polished white rice must have been precious. In addi-

tion, she treated soldiers' injuries and sewed something called thousand-stitch belts, praying for the soldiers' safety. I also heard that my great-grandfather went to war, but the war ended soon after he left. Although it was only a short time, he saw many soldiers' bodies lying on the battlefield, and even after returning home safely, he could not sleep for a while. War is something terrifying that wounds not only people's bodies, but also their hearts. My great-grandmother, too, sometimes could not stop trembling from fear of bombing sounds, and she did not like to talk much about those times.

Even in places so close to me, there were people who experienced the tragic war of that time. By hearing stories from family members close to me, I was able to feel the raw reality of war more vividly.

Japan today is protected by pacifism so that war does not occur. Because it is peaceful, there may be people who think of the frightening memories of war as if they were merely "stories."

However, I felt that in order to continue protecting that peace, it is important not to turn away from war just because it is frightening and sad, but to face it directly. If there is someone nearby who experienced war, it might be a good idea to listen to their story at least once.

Trying to learn on our own and facing these realities may be what connects to the future that we will live in.

The Future Can Always Be Changed

Kanaoka Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Kiho Tada

"Is there peace if there is no war?"

When I hear the word "peace," this question is the first thing that comes to my mind. Even now, the war between Ukraine and Russia continues, and many people are being injured and losing their lives. What we see in the news is only a small part of it. When I think that, behind that, there are people whose names we do not even know, suffering and crying every day, my chest aches.

It would be better if there were no war. Everyone should know that. In novels, movies, and anime as well, the message "Do not forget war" has been conveyed again and again. Even so, why does war never disappear? Even if war were to end, would the sadness of those who have lost loved ones really disappear? Japan is the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, and even now, eighty years after the war, the suffering of people who lost their families to atomic bombs and air raids continues. When I think about this, I cannot easily say that "peace will come as long as war ends."

I tried to research the war between Ukraine and Russia. I thought I knew about it vaguely from watching the news, but I did not know the real reasons. As I continued researching, I

learned that there is a long history between these two countries that cannot be explained simply. I also learned that past wars and periods of domination are influencing the present conflict. War gives birth to the next war—. When I realized this reality, I felt a sense of despair.

Last summer, I visited Taiwan. I experienced the liveliness of the streets, the smells of food, and the kindness of the people, and while feeling charms different from Japan, I also sensed an atmosphere somehow similar to that of Japanese people, which gave me a strange sense of comfort. When an elderly woman sitting next to me on the train spoke to me in the local language, I was troubled because I could not understand her. When I gathered my courage and told her in English, “I am Japanese,” she spoke to me in broken Japanese. When I took a taxi as well, the driver responded in Japanese. Everyone smiled and was very kind. That kindness made my heart feel warm. However, after returning to Japan, I began to wonder why Japanese was understood, and I researched the history between Taiwan and Japan. Then I learned that war was deeply involved there as well. I learned that during the period when Japan ruled Taiwan as a territory, people were forced to learn Japanese. The moment I learned this history, I remembered the kindness and smiles I had received in Taiwan, and my chest felt tight. I thought that behind their kindness lies a history of suffering and sorrow that I cannot imagine.

Even relationships that appear peaceful on the surface have past pain hidden beneath them. Even between countries that seem to get along well, there are complex emotions that they have overcome. And even now, somewhere in the world, there are situations where a new war could break out at any time.

Is there peace if there is no war? I still cannot give an answer to this question. That is because there have been wars that began for the reason of “protecting peace.” However, there is one thing I can say clearly. Peace does not come from war. Peace can only begin from the determination not to wage war. We cannot change the events of the past. But the future is something that we can choose and create. I think this: in order for someone in the future to be able to say from the heart, “This world is peaceful,” we must build the society of today. Only by not waging war can the path to peace be opened. That is why I will not stop thinking about peace. And even through my own small actions, I want to help create a “peaceful future.”

The Difference Between Peace and Happiness

Kanaoka Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Chikako Ide

What is the relationship between peace and happiness? I often think about this question. When I look it up in the dictionary, peace is defined as “a calm and stable state without

war or violence.” On the other hand, happiness is defined as “a desirable state in which a person has no dissatisfaction.” In other words, peace is a word that describes the condition of society as a whole, while happiness describes the state of everyone’s heart. However, these two do not always seem to be pointing in the same direction. Japan has lived through eighty years without war since the end of the war, yet it ranks only fifty-fifth in the World Happiness Report, which is by no means high. Why is it that even without war, people do not necessarily feel “happy”? I think this is deeply connected to differences in the quality of happiness.

The first time I saw real-time footage of war was during the war between Russia and Ukraine. When I saw explosions and people evacuating on the television news, I felt a strong shock. That was because I had thought war was something from the distant past, found only in textbooks. However, now that three and a half years have passed, that shock has faded. Even though it is reported almost every day, it somehow feels like someone else’s problem. This is probably because there is no direct danger to me personally. Only when my daily life is affected - such as when gasoline or food prices rise - do I feel war as something closer to me. Japan is surrounded by the sea and does not share land borders like Europe or Asia. That may also be one reason why we tend to feel war as something distant. In my everyday life, there are moments when I think, “I am happy.” When I sit around the table with my family, when I say “See you tomorrow” to my friends, when I make plans to hang out on a day off. Having food, clothing, and shelter guaranteed, being able to go to school, and being able to think about tomorrow’s plans - these are, in fact, great happiness. However, the way happiness is felt differs from person to person. Some people may think, “As long as there is war somewhere in the world, I cannot say that I am at peace.” Others, like me, find happiness in their immediate daily lives. It is here that the difference in the quality of happiness may exist. What is important, I think, is to acknowledge those differences while not forgetting the ordinary happiness we have.

What is frightening is failing to notice ordinary happiness and chasing only desire. Wanting to be richer, wanting more land, wanting more support—when such desires grow stronger, people lose sight of their surroundings, and eventually they become causes of conflict. Desire has no end, even when it is satisfied. But happiness is something that is born precisely within relationships with others. I think that true happiness lights up within the heart when people support one another, share with one another, and help one another.

Japan, as the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, should know the horror of war. And yet, perhaps the reason it is difficult to feel happiness even while living in peace is that our compass of happiness has turned toward “desire.” Peace is the foundation of happiness and something that is essential. Depending on what kind of happiness we seek on top of that foundation, the shape of society will also change. That is why I want to be a person who can feel, in daily life, “I am happy because there is peace.” Not taking our ordinary lives for granted but feeling gratitude for them. Cherishing the happiness that exists within human

connections. I think that this is what is necessary to continue protecting peace in the future as well.

Non-Overtunable Justice

Kanaoka Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Shino Ito

After watching NHK's morning serialized television drama "Anpan," I began to think about what peace and justice really are. This drama is modeled on the lives of the manga artist Takashi Yanase, who created "Anpanman," and his wife Nobu, and it depicts the days of hardship they endured and the life they lived while never forgetting their dreams.

In this drama, the line spoken by the main character, Takashi, "Justice can be overturned... Then what kind of justice is one that never gets overturned?" left a very strong impression on me. This question also serves as an important element that shapes the story.

Yanase experienced war when he was young. At that time, what was considered justice was "defeating the enemy," and for that purpose many people risked their lives. However, when the war ended, that suddenly became something evil. At that moment, Yanase developed a deep doubt about justice, which can so easily be overturned depending on the era, the country, or one's position. From that experience, the character "Anpanman" was born.

Anpanman's sense of justice is to help people who are in trouble by giving a part of his own face to those who are hungry. The message Yanase wished to convey is that winning through fighting is not necessarily justice, and that truly helping or making someone happy is what real justice is.

In the story, Takashi is portrayed impressively as he searches, amid anxiety, for something he can cherish no matter what, wondering what he should believe if justice is something that can so easily be overturned depending on the era or one's position. And I thought that the "non-overtunable justice" he discovers - "reaching out a hand to people who are in trouble" - is the form of peace that Yanase tried to convey throughout his entire life.

I think this way of thinking is deeply connected to the modern society in which we live. In the news and newspapers, conflicts between countries and between people are constantly reported. Each side insists that it is right, and sometimes these conflicts develop into violence or attacks. In such a world, I think that if each person could hold the idea that "acting for someone else is justice," the world might be able to change, even if only little by little.

In addition, I think that this "non-overtunable justice" is not only necessary in large-scale matters such as nations or the world, but also in the familiar events around us in our daily lives. When we reach out a hand or speak up when a friend is in trouble, those actions contain the desire to help someone. However, until now, I have not been able to easily turn those

feelings into action. But now that I have come into contact with Yanase's way of thinking, I have begun to want to be someone who can carry out the small justice right in front of me without hesitation. Even if it is not something that stands out, caring for others is itself an undeniable example of "non-overturnable justice."

Justice is not about attacking and defeating someone, but about helping and supporting one another. Through his own experiences of war and the hardships of his life, Yanase arrived at that answer. And to convey it to many people, he continued drawing "Anpanman."

I strongly want to be someone who can cherish my own "non-overturnable justice" in this way as well. Caring about the people around me, reaching out to those who are in trouble, and firmly doing what I can - within such small actions, I think that true justice and peace may be hidden. Holding close to my heart the important lessons I learned from Yanase's way of life and thinking, I want to continue growing into a person who possesses both kindness and strength.

Living With a Wish for Peace

Kanaoka Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Seiga Komatsu

This year marks the milestone of eighty years since the end of the war. Many special programs have been broadcast on television as well. I have had many opportunities to see and hear about things such as the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and programs in which war is spoken about. Not only that, but even now, wars are being fought around the world, and many lives are being taken. In the midst of this, I find that I still cannot fully see war as something that concerns me personally. When I thought about why that might be, I realized that it is probably because I have never heard about it directly from anyone, and because war is not something close to my everyday life.

So, I decided to look into what happened during the war in Numazu, where I live.

As I researched various things, I learned that there is an organization called the Numazu City Bereaved Families Association. I also found a book titled "War and Peace", which was published in 2011. In it, the story of a certain family was written. It was the story of a woman who lost her husband in the war shortly after they were married.

They married during the war, her husband was sent off to war while she was pregnant, and soon a child was born. Air raids, defeat, postwar reconstruction from the burned ruins. A notice informing her of her husband's death in battle... When she went to collect his remains and opened the plain wooden box at home, there was only a single piece of paper inside with her husband's name and age written on it. This, it said, was what happened to her during the war. Reading the passage, which described the circumstances at the time in concrete detail, I found myself unable to put my feelings into words. That was not all that was written there.

It also described her “life for survival” with her deceased husband’s parents and child, in a situation so painful and harsh that she was not even allowed to cry. While reading the book, even though I have never actually experienced war myself, the painful and difficult scenes of that time came vividly to mind. When I told my mother about this story, she said, “I’m sure she desperately raised her child, who was born in place of her husband.”

She also said,

“A mother is willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of her child.”

I thought that, in any era, a mother’s feelings for her child do not change. And seeing my mother speak gently, I felt truly grateful for her love, which always puts her children before herself.

Japan today has renounced war based on Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan. Because of that, it may be that, realistically, I will never be in a situation where I have to go to war. However, when I think about what I would have felt and thought if I had been born in a time when I had no choice but to go to war, I cannot easily find an answer, no matter how much I think about it. Japan today may be peaceful, with no war. But if we turn our eyes to the world, there are people who, just like that mother, are desperately living each day simply “to live in the present.” We must not forget that. Waging war is something that is wrong. And I think that, just as wrong, is having no interest and thinking, “It has nothing to do with me.”

As eighty years have passed since the war, and the number of people who actually experienced it is decreasing, I live while deeply appreciating the peace that exists in Japan today. And in order to ensure that the peace we take for granted does not collapse, and even if it were to collapse, I think we need to consider what kind of actions we ourselves should take. I am still just a middle school student, with neither strength nor knowledge. However, even someone like me must surely be able to do something to protect myself and the people I care about. I think that the best situation is one in which no conflict ever arises, but no one knows when conflict may occur. People who experienced war have left words and records for those of us living today. By listening to them, and wishing that war will never happen again, I want to continue living my days.

Our Connection to War

Ooka Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Yamato Furuya

Recently, I often hear about the atomic bomb on television news and similar programs. This is because eighty years have passed since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On August 6 and 9, 1945, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing about devastating damage. These attacks were carried out to bring World War II to an end, but many people became victims.

And even now, there are still people who continue to suffer. They are still troubled by keloid scars from burns, illnesses such as leukemia and cancer, as well as psychological trauma, depression, and anxiety disorders. In addition, not only the survivors themselves but also their families can be affected. When I think that there are still people suffering somewhere I do not know about, I felt that we must learn about the atomic bomb and about the atomic bomb survivors.

At this year's school festival, my class decided to sing a song called "The Disappeared August," which has the atomic bomb as its theme. "The Disappeared August" expresses the damage caused by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945 and the tragedy of it. In the lyrics, phrases such as "In the hot light, I became a single picture" and "In the hot wind, you became a single stone statue" describe the scene immediately after the atomic bomb was dropped, when objects around were burned and discolored by the heat rays released at the time of the explosion, and people became shields, leaving only black shadows where their bodies had blocked the heat. In addition, from the lyrics beginning with "My beloved August" to "But everything disappeared" and "Without even a single drop of blood," the song expresses the sorrow and sense of loss of a summer that should have been fun and exciting, a beloved season, being struck by light in the hot wind and poisoned air, and erased in an instant without even a single drop of blood being shed. When I listened to this song for the first time, my chest felt tight as I thought about people around my age, or even younger children, who, despite having done nothing wrong, had their entire towns burned away and lost their lives. And I strongly felt that I wanted to sing this song while engraving this sorrow and sense of loss into my heart and putting my feelings into it.

The sadness caused by war was not limited to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Tokyo Air Raid, the Battle of Okinawa, air raids on the Japanese mainland—air raids occurred all over Japan, and many people suffered and experienced deep sorrow. The same was true for my hometown, Numazu. On July 17, 1945, the Great Air Raid of Numazu occurred. It is said that Numazu became a target of air raids because it had military facilities and many factories. Around 120 U.S. aircraft attacked, mainly centering on the area around present-day Ōtemachi. More than 9,000 incendiary bombs were dropped. As a result, there were 274 deaths, 505 people with serious or minor injuries, and 89.5 percent of the urban area was burned down, causing enormous damage. In addition, even before this air raid, Numazu had been hit by several small-scale air raids, and when these are added together, it is said that there were 322 deaths and 634 people with serious or minor injuries. When I think that so many lives and hearts were taken in the very place where I am breathing now, I feel as if tears might come to my eyes at any moment. When I researched further, I learned that near where I live there is a bridge damaged by bombing, parks where anti-aircraft guns used to intercept enemy planes remain, and that within Numazu City there are a total of eighty sites that bear traces of war. None of these have been removed or repaired; they

remain as they are. That is because they are history that must be passed on to the next generation. Therefore, I too want to pass on the lessons and tragedy of this war to the next generation, so that war will never happen again and so that no one will ever have to suffer because of war.

I never imagined that there were so many connections to war so close to me. To ensure that such cruel and tragic suffering is never repeated, I strongly feel that we must pass on the tragedy of war and the history of war in our own hometown to many people. And at the upcoming school festival chorus, I have decided to think of the people who suffered in the war and their families, and to express those feelings through our voices and convey them to the entire school.

To Prevent War From Happening Again

Ooka Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Iori Uno

When the anniversary of the end of the war approaches, I hear stories about the war on television, and I remember the war stories my great-grandmother told me. I think that the lives of people at that time were so difficult that we can hardly imagine them today. The life we are able to live now was not something ordinary for the people of that time.

Before my great-grandmother passed away, I once heard her talk about her experiences during the war. She told me that when she was a female student at the time, she and her older and younger sisters were making weapons used for the war. I was very surprised to learn that people around the same age as us were working long hours for the sake of the war in that era. She talked about how they would run to air-raid shelters when sirens sounded, and how life was so poor that they mixed sweet potatoes into rice to increase its volume or even boiled and ate sweet-potato vines. She said that life at that time was truly painful.

Whenever my great-grandmother talked about the war, she would always tightly close her eyes and seem to be desperately recalling those memories. Her expression at those moments was so painful that I still cannot forget it, and from her face I could feel how hard life was for people at that time. I think that the reason people who experienced the war passed on such painful stories - stories they would rather not even remember—to those who had never experienced it was because they had a strong wish that the same thing would never happen again. My great-grandmother often said to me, “You children are fortunate.” I could feel her feelings even through those words. In order not to waste the feelings of people like her, I believe that war must absolutely never be repeated.

Now, eighty years after the end of the war, the number of people who actually experienced war has been decreasing, and opportunities for their stories to be passed on to people who have never experienced war are also decreasing.

The other day, on a television program I happened to be watching, I heard that people today are reading fewer books. The program said that in today's age, people can search for only what they want to know on their smartphones or computers, so books, which contain a wide variety of information, can feel bothersome because they include information other than what one wants to know. It is certainly easier if you can look up only what you want to know, but by reading books, you can learn more deeply about a topic than by searching on a smartphone or computer, so I think reading is very important. I think it is important to read books that allow you to deepen your knowledge by learning not only what you are trying to know, but also the background and related information.

Recently, I read a book titled "If we could meet again, on the hill where that flower blooms," which has war as its theme. This book is fictional, and the depictions of war were not extremely vivid, but I was able to learn a little about war and imagine what things were like at that time. Recently, the number of people who experienced war has decreased, and books have also become less familiar, so I think opportunities to learn about war are gradually decreasing. War is something that must not be allowed to fade away, and in order to prevent war from happening in the future, I believe we must not reduce opportunities to learn about it. Therefore, I thought that for war to continue to be passed down in the future, it is important to convey the feeling that war must never be repeated, in ways that suit each era.

I feel anxious that opportunities to encounter stories about war are decreasing and that the peace we have now may start to feel taken for granted. Since Japan is not currently at war, we are able to use the time we live for ourselves. However, if we look around the world, there are certainly many people for whom this is not the case. I think wars arise from struggles over resources and territory, and differences in opinions, and when armed force is added to those conflicts. But I also think it is important to consider how we can prevent such situations from leading to war in the first place.

Cucumbers... Listening to My Great-Grandfather's Story

Ashitaka Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Rento Hashimura

Whenever I see footage about war in the news, I sometimes think about why people fight and take things from one another. Every time people try to decide something, conflict arises. When I watch the news, there are reports about many people losing their lives in war, about disputes between countries somewhere in the world, or about conflicts within the Japanese government. Each time, conflict occurs. On social media as well, I sometimes see people arguing, saying "this side is right" and "that side is wrong" about certain issues. In social studies classes, we have learned about war, and about how many lives war has taken, since

around the third grade of elementary school. I think that treating others with kindness and empathy through our words and attitudes is the first necessary step toward creating a peaceful world. I believe that it is most important for countries to cooperate with one another and resolve problems through dialogue.

My great-grandfather loved cucumbers very much. However, during World War II, at the young age of fifteen, he was sent from Okayama to Kyushu as a soldier trainee. There, the meals were never served in sufficient amounts, and he ate cucumber miso soup all the time. Because of that, my great-grandfather came to strongly dislike cucumbers and miso soup. My great-grandfather's older brother was already an adult, so he was drafted into the military and sent to the battlefield. After the war, he was transferred to Siberia. In Siberia, he was placed in a detention camp and forced to do harsh labor. We today are able to live relatively happy lives. We can go to school, and when we are in trouble, we have family members, friends, and teachers who help us and cooperate with us. If I were in the position of my great-grandfather or his older brother, I would be overwhelmed with fear. When I think about how anxious and frightening it must have been to be separated from one's family, subjected to strict training, or sent to fight for one's country on the battlefield, I feel it must have been truly painful.

When I looked up what peace is using a dictionary or a smartphone, it was written as "a calm and safe state without war." I do not think that the opposite of war is "peace." I do not think the world can be peaceful as long as there is violence or racial discrimination, even if war does not occur. However, I believe that reducing conflict is an important step toward creating a peaceful world. In this way, something that one loves can become something one hates. By personally researching, seeing, learning, and thinking about things such as the Atomic Bomb Dome that survived the war, and books and websites related to war, I think we can come to feel that our ordinary daily lives are irreplaceable happiness. That is why I think that respecting the opinions of others and working to resolve problems is the most important thing of all.

Truly "Knowing" War

Ashitaka Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Kota Otake

"I know about war." "I know the value of peace."

Living in Japan, where information about wars that were fought in the past and wars that are still continuing today can be obtained as a matter of course from all kinds of sources, and having thought about peace many times at school, I used to think this way. I believe that most Japanese people do not usually think things like, "Today is peaceful and happy." Of course, I was one of them. However, from a certain day onward, I changed the way I thought.

One summer day, I became interested in a certain shrine. It was Shizuoka Gokoku Shrine,

located near Higashi-Shizuoka Station. As someone whose hobby is visiting shrines, I was drawn to the words “Gokoku Shrine” and decided to visit it. Passing through the torii gate, the first thing that caught my eye was information about the enshrined deities. It read, “76,230 heroic spirits from Shizuoka Prefecture.” When I saw this, I let out a gasp without thinking. That was because I was shocked by how many people had died in the war from Shizuoka Prefecture alone. At the same time, I keenly realized how indifferent I had been to history, not even knowing that there was this many war dead just from Shizuoka.

Knowing that this place was a sacred site that enshrines heroic spirits, I proceeded further into the grounds and found a stone monument. It was called the “Takukon Monument.” There was an explanation saying that it was a monument built to commemorate young people who had been sent out for Manchurian settlement and became refugees due to the collapse of Manchukuo. When I saw it, one thing came back to my mind. It was a story about my great-grandmother, who has passed away since. She had told me that when she was young, she had been made to work in Manchuria in China and had gone through extremely difficult experiences. The moment I remembered this story, I felt as if dots had suddenly been connected. While feeling surprised at the thought that my great-grandmother might have gone to Manchuria for settlement, I put my hands together in prayer before the monument. There were other monuments as well. On them were many explanations about battles on islands with names I had hardly heard of and did not really know, such as Mindanao Island and Guam Island.

After finishing my worship and taking a moment to rest, I thought about something. I realized that although I thought I knew about war, perhaps I actually knew nothing at all. I did not know how many people from Shizuoka Prefecture had been sent to the battlefield, nor did I know that there had been Manchurian settlement. I had never even heard that battles had taken place on nameless islands. Having thought about peace many times in social studies and moral education classes, I do know that peace is important. However, I realized that I had absolutely no idea what kind of people’s efforts and sacrifices today’s peace rests upon. I could only feel ashamed of myself for this fact. It was at that moment that I changed my way of thinking for the first time. I realized that I still did not know the value of peace, and that I did not know what war had left behind. And so I decided to study history more deeply. I came to understand that the sorrowful history left behind by our predecessors has created the peace we have today, and that learning that history is the only memory that can truly teach us the value of peace.

Today, people may be satisfied with learning only what is written in textbooks. They may watch news about wars currently happening on the internet and wish for the continuation of peace in Japan. However, peace is not something that can be easily achieved without doing anything. If we who are living now become lazy about continuing to wish for peace and about passing on the events of the past, peace will eventually collapse. Knowing the past, holding

the determination to cherish the peace that our predecessors built at the cost of their lives, and trying to protect that peace - this is a cycle that I believe is most important for as many people as possible to carry out. It would be even better if, after knowing the past, each person could have their own thoughts about peace. I sincerely hope that many people will engrave in their hearts the fact that the foundation for advocating peace lies only in past history and will walk forward on a better path.

Now, as we mark eighty years since the end of the war, this is precisely the time to learn from the past and nurture our hearts. I want to be a person like that.

Carrying Today's Peace Into the Future

Ohira Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Miku Tsuchiya

War is when conflict between countries, or between ethnic groups or communities, grows larger and people try to defeat one another through the use of armed force.

Throughout human history, war has been repeated again and again, and each time many lives have been lost, and towns and nature have been destroyed. War does not only affect soldiers; it also destroys the lives of ordinary people who live there. People who lose their homes must evacuate, and sometimes they are forced to leave their country and live in unfamiliar lands. Living in places where the language and culture are different is extremely difficult, and people will feel anxiety and loneliness. Children are unable to go to school and are even deprived of their right to learn. War destroys people's futures as well.

In addition, war leaves deep wounds in people's hearts.

The sorrow of losing precious family members and friends does not disappear, no matter how many years pass.

Memories of fear and anger remain, and can give rise to hatred in people's hearts. That hatred leads to the next conflict, creating an endless cycle of suffering. That is why, once war occurs, it takes an extremely long time to heal the wounds.

Modern warfare is slightly different from wars of the past. In the past, people fought with swords and guns, but now there are powerful weapons such as missiles, bombs, and nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons in particular, if used even once, can take the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in an instant and turn cities into ruins. Furthermore, due to the effects of radiation, people are unable to live on that land for a long time.

Japan is a country that has experienced atomic bombs being dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Precisely because we know the horror of this, we must hold a strong conviction that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

So, what should be done to eliminate war?

One method is to continue dialogue between countries. Even when opinions differ or

ways of thinking clash, it is important not to try to solve problems immediately through force, but instead to make the effort to understand one another over time. In addition, not only countries, but each one of us must also have a heart that values peace. I believe that small acts of kindness and mutual support, when accumulated, become a force that can prevent large-scale conflict.

When we watch the news, wars and conflicts are still occurring somewhere in the world. In those images, there are sometimes children who are about the same age as us. Even though they do not wish for war at all, they cannot avoid it and are suffering. When I think about what it would be like if I were in the same position, my heart aches deeply.

That is why I feel that we who live in peaceful Japan must not take that happiness for granted, but must be grateful for it and continue to protect it.

Eliminating war is not an easy task. However, if people all over the world continue to hold the desire for peace, it should be possible to change things little by little. Learning at school and getting along with friends are actually things that are only possible because peace exists.

In the future, when I become an adult, I want to be someone who thinks about what can be done to protect peace and who is able to take action.

And I sincerely hope for a world in which the sorrow of war is never repeated.

Fragments of Memory

Ohira Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Shuto Omura

This year marks eighty years since the end of the war. The number of people who experienced the war is decreasing year by year. In addition, even among those war survivors who are still alive today, there are people who cannot talk about the war. One reason for this is dementia. My great-grandmother, too, is now becoming unclear about her memories of the past.

My great-grandmother lived in Manchuria during the war. What she experienced there was something that I, living in the modern age, could never possibly imagine. At the same time, I still vividly remember the moment when the blood drained from my face. It seems that many people died right in front of my great-grandmother when she was still very young. My great-grandmother said, "One day, what if I end up like that too?" She was apparently seized by fear and a sense of despair. Her voice when she talked about this was different from her usual voice.

Even so, my great-grandmother's memories of the war are now becoming vague. Recently, when I asked her about her wartime experiences, she said, "I don't remember very much anymore." I was unable to hear her story. However, there was something she never forgot, no matter how much time passed. That was my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather was my

great-grandmother's husband. He was a kind and wonderful person. My great-grandmother always remembered him. I think the reason for that was that the time the two of them spent together was "peaceful." I believe that the everyday life in which they could freely go wherever they wanted and eat whatever they wanted, without having anything to fear, remains as a shining memory even now. Then I remembered my great-grandmother saying, "There isn't a single good thing about war." I truly felt that she was right, and from the bottom of my heart I wished for a peaceful world. And then I made up my mind: "I must pass these stories on."

Previously, I once saw on the news that students in Hiroshima were engaged in activities to pass on stories about the war. I think such activities are very important. That is why I want to pass on stories about the war. I think such activities are very important. That is why I want to firmly pass on the feelings contained in my great-grandmother's "fragments of memory," and I want as many people as possible to know how important peace is. The present age is completely different from wartime. There must be many people who do not know much about the war. In such circumstances, I think it is important to overlap the events of wartime with ourselves. That is the key that leads to peace. By overlapping them, true peace will naturally be found. And we who are living in the present must ensure that the cruel event called war never happens again. My great-grandmother's favorite saying is, "Everyone, get along." I want us all to cooperate, make the right decisions at each moment, and aim for peace.

I want to help create a world overflowing with "happiness." For that to happen, it is important to respect individual ways of thinking, and even if others hold opinions different from one's own, to accept and try to understand them, even if only a little. I hope that by passing on the "war" that I know to someone else, it can become an opportunity for each person to properly think about peace.

To My Great-Grandmother - After Hearing About the "Balloon Bombs"

**Nagasaki Elementary and Junior High School,
8th Grade, Chifuyu Sekino**

This is a letter from me to my great-grandmother. I heard about you from my grandmother. I was told that when you were sixteen years old, you were making a weapon called "balloon bombs." Balloon bombs were weapons in which bombs or incendiary bombs were suspended from balloons made by pasting together Japanese paper with konjac paste, then sent across the Pacific Ocean on the jet stream to target the mainland of the United States. It is said that many female students were mobilized for their production. When I heard that story, I was very surprised. It was something that is unimaginable today. I am writing this letter because, after hearing that story, I wanted to convey the feelings I had. My grand-

mother told me, “Your great-grandmother was strong-willed, serious, competitive, and a hard worker.” I heard that with the feeling of “I don’t want to lose to others,” when the friends around her were working hard, she would say, “I’ll work even harder!” and put her full effort into everything she did. So I imagine that you, too, while thinking “I hate war,” also thought, “I have to do something useful,” and that is why you were making balloon bombs.

But I still felt that something about it was wrong. That is because I think that war itself is wrong - war that makes even girls around junior high school age manufacture weapons in order for people to kill other people.

I wondered whether it was really right to make even children work by saying things like “for the sake of the country” or “endure until we win.” I’m sure that you, too, really wanted to spend your time chatting with friends, studying, and eating until you were full. Isn’t that how you truly wanted to live?

But you were told that “luxury is the enemy,” and you couldn’t do the things you liked. Even so, you thought, “I have to do my best too,” and lived desperately. I can’t imagine what it was like, but I want to know how you thought about “surviving.” I think that you were able to keep living not just by working hard, but because you thought about others and held on to dreams and hopes.

When I heard your story, I thought, “That’s amazing,” and at the same time, I felt very sad. If it were me, I think I would quickly say, “I can’t do this anymore! I don’t want to do it!” But because you did your best and lived through that time, I am here today. Today, I go to school, laugh with my friends, play, do the things I like, eat meals with my family, and live my everyday life. I had thought that all of this was normal, but I now believe that the peace we have today exists because people like you lived through such painful times.

But even now, wars continue in the world. I hope that the number of people who suffer -those who lose their families, small children, and people who are caught up in war despite having done nothing - will not increase any further. From now on, I want to cherish and protect the peace that you all connected and passed down to us. And I want to become someone who can tell the next generation, “Peace is important.” Because you survived, I am here now. Thank you for surviving.

Questioning the Present, Eighty Years After the War

**Nagaisaki Elementary and Junior High School,
9th Grade, Natsumi Onuma**

A peaceful and prosperous era that we learned about in history class. Before the war, a brief period of economic prosperity arrived, and people likely enjoyed fashion, enjoyed food, and enjoyed time with their families. They may have thought that war would never happen

again, and that happy times would continue forever. However, that “normality” eventually collapsed. That war was the Second World War.

This year marks the milestone of eighty years since the Second World War. We who are living in the present age may need to think once again about what we consider to be “normal.” First, I will think about what is “normal” for me now. I go to school, laugh with friends over casual conversations, play volleyball in club activities, and eat meals made by my family. That kind of happiness is my “normal.” I cannot even imagine this “normal” breaking apart.

To be honest, I tend to think of war as something that happened only in the past, and as something unrelated to modern-day Japan. Recently, Ukraine and Russia have been engaged in war, but I still find myself thinking that it has nothing to do with Japan today. Of course, I am not the only one who thinks this way; many people who have never experienced war may also hold this kind of view. We wish that war, which is terrifying, will never happen again. And at the same time, there are also people like us who think of it as something distant and unrelated.

However, such “normality” can be destroyed in an instant by just one small event. For example, the Soccer War between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969. Dissatisfaction between the two countries collided during a soccer match and developed into war. Astonishingly, both countries deployed their militaries, and many people became victims. I could hardly believe my eyes. Even a familiar sport can become a trigger for war. Wars like this have occurred all over the world, both in the past and even now.

Even so, is it really acceptable for us to think that we are unrelated to war? I disagree. We who are living today must once again learn about war carefully, think about it, and create the society of the future and what we call “normal.” People living today may be thinking too much that peaceful daily life is something “normal.” Eighty years have passed since the Second World War. Should we not once again think about what “normal” truly means?

But how can we create this “normal”? This is what I think. Eliminating war is something that absolutely cannot be done by one person alone. However, small acts of kindness, small actions, and conveying those feelings to others are important. Perhaps it is the accumulation of such small things that creates what we call “normal.” I believe that if people living today continue to create the society of the future and its “normal,” a world in which “normal” lasts forever will eventually come.

Living in the Present

**Nagaisaki Elementary and Junior High School,
9th Grade, Sanae Sugano**

Without wasting a single minute or second
Doing both what I love and what I must do
Running toward my dreams
It is fun—and yet I still ask
Why am I alive?

My mother and father gave birth to me - I am grateful
But what about everyone else?
There are many different people
Some are born protected by families where they feel safe
And some are not
What is lost in war is enormous

We can buy anything we want
And yet, somewhere even now
Harsh lives continue
Time to play, time to study, time with family
Those irreplaceable moments
There are days when they are dyed with anxiety and fear

I am not on the battlefield
So I do not know the true pain
Is it enough to just see and hear, and end there?
Even if I am not there
Is there really nothing I can do?

People live only one life
That is why I want to be considerate of others and care for one another
People cannot live without helping each other

I want to reach out a hand to those who are suffering now
Deliver food and medical care, and save children
Listen to their stories, and help them regain smiles and dreams

Until this wish reaches them

I want to believe in a world where we can cooperate with one another

Visiting Hiroshima

Hara Junior High School, 1st Grade, Minato Saito

At 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. About 140,000 people died because of this bomb. What kind of feelings did those people have? Also, at the moment the bomb fell, what were they doing? There must have been many people who died suddenly, without being able to fulfill their dreams. I think that the atomic bomb is nothing more than a weapon that simply causes people suffering, and that it brings no benefit at all to life.

This summer, I went to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. There, photographs and drawings about the atomic bomb and about the lives of people at that time were on display. Among them were many items showing the burns and injuries that people suffered. The burns were all severe - some people had their entire backs burned, and there were even photographs of people who had burns all over their bodies. One thing that left a particularly strong impression on me was a drawing of a person whose eyes were falling out. The eyes were hanging down in a thick, melted state. It looked as if they were melting away, and I felt extremely uncomfortable and frightened.

Next, I walked through the section where personal belongings were displayed. There were tricycles that children were likely riding at the moment the atomic bomb was dropped, and school uniforms worn by students who were exposed to the bomb. They were scorched and deformed. Among them, the one that made me feel the most pain was a single lunchbox. On that day, just like always, the student had gone to school carrying a lunch made by his or her mother, but was exposed to the bomb and died without ever being able to eat the lunch they had been looking forward to. The lunchbox, including its contents, was completely charred black. That child was a junior high school student, the same as me. Faced with the reality that people of my own generation were also caught up in the atomic bomb, I was stunned, unable to think of anything, and froze in place.

As I moved further on, I saw a stone displaying a human shadow. This stone is believed to show the remains of a person who had been sitting on the steps at the entrance of a bank when the atomic bomb exploded at close range, leaving them unable to escape and causing them to die on the spot. It was written that due to the intense heat rays of the atomic bomb, the steps turned whitish, while the place where the person had been sitting remained as a dark, shadow-like shape. When I saw this, I felt fear at the cruelty of the atomic bomb, which not only took human lives in an instant but also erased even their forms. Even now, it is

unknown who the person sitting there was.

The horror of the atomic bomb is not only that there were many deaths. The people who survived also lived in suffering. Exhibits showed an older sister and younger brother who lost their hair because of the atomic bomb, and children who lost their parents. Among these, the story of Sadako Sasaki, shown at the end of the exhibit, remained strongly in my heart. Sadako was exposed to the atomic bomb when she was two years old but afterward lived a normal life. However, ten years later, when she was in the sixth grade of elementary school, she developed leukemia, and after eight months in the hospital without being able to attend junior high school, she passed away. During her hospitalization, Sadako continued to fold paper cranes with the wish to live, and it is said that the number reached more than 1,300. I learned that those paper cranes spread throughout the world as a symbol of peace and are still passed down today.

By going to the museum, I learned that the atomic bomb is far more terrifying than I had imagined. Making use of this experience, I want to work hard on the following things. The first is to value life - not only my own life, but the lives of others as well. To do that, I think it is necessary to live by helping one another. The second is to have dreams and goals, and to face them without giving up. I think that we who are alive should do our best for the sake of those who died without being able to fulfill their dreams. The third is to pass things on. Just as my parents taught me about the atomic bomb this time, I will also pass these feelings and this knowledge on to the next generation. I believe that this is the first step toward peace.

Thinking About War and Peace

Hara Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Hayato Hayakawa

Through Japanese language classes, reading, films, and the news, I have learned many things about “war and peace” and have come to think about them deeply. I have gradually come to understand how fortunate it is to be able to live each day as if it were normal, and how much that life must be protected.

In Japanese class, we read a passage called “The Message Left on the Wall.” It introduced a true story from Hiroshima immediately after the atomic bomb was dropped, in which someone wrote a message in chalk on a scorched wall for another person. Though the words were few, they were filled with an extremely strong feeling, and I felt as if my chest were being tightly squeezed. Even if you want to see someone, you may never be able to again. Still, you want to believe that the person who matters to you is alive. When I thought about that person’s feelings, I felt like I might cry.

From this passage, I felt the importance of “conveying” something, and the weight of “living.” I think the chalk letters were proof of someone trying with all their strength to convey

love and hope within the cruel reality of war. War does not only tear apart connections between people; it also creates situations in which even words can no longer be delivered. That is why I felt that the peaceful everyday life in which we can normally exchange words like this is not something to be taken for granted.

Also, when I read the novel “In This Corner of the World,” I strongly felt both the fear of war and the importance of ordinary daily life. The main character, Suzu, lives in wartime Hiroshima, and even while suffering from a lack of food and trembling in fear of air raids, she draws pictures and devises ways to cook, living “each day with all her strength.” I felt strength and kindness in the way Suzu tries to live without forgetting small joys and laughter, no matter how difficult things become. But even that daily life is easily taken away by war. Through bombing, family members and friends are lost, and deep wounds are inflicted on the heart as well. I strongly thought, “Why does something like this happen?” I felt that it is truly frightening that war does not occur in some special place, but suddenly begins right beside people living ordinary lives, destroying the lives and livelihoods of innocent people.

In the news as well, scenes of war in Ukraine and the Middle East are shown almost every time. When I saw children about the same age as me living amid war, my heart ached. They suddenly cannot go to school, are separated from precious family members, and live while trembling at the sound of bombs. Things that I do as a matter of course become impossible. I thought, “What can I do?” Of course, I do not have the power to stop war right now. But I can learn about war and think about it. And I believe that I can care for the people around me and take actions to reduce conflict. For example, not turning differences with friends immediately into fights, but talking things through and trying to understand one another. Thinking about others’ feelings and treating them kindly. I felt that such small actions are the first step toward creating a peaceful world.

We are a generation that does not know war. But that does not mean it is “unrelated” to us; rather, I think we have a responsibility to carry on the memories so that the same things never happen again. As I write this essay, I am once again deeply reflecting on the meaning of the words, “Peace is not something to be taken for granted.” From now on as well, I want to continue learning about the history of war and the feelings of people through classes, reading, films, and the news. And while gradually putting into practice what I can do, I want to become someone who helps build a peaceful future.

The Weight of Life and Peace

Hara Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Reina Shimada

Previously, I read a novel titled “If We Could Meet Again, On the Hill Where That Flower Blooms.” In this novel, a modern high school student time-slips to wartime Japan, and as she

comes into contact with young people living in the era of war, she gradually comes to understand the meaning of “living” and of “valuing life.” As I continued reading, I too began to think about the weight of living as something we usually take for granted.

A few days later, I watched the film “Grave of the Fireflies.” My heart felt tightly constricted as I watched the brother and sister who had lost their parents in the war struggle desperately to survive while searching for food and a place to live. The young siblings wander through a city turned into scorched ruins by air raids, trying to survive by sharing the small amount of food they have. In particular, I was deeply struck by the way the older brother, still a child himself, behaved like an adult in order to protect his younger sister. However, those efforts were in vain, and in the end, the brother also lost his life. When I witnessed that ending, I could not stop my tears.

What was commonly depicted in both works was the reality that an “ordinary life” can be destroyed in an instant by war. Sitting around the table with one’s family, sleeping peacefully at night - these everyday moments that I experience naturally are all taken away by the abnormal event called war. I strongly felt that they become irreplaceable time that can never be regained, no matter how much one wishes for it.

In particular, in “If We Could Meet Again, On the Hill Where That Flower Blooms,” the scene in which a young kamikaze pilot says, “I don’t really want to die. But I am going for the sake of my family,” left a strong impression on me. Seeing a young man who was still in his twenties and should have had a future ahead of him speak with such resolve to risk his life was admirable, yet painfully sad. In “Grave of the Fireflies,” I cannot forget the scene in which the younger sister murmurs, “I’m hungry.” With no food or water, her body growing thinner day by day, the sight of a small child losing strength while wishing to live was so painful that I wanted to look away.

There is no one in my family who has experienced war. Because of that, I had thought of war as “something from the distant past.” However, I came to feel that war is not something imaginary, but a reality that truly existed just several decades ago. Among the lives lost in war were many children about the same age as I am now. If I had been born in that era, I might have lived days without smiles. Thinking about that made me reflect once again on how precious our peaceful daily lives are.

Now, I wake up in the morning and go to school, come home and eat dinner with my family, and sleep peacefully at night. Sometimes I think, “Studying is hard,” but even that is a worry I can have only because there is peace. If war were to occur, I would not be able to go to school, nor would I be able to eat meals with my family. The young man in “If We Could Meet Again, On the Hill Where That Flower Blooms,” and the brother and sister in “Grave of the Fireflies,” must have truly wished for an ordinary life. What did not allow them to have it was war.

There is nothing major that I can do right now to protect peace. However, I believe that

first of all, it is important to know about war. Having a sense of gratitude for the life we have now is the first step toward valuing peace. Learning about life at that time through books and films, or visiting museums and exhibitions, are also important forms of learning that I can do. I want to cherish the time I spend with my family and friends without thinking of it as something “ordinary.”

Someday, if my children or grandchildren ask me, “What is war?”, I want to become an adult who can say with pride, “There were sad times in the past. But because we have protected peace, we are now able to live safely.” For that to happen, I believe it is important not to forget the “preciousness of peace” that I felt through these works, and to carefully build up my daily life.

Both works were sad and painful stories. At the same time, however, they taught my heart the importance of peace. Without forgetting the weight of life, human kindness, and the value of what we take for granted, I want to continue living. And I want to become someone who can pass peace on to future generations.

The First Step Toward Peace That We Can Take

Ukishima Junior High School, 1st Grade, Ami Sugiyama

One morning, while watching a television news program, my older brother asked me, “Do you know what day it is today?” When I answered, “It’s the anniversary of the end of the war, right?” he said, “Then what about August 6?” I was unable to answer.

August 6 is known as Hiroshima Peace Memorial Day, originating from the atomic bomb being dropped on Hiroshima City on August 6, 1945. Every year on this day, a memorial ceremony is held to pray for the souls of the atomic bomb victims and for the realization of lasting world peace. I remembered seeing a news report in which elementary school students gave speeches about war at the memorial ceremony. I felt embarrassed, realizing that I had watched that news vaguely and without thinking deeply. Although I had learned about war at school, I had thought of it as nothing more than a historical event written in textbooks.

We live surrounded by a great deal of information every day. We see news reports about conflicts and incidents around the world, and we see and hear about various disputes occurring on social media. Many people tend to receive these as events happening in distant parts of the world. However, I felt that what is necessary to create a peaceful world is for each individual to think about the importance of peace and to convey it to others.

We were born and raised in a peaceful era without war. But peace is not simply the absence of war. To me, peace means that everyone can live with peace of mind and with smiles on their faces. That is why there are opportunities to convey peace in everyday life as well. Small arguments or quarrels between friends can be resolved through discussion, and

when we notice a friend who is feeling sad or distressed, speaking to them can convey our feelings. I think that even these small, everyday actions are important ways of conveying peace. On the other hand, if we are not careful, conveying something can also make problems worse. Having incorrect information or biased ways of thinking can lead to hurting others or damaging relationships. I think it is necessary to have correct knowledge and accurate information, and to think from the other person's point of view.

The other day at school, I watched a picture-story show about war called "Prayer Cranes." It was the story of a girl who was exposed to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, developed leukemia, and died at the age of twelve. We were also shown photographs of the paper cranes that the girl had folded. When I realized that this was not a fictional story but something that actually happened, my chest tightened painfully. I could not believe that a girl the same age as me had gone through such an experience. Wanting to hear stories from people who had directly experienced the war or from their families, I spoke with my grandparents, but we were unable to find any relatives or neighbors who had experienced the war.

"People who experienced the war are now very elderly, and hearing their stories directly is becoming something extremely precious. That's why passing on stories about the war is very important, and we must not lose the sense that it was something that happened close to us,"

my grandmother told me. I felt that I wanted to look at more books and materials about the war.

War is not something from the distant past. Even now, there are countries engaged in conflict, and many people are losing their lives. If Japan were to lose the will to protect peace, war might break out again. The things we can do are only small. Acting while thinking about others' feelings, not saying things that hurt people, learning the history of war and passing it on carefully. I believe that each one of these small actions becomes the first step toward peace.

A Life Passed Down

Ukishima Junior High School, 1st Grade, Koharu Suzuki

Eighty years ago, 1945 was the year Japan's war ended. Although the media and others report about the war, our generation has never experienced war. For that reason, we do not know in detail what kinds of events occurred. In order to learn about those events and to think deeply about how we should live and what we should keep in mind, I spoke with two of my great-grandmothers.

The first great-grandmother said that the war began when she was in the second grade of elementary school and ended in August of her sixth-grade year. She said that, at that time,

there was simply nothing available. If there was no food, there were also no pencils or erasers, and she said that erasers were substituted with bicycle tires. At school, they practiced fighting and such, and she said it was hardly a place for studying. The lunch she took to school consisted of barley rice or sweet-potato rice, and to increase the volume, diced taro sprinkled with salt. At that time, white rice was extremely precious, and she said that if she brought white rice to school, the teacher would scold her. Her family were farmers, so they had a little food, but she said she was never truly full. Also, although there were textbooks, there were no handouts or reference books, and when studying for tests, she said they studied by looking at the textbook or copying what was written on the blackboard. And when they went to school, they were instructed to pick tea seeds to be used as airplane fuel, or told to pick up scraps fallen in fields to be used as horse feed, and she said they were constantly picking things up.

One night, she said sadly that what they thought was rain was actually kerosene being scattered, and bombs were dropped there, causing everything as far as the eye could see to be burned to the ground. Perhaps it was thought that if it was to win the war, even cruel actions would be carried out. I think that for those who experienced it, it must have been frightening beyond what I can imagine. And she said that the event she feared most was air raids. When the air-raid sirens sounded, she said they would frantically run to air-raid shelters. Looking outside from the shelter, she said the eastern sky was bright red, and she said it was terrifying at that time. After the war ended, ideas changed, and it seems that books containing war-related education were blacked out with ink. My great-grandmother ended by saying, "War must absolutely never be done. Peace is the best. I wish for peace."

The second great-grandmother said that she was in the sixth grade at the time and had been evacuated to Hamamatsu until the end of the war. She said that she attended a school at the evacuation site and that there was little food, eating things like sweet-potato rice and pumpkin. She also said that at night, when air-raid sirens sounded, they covered lights with black cloth so that no light would leak out. In the sky, airplanes called B-29s were flying, and she said they were carrying bombs called incendiary bombs. She said that the town of Shizuoka, where the bombs were dropped with loud sounds, looked bright red and became a burned-out wasteland.

My great-grandfather was said to have belonged to the Naval Aviation Preparatory Training School as a naval aviation cadet. His parents opposed it, but he volunteered out of a sense of patriotism, saying "for the sake of the country." When my great-grandmother spoke about how, if the war had dragged on, my great-grandfather might have lost his life as a special-attack pilot after undergoing harsh training, her tone of voice grew dark. I think that deep in his heart there must have been fear, but at that time there were likely not a few people like my great-grandfather who wanted to protect Japan and who wanted to train for the sake of the country. My great-grandmother said, "War is nothing but killing. But it can't be helped

because important people decided it. That's why voting is important." Hearing that, I strongly felt that I have a responsibility to vote to choose the politicians who make important decisions.

Now, systems are in place, and I want to believe that war will not occur. As my great-grandmother said, I think that war, which takes human lives, must absolutely never happen. Today, the number of people who pass on stories of war is decreasing. That is why I think it is important to listen to stories, to learn about events through the media and other sources, and to live the present with gratitude toward those who faced and overcame harsh circumstances and connected life onward.

To Prevent Conflict

Kadoike Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Haruki Kobayashi

This year marks eighty years since the end of the war. Japan was defeated by the Allied forces led by the United States in World War II and the Pacific War, and after the war, under U.S. leadership, it achieved reconstruction and has built eighty years without war.

Last winter, I went on a trip to Hiroshima with my mother and grandmother, the three of us together. Because I am very interested in history, I visited the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Peace Memorial Museum. The Atomic Bomb Dome was originally a beautiful brick three-story building, with a central staircase that rose to five stories, topped by an oval-shaped dome. However, because it was only 160 meters from the hypocenter, it was burned by the blast and heat rays and collapsed in an instant. Afterward, it underwent repeated repairs, and it continues to convey the devastation of nuclear weapons in a form that is almost the same as it was at the time of the bombing. It is said that it took many years before a decision was made regarding its preservation. That was because there were voices calling for its demolition, saying that the Atomic Bomb Dome was tied to painful memories of the bombing. I thought it was similar to the debates over preserving the remains of the Great East Japan Earthquake. It seems that the decision to preserve it was finally made in 1966.

At the Peace Memorial Museum, many personal belongings of people who died in the atomic bombing were on display. Some of them even had the names of their deceased owners written on them, and that somehow made me feel very afraid. My grandmother was born during the war and lived in Numazu. When she visited the museum, she said this:

"Why do Americans come here?"

Certainly, one could think that the United States, which dropped the atomic bomb, should not come here. But at the same time, I felt that precisely because they are from the country that dropped the bomb, I want them to know just how terribly Japan and its people suffered because of the atomic bomb.

During World War II, Japan was a nation centered on the emperor and driven by imperialism. At the same time, many countries were invading neighboring nations in order to expand their territories. I thought to myself,

“The whole world was ruled by desire.”

Today, we can think critically like this and express our opinions, but during the war people had no choice but to obey the orders of the emperor and the military. Under power holders driven by desire, citizens were forced into military service and labor, almost like slaves. As a result, more than 3.1 million Japanese people lost their lives. Of those, nearly 800,000 were civilians.

I wondered,

“Why did civilians have to be killed, rather than those in power?”

It was not civilians who ordered the war. It was the military and the political leaders of the state. I truly cannot understand why so many civilians had to lose their lives.

This summer vacation, many television programs dealing with war were broadcast. In one movie I watched, there was a scene in which soldiers who tried to escape from becoming kamikaze pilots were criticized as “cowards” and “traitors” and forcibly brought back. The soldier who tried to escape wanted to value life with the person he loved more than his pride as a soldier. In another movie, there was a scene in which young siblings who had lost their parents and taken refuge with relatives were driven out by those relatives. Everyone was desperately trying to survive. That is how war robbed people of ordinary kindness and mutual support.

Even now, wars and conflicts are occurring in many parts of the world. I believe it is important not to give in to desire and to respect each other’s cultures and ways of thinking. So that such a tragic history is never repeated, countries must deepen their exchanges and face problems together through cooperation. Japan, the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, has renounced war for eighty years. As one person living in such a country, I want to continue thinking about what I can do to prevent conflict from arising.

A Peaceful Future

Kadoike Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Rinka Yamashita

August 6 and 9, 1945.

This year marks eighty years since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To be honest, when I thought about the atomic bomb, all that came to mind was the enormous explosion, the intense flash of light, and the fact that an overwhelming number of people were killed or injured. However, this year I had many opportunities to reflect, as scenes from the peace memorial ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as footage

from the time of the Pacific War, were frequently shown on television. Among them, what left the strongest impression on me was the “Pledge for Peace” read by a sixth-grade student from Hiroshima at the peace memorial ceremony.

“When the world’s first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, ordinary daily life vanished in an instant.”

“A single atomic bomb took countless lives and changed people’s lives forever.”

After hearing these words, I could not help but research the atomic bomb.

There are said to be several reasons why the atomic bomb was dropped. It was to bring World War II to an early end; it was for the United States to test the power of the atomic bomb; and it was to gain leadership in the postwar world—these are among the explanations given. All of them seem selfish, driven by convenience and desire.

It is also said that the blast wind reached speeds of 280 meters per second at a point 100 meters from the hypocenter, and even 170 meters per second at a distance of one kilometer. Considering that the maximum wind speed of a typhoon is about 80 meters per second, the destructive force must have been tremendous. Furthermore, the heat rays—meaning the intense heat generated at the moment of the atomic explosion—exceeded one million degrees Celsius at the point of detonation, reached 3,000 to 4,000 degrees Celsius at the hypocenter, and even at a distance of 3.5 kilometers caused burns to any exposed skin. And the greatest characteristic of the atomic bomb was that it released a massive amount of radiation that ordinary bombs do not produce, causing severe damage to the human body. Not only those who were directly exposed, but also people who appeared uninjured with no visible wounds, as well as those who entered Hiroshima or Nagasaki days later for rescue efforts or to search for family members, suffered serious health effects. By the end of 1945, it is said that a total of 210,000 people had died in the two cities combined. I was shocked and frightened by the scale of the damage that I had never known before. At the same time, I felt ashamed that I had never looked into it until now.

In the “Pledge for Peace” mentioned earlier, there was the following passage written for this year, eighty years after the war:

“Now, eighty years after the atomic bombing, opportunities to directly hear the stories of survivors, who share memories that are truly painful and that they would rather forget are becoming fewer.”

As the survivors age, their average age has now exceeded eighty. For this reason, I believe it is necessary to strengthen efforts to pass down their experiences to the next generation. The fact that so many lives were lost eighty years ago; the fact that such suffering would not have occurred without war; and how cruel and inhumane the atomic bomb truly was - if more people learn about these realities, pass them on to future generations, and continue thinking so that the same mistake is never repeated, that will lead to “peace.”

For those of us who do not live in Hiroshima or Nagasaki, we usually only encounter this

history through school trips or textbooks. That is why I felt strongly that we should listen to survivors' stories while we still can. Even if we cannot hear them directly, we can make use of modern technology—for example, recording their testimonies on video and sharing them, or connecting with survivors remotely. We should use AI for the sake of “peace.”

Even at this very moment, fighting continues to spread in many parts of the world. People everywhere must have a stronger sense of urgency and sincerely wish for peace - and take action. A peaceful future is something we must create with our own hands. That is what I believe.

Toward a World Without War

Kadoike Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Yosuke Haga

This year, summer has come again. For us, summer vacation is a time not only for fun memories, but also a time to engrave in our hearts and recall a past that must never be forgotten. That past is war—especially the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki on August 9. In 2025, this year marks the major milestone of eighty years since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When I watched the news showing the Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima, my chest tightened at the sight of so many people from around the world gathering and offering a moment of silence.

The two atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and even now there are people who continue to suffer from the grief of losing family members and from lasting aftereffects. These eighty years also mean the reality that the voices of those who experienced the war are gradually becoming harder to hear. Now that the average age of atomic bomb survivors has exceeded eighty, I believe it has great meaning for us, the younger generation, to make efforts and take initiatives to pass on memories and records.

During this summer vacation, I talked with my mother about war. In the course of that conversation, she told me about my grandfather's experience during the war. When my grandfather was only four or five years old, there was an air raid at night, and when the family hurriedly rushed outside, everything around them was a sea of flames. When my grandfather and his family jumped into a nearby river to escape the bombing and surrounding fires, the river water was said to be like boiling water from the heat of the flames. It is impossible for me to imagine river water being hot. My mother also said that when she heard this story from my grandfather as a child, she was deeply shocked and never forgot it. I want to continue remembering and passing on this experience that was passed from my grandfather to my mother, and from my mother to me.

And every time I see news about war, I wonder why, even after people all over the world

have endured such painful experiences in the past, wars still break out and continue in many places today. There are many kinds of war: wars between countries, civil wars in which different factions fight within a single country, and wars involving religion, among others. However, what all wars have in common, I think, is that people force their own sense of justice onto others. When this forcing of one's justice escalates and people try to resolve things through military force, war breaks out. Yet those who suffer as a result are innocent civilians.

In order to eliminate or end wars, people must mutually possess a willingness to respect and accept the feelings and opinions of others. However, realizing this immediately is not easy. Perhaps it can only be achieved through the steady accumulation of each individual first having a heart that accepts others and then spreading that mindset.

For the sake of those who were sacrificed in war, and so that their memories and feelings are never lost, I hope that by keeping our eyes on world affairs in our daily lives and by passing on what we have learned about war to the next generation, we can raise awareness about war and take a step toward a world without war by cultivating hearts that respect and accept others.

What Peace Means

Imazawa Junior High School, 1st Grade, Koko Onitsuka

When I began writing this essay, I thought about what "peace" really means. To me, peace means a world without conflict or war. It means not discriminating against others and accepting one another. It means not speaking badly of others or fighting, but living together with smiles and harmony. When I think about it this way, I realize that there is a great deal of "peace" all around me in my everyday life.

I have never experienced war myself. All I know about war comes from television news, war movies and books, and stories told by people who actually lived through it.

My grandfather is one of those people who experienced war. He was born in Tokyo during the Pacific War. Because Tokyo was subject to air raids, my grandfather was evacuated to the safer area of Nara, while my great-grandfather went off to war. While praying for my great-grandfather's safety, my grandfather lived in constant fear of the war. The food he ate there consisted mostly of vegetables, especially potatoes. Because of that experience, my grandfather disliked potatoes even many years later. He once told me that even deep in the mountains where he was evacuated, he could hear the sounds of airplanes and bombs, and that he was terribly frightened. I still remember him telling me this when I was very young. When I imagine war happening in our time, I think about how my father and older brother might be sent to fight, while I would be evacuated to a safe place and separated from them. Not only that, they might even lose their lives. Just thinking about that makes my chest ache.

I wonder what kind of feelings people who survived the war carried with them as they lived each day, burdened by uncertainty and fear of what lay ahead.

Even today, while we are living peacefully, wars are still taking place. Through the news, I learned about the war between Russia and Ukraine. Cities in Ukraine have been destroyed by missile attacks, and countless people have lost their lives. Among the victims are children, and many citizens have been forced to flee their country as refugees, crossing borders to seek safety elsewhere. To lose loved ones right before one's eyes, to watch cherished places be destroyed—their fear and emotional exhaustion must be unbearable. They must wonder why they alone are forced to suffer such pain. What is gained by winning such a war? When the fighting ends and a victor is decided, will everything truly return to peace? I believe that peace obtained at the cost of human lives can never be true happiness.

When I was in elementary school, we had a lesson about war, and I watched footage from the war in Syria. It showed a father trying to protect his three-year-old daughter, who was terrified by bombing sounds. He told her that the sound of air raids was “a fun sound” and encouraged her to laugh whenever she heard it, turning it into a kind of game. The more the child laughed, the more heartbreaking it felt to watch. When I thought about what her future might be like as she grows up, my heart ached. I wished she could laugh at joyful sounds, not the sound of bombs, and that the world could become a place where that was possible.

I often think about war. People fight over land and power, taking countless precious lives and leaving deep trauma behind. Couldn't conflicts be resolved through dialogue and negotiation instead of deciding victory and defeat through violence and weapons?

I sincerely hope that one day, the countries now caught in war will see an end to conflict, and that calm, peaceful days will return.

I also feel deep gratitude toward my grandfather, who survived evacuation and protected the chain of life that led to me being here today. I want to remember that gratitude always. And rather than taking the “peace” around me for granted, I want to cherish it— feeling thankful for each small happiness as I go about my daily life.

Proof of Life Lived Beneath That Sky

Imazawa Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Honami Miki

A burned sky, cries of grief, and a vanished future

I used to think that war was something from the distant past, something that existed only inside textbooks. I thought it was a story from the past that had nothing to do with me.

But when my great-grandmother, who is now ninety-eight years old, told me about how she survived the war, that way of thinking changed completely.

“When there was war, there was almost nothing to eat. Every day I was hungry, and it was

painful. Children and adults alike were desperate just to stay alive.”

When I heard this, I realized that war is not only about bombs falling, but something that turns life itself—everyday living—into suffering.

In class, we learned about the First World War and the Second World War. However, the events in the textbook were too quiet, and I could not feel their true weight. They only entered my head as knowledge, and I could not imagine how cruel they were or how many lives were taken.

It was at that time that I encountered “Grave of the Fireflies”. After the massive air raids, it depicts young siblings desperately trying to survive in the midst of war. Crying voices under a burned sky, a scorched city, people suffering from hunger. Everything was far too real, and my chest tightened. At last, the tragedy of war pressed directly into my heart.

Then I remembered the words my great-grandmother had spoken. Although she was not directly exposed to the atomic bomb, she often told me about the suffering of surviving amid food shortages. She said that she “cried with gratitude over a single rice ball.” During the war, rice was especially precious, and the value of just one rice ball was extremely high. From her words, I felt how war destroyed not only the battlefield, but also the hearts and daily lives of people far away from it.

Those of us living in the present age may rarely feel the effects of war directly, but even so, we must never forget the terror that war brings.

My great-grandmother’s words are not merely memories to me; they give me the strength to live now. I feel that we must never waste the feelings and messages conveyed by those who survived war.

What we can do is to learn about the events of the past in order to protect peace, and to build the future upon that learning. To do so, I feel it is essential to properly understand how greatly war affected people’s lives and daily living, and to pass on those important lessons to the next generation.

War took countless lives and even burned away the future itself. Yet there were people who survived. I believe that the words those people speak, and their attitude of continuing to live without abandoning hope no matter how difficult things were, are “living proof” that teaches us the preciousness of peace.

What is required of us who live today is to receive the voices of that era without forgetting them, and to make use of those lessons for the future.

My great-grandmother’s words, and the image of the siblings in “Grave of the Fireflies”, will surely continue to live on within me.

I will never forget the voices of the lives that vanished beneath that burned sky.

Precisely because I live in an age in which we rarely feel the impact of war, I will continue to learn, to pass things on, and to keep thinking. I want that to become my own “living proof.”

Wishing for a future without nuclear weapons, I sincerely hope for a peaceful world in

which everyone can live without fear, in safety and peace.

A Step Toward the Future

Imazawa Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Kiichi Fukasawa

Before summer vacation, in a social studies class, I watched painful footage that showed the moment when people were killed during World War II. The footage was extremely brutal, and I was left speechless, clearly feeling pain in my chest. At that moment, I realized just how precious it is that I am now able to live happily like this. I came to understand that happiness does not require anything special—eating dinner together with family, fooling around and laughing with friends—those ordinary moments are actually the most important. However, I usually felt this happiness as something natural and taken for granted. Until I saw those tragic images, I had never once felt grateful for it.

“History repeats itself” is a phrase attributed to the philosopher Karl Marx. Throughout history, wars have been repeated again and again. The first war is said to have been the Battle of Kadesh in ancient Egypt, and after that wars continued countless times, and even now wars such as the Russia–Ukraine war and the Israel–Palestine war are still ongoing. What remained most strongly in my heart was the fact of how many lives and livelihoods wars have taken, and how brutally innocent people have suffered. That suffering and despair may still be continuing even now, in places we cannot see. Why do such tragedies keep repeating? I think one of the reasons is “ignorance.” I believe that what we do not know, and what we choose to ignore, creates war.

In modern times, AI has become deeply integrated into our lives in all kinds of situations. While scientific progress enriches our lives, I was shocked by the reality that this immense power is being used in the wrong way. In fact, I felt deep fear when I learned that AI is being used as a tool of war in many of today’s conflicts. So I asked AI, “How do you feel about being used as a tool of war?”

AI answered, “I am neutral, and good and evil are determined by how humans use me.”

Those words startled me. Technology itself has no good or evil. It is how humans use that power that determines the future.

I learned that in World War II, which is said to have been the worst in history, only a handful of people made the decisions to wage war. The choices of those few people distorted the lives of millions. If those few people had been able to decide,

“Let’s stop the war any further,”

then perhaps many people who did not survive might be alive today. Of course, this is only a hypothetical story. However, I believe such hypotheticals are necessary in order to learn lessons from the past and live toward the future.

So, what specifically can we do? To protect our everyday happiness and realize peace, the first thing we can do is “to know.” For example, before donating money, it is very important to know where that money will be used and who needs the donation, and to understand the meaning of donating. However, knowing alone is not enough. Next, we must make use of what we have learned and actually take action. Each and every one of us must not look away from what is happening “now”; “to know” and “to take action” are what we should be doing at this moment.

Peace is not something that exists somewhere far away, nor is it something that someone else will make happen for us. The single step that you take is what creates the future. Now is the time to act.

“Comrade Girl, Shoot the Enemy”

**Secondary School of Numazu-Ichiritsu Numazu High School,
2nd Grade, Soshi Hara**

After reading Toma Aisaka’s novel “Comrade Girl, Shoot the Enemy”, I was made to think deeply about the brutality of war and about what the “true enemy” really is. Set in the Soviet Union during World War II, the story follows a girl named Serafima, whose family is killed by the war and who loses her homeland. Driven by a desire for revenge, she becomes a sniper and stands on the front lines of battle. As she grows, she begins to question a world consumed by war and gradually comes to face what the “true enemy” is.

Although it is a work of fiction, the background is grounded in real history, and the hellish reality of the battlefield presses powerfully on the reader’s heart. I felt that war is not simply a matter of soldiers fighting each other with weapons. I was deeply moved by the way people’s hearts are broken on the battlefield, and by the figures who lose the comrades they trusted and try to survive relying only on hatred. In the novel, the “true enemy” is not German soldiers or Nazi ideology, but the inhumane structure of war itself, and the “desire for revenge,” “hatred,” and the “weakness within oneself” that obeys the orders of the state. I felt sympathy for this idea, and at the same time, even fear. That is because it is a problem that could exist in our own society as well. In Japan, even if it does not amount to war, there are many conflicts with other countries, and when we look at the world, fighting continues without end in places such as Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa. Even now, many people are having their lives taken—and are taking lives—under the names of “justice” and “enemy.”

Such wars are caused by complex histories, religions, ethnic divisions, and economic backgrounds, and when people are told, “That country is your enemy,” they can easily believe it. This overlaps with Serafima’s situation, as she follows the orders of the state and nearly forgets how to think for herself. And we Japanese must not treat this problem as someone

else's concern. Japan is the only country in the world to have suffered atomic bombings. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in an instant and left deep wounds in those who survived. Those wounds and sufferings remain even now, eighty years later. Japan is a country that became both a perpetrator and a victim through war. That is why I believe we must pass on the essence of war and remain sensitive to the warning signs that lead to it.

Serafima takes up a gun out of hatred toward the enemy who killed her mother, but gradually she begins to question a world in which the cycle of revenge never ends. Her story overlaps with the testimonies of atomic bomb survivors who lost their homes, homelands, families, and comrades, and who say, "I don't want anyone else to go through what I did." Revenge becomes the spark for the next war. To break the chain of hatred, one needs the strength of heart not to be ruled by such emotions. I feel that Japan is peaceful today because our predecessors chose not the path of revenge, but the path of nuclear abolition. In Japan today, the "importance of peace" is spoken of as if it were obvious, but how many people are truly thinking about it seriously? The meaning of Article 9 of the Constitution, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and the role of the Self-Defense Forces—these are things we should think about far more seriously in order to protect peace. Through this novel, I learned that war is not something of the past, but something that can begin even from the emotions and indifference within us. The "true enemy" may not be someone outside us, but our own inner weakness, complacency, and desires. That is why Japan, as the only country to have experienced atomic bombings, has a responsibility to continue sending out words to stop war, and why we, the younger generation, must be prepared to inherit that role. I too want to fight the true enemy within myself. I am grateful to this book for giving me that realization.

Thinking Again About What Peace Truly Means

**Secondary School of Numazu-Ichiritsu Numazu High School,
2nd Grade, Rin Takakusaki**

Every year, when August comes, there are more opportunities to think about war and peace. On television, news about the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is shown, and when I see images of what things were like at the time, it is so tragic that my chest tightens. Even so, in my everyday life, I realize that I do not think very much about "peace." It was through one particular experience that I began to think deeply about what peace truly means.

Today, we live safe lives as if it were only natural. We go to school every day, talk with our friends, eat our meals, and sleep at night together with our families. These ordinary days are precious and full of happiness. However, I came to realize that this "ordinary life" is actu-

ally something very special and irreplaceable.

Last summer, I visited Hiroshima with my family. As we toured the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Peace Memorial Museum, I felt a shock and an emotional disturbance unlike anything I had ever experienced before. Inside the museum were personal belongings and testimonies of people who lost their lives due to the war and the atomic bomb, and each one was filled with deep sorrow. The first things that caught my eye were a tattered school uniform and a young girl's diary placed beside it, with the words "I want to see my mother" written inside. The reality that a child about my own age suddenly lost everything weighed heavily on my heart. In particular, when I saw a photograph of a girl wearing badly burned clothing, I was left speechless; it felt far more raw and unbearable than anything I had seen on television. The children in the photographs were all about my age, and when I imagined, "What if I—or my family—had lived in that time," I felt a deep chill and could no longer see it as someone else's problem.

Until then, I had thought of war as something that existed only in the world of anime, dramas, or picture books. However, by standing in that place and coming into contact with what life was like at the time, I was able for the first time to truly feel the terror of war and the preciousness of peace as something personal. I believe that peace is not simply the absence of war, but a society in which people care for one another, respect one another, and live safely and abundantly.

Yet when we look at the world today, wars and conflicts are still continuing in many places. On the news, footage of wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and elsewhere is shown, and every time I see people fleeing their homes or losing their families, my heart aches. Even while we are living peacefully, there are people suffering somewhere in the world. War is not the problem of a single person; it is a problem for society as a whole. And when war occurs, precious lives are lost regardless of whether they belong to children or adults. The reason we are able to live safely today is because many people in the past made sacrifices and worked with a hope for peace. I believe this is a fact we must never forget.

When I thought about what I could do to protect peace, I remembered the words of someone who came to read to us when I was in elementary school. That person had experienced war, and at the end of the talk said this: "War is a struggle between countries. But first, eliminating conflicts close to us is the first step toward reducing war." At the time, I did not fully understand the meaning of those words. However, after visiting Hiroshima last year and encountering the tragedy of war at the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Peace Memorial Museum, I felt the weight of those words once again. And I came to strongly feel that I should take action in whatever ways I can.

I sincerely wish for a peaceful world where people all over the globe can live with smiles and a sense of security.

In order to create a future without war, I want to continue thinking about peace while

gradually putting into practice what I can do. And I hope to share these feelings with those around me and, together with others, take action toward building a society without conflict.

What Peace Means

Secondary School of Numazu-Ichiritsu Numazu High School, 3rd Grade, Yuki Kobayashi

Japan, where we live, is said to be a peaceful country without war. Going to school every day, laughing with friends, and gathering around the table with family. These daily scenes feel ordinary, but when we turn our eyes to the wider world, we are made to realize just how precious they truly are.

When we watch the news, we see that problems such as wars, conflicts, and terrorism are still continuing somewhere in the world even now. There are people who have lost their homes due to bombings, children who cannot attend school and are forced to live as evacuees, and many who remain separated from their families. Each time I see these realities, I am reminded that the everyday life I normally take for granted is, in fact, something I am deeply fortunate to have.

The first time I seriously began to think about “peace” was during peace studies in my third year of junior high school. In class, we learned about the Second World War and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The photographs and documentary footage from that time showed scenes so shocking that they left me at a loss for words. Children standing motionless amid the rubble, burned-down towns, people crying out in grief—these were not stories from the distant past, but events that actually happened. When I imagined what it would be like if I had lived in that era, I felt even more strongly how precious our present peaceful life truly is.

I believe that peace is not simply “the absence of war.” Even if there is no fighting, if problems such as discrimination, poverty, bullying, and loneliness exist, that cannot truly be called peace. A society where people can live safely, where everyone is valued, and where relationships are built on kindness and consideration—only when these exist can genuine peace be realized.

So what can each of us do? Solving major national or global issues may be difficult right away. However, I think that clues to protecting peace can be found close to home. For example, having the attitude to listen to a friend’s opinion all the way through when views differ, having the courage to speak up when you see someone in trouble, and having the curiosity to learn about different cultures and ways of thinking. I believe that the accumulation of these small actions will eventually lead to peace in society as a whole.

We also have a responsibility to learn from the past and make use of it for the future.

Knowing the horrors of war and the suffering people endured, and continuing to tell those stories without forgetting them, is also an important step toward protecting peace. In recent years, the number of people who can speak firsthand about their experiences of the atomic bombing has been decreasing. Because of that, I feel that it is increasingly important for us, the younger generation, to learn, think, and share what we know.

What we can do right now may be limited. Still, I believe that cherishing the people around us, empathizing with others' pain, and accepting differences—continuing to hold these attitudes in our daily lives—leads to protecting peace.

Peace is not something that someone else gives us; it is something we create, each and every one of us. To realize a world without conflict and a society where people can live with peace of mind, I want to continue reflecting on “what peace is” and reexamining my own actions. And as someone who will one day support society, I hope to make the effort to pass on the peace we have today to the next generation.

The Happiness Around Us

**Secondary School of Numazu-Ichiritsu Numazu High School,
3rd Grade, Iori Watanabe**

My great-grandmother is one of the people who survived the war. From her stories, I can feel not only the hardship and suffering of the war, but also a deep sense of gratitude for the happiness of the present day. Listening to the stories she told about life during the war made me think deeply about the importance of peace.

In the era my great-grandmother lived in, she was not even able to go to school, and instead helped with farm work and other tasks to support her family. In the midst of that, air-raid sirens would sometimes ring out. The sight of children continuing farm work even while air-raid sirens were sounding is something unimaginable in today's world, and I cannot even picture it. On top of that, because her family members were sent either to the battlefield or to work in factories, there were times when my great-grandmother had to flee on her own. She evacuated to nearby mountains and endured the fear and loneliness all by herself.

In the midst of the terrifying reality of war, my great-grandmother continued to hold on to the strength to survive.

At the same time, she felt deep gratitude for the peaceful era we live in now. She would happily say, “This is a very fortunate time. There is enough food, we don't have to live in fear of air-raid sirens that might sound at any moment, and we can live with peace of mind.” She especially taught us that we should be grateful that we can receive compulsory education today, that we are given opportunities to study, and that we are able to learn properly. She told us, “Study hard so that you can repay your parents.” I feel that those words came precisely

because she herself overcame the war and experienced hardships far beyond what we can imagine.

What I felt most strongly after listening to my great-grandmother's stories was that we must cherish the happiness that is close to us right now. In modern times, technology has advanced, and our daily lives are filled with many convenient things, allowing us to live without major inconvenience. Compared to the era my great-grandmother lived in, we are living in an extremely blessed environment. For example, being able to attend school, freely go out and shop, and quickly contact family using smartphones—today, these things can be done as if they were completely normal. However, for people who lived constantly exposed to the danger of losing their lives due to war, such calm daily life must have seemed like a dream.

From my great-grandmother's stories, I also felt that before setting large goals such as “eliminating war” or “abolishing nuclear weapons,” what matters first is noticing the happiness close to us. If we wish for happiness, I think it is important to first cherish the small happiness around us and hold feelings of gratitude. For example, valuing time spent with family, helping people who are in trouble, and interacting with others with a peaceful heart—such small actions can lead to peace in society and the world as a whole.

When asked, “How can we achieve peace?” many people would probably answer, “By eliminating war.” However, before that, I believe it is necessary for each of us to truly feel and cherish the “peace” that exists around us. To realize a peaceful society, it is important to deeply understand how precious peace is and to keep thinking about what we can do to protect it.

From now on as well, I want to keep in my heart what my great-grandmother taught me, live with gratitude for the peace we have now, and continue thinking about what I can do for peace in my daily life.

Tragedy

Secondary School of Numazu-Ichiritsu Numazu High School, 3rd Grade, Kanon Watanabe

August 6 and August 9, 1945. Atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a result of these events, countless lives were taken in an instant, and those who survived continued to suffer from radiation-related illnesses and deep emotional scars. The atomic bomb destroyed not only cityscapes, but also people's lives, their futures, and even their hopes.

My great-grandmother, who turns ninety this year, was a sixth-grade elementary school student in Shizuoka Prefecture at the time. Although she did not suffer direct damage from the atomic bomb, she experienced the terror of air raids during the war firsthand. She told

me, “Whenever the air-raid sirens sounded, we ran into the woods and spent every day in fear.” At that time, evacuation shelters were not well prepared like they are today, and each time the sirens rang, she and her family hid in the woods, anxiously looking up at the sky.

She also told me, “The place that is now a school ground used to be fields where we grew potatoes and vegetables.” In an era of food shortages, people turned nearby land into fields in order to survive, even if only a little. Listening to these stories, I strongly felt that war is something that destroys people’s lives at their very foundation.

After the war, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which had been reduced to burned-out wastelands by the atomic bombs, people began to walk the path toward recovery little by little by helping one another. However, that path was never easy, and it involved many sacrifices and much suffering. In particular, the pain caused by aftereffects of radiation exposure and the discrimination faced by those affected are things we must never forget.

My great-grandmother said, “For me, peace means being together with my family and being able to receive as much education as I want.” These words are very simple, yet they remain deeply in my heart. Being able to spend time with one’s family and to study freely are things that feel ordinary in our daily lives today. However, I believe it is only when these are taken away by war that we truly realize how precious they are.

That is why we must not allow the memories of war to fade, and must firmly pass them on to future generations. Today, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are recognized around the world as “symbols of peace.” This is not by chance, but because the testimonies of survivors, the words engraved on memorial monuments, and each of the belongings preserved in the Peace Memorial Museums strongly appeal to us, saying, “We must never repeat the same mistake again.”

Japan is now living in a peaceful era, but there are still regions in the world where wars and conflicts continue even today. I believe we have a responsibility to hold the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki close to our hearts, to speak in our own words about what peace is, and to take action.

Peace is not simply a state in which there is no war. I believe true peace is a society in which everyone can live with a sense of security, receive education and medical care, and live with consideration for one another. From my great-grandmother’s words, I can clearly feel the importance of this. Facing the past honestly and thinking about how we should live as we move toward the future - perhaps that is the very first step in continuing to protect peace.

What is Pacifism?

**Heda Elementary and Junior High School,
7th Grade, Momoko Yamada**

“Wouldn’t it have been better if war had never happened in the first place?”

Many people probably think this way. However, I think that war may have been necessary—there are aspects of the world we have today that would not exist without it. This is because, if there had been no war, the idea and the word “pacifism” might never have arisen.

To begin with, pacifism is a way of thinking that opposes war and violence and aims for a world without conflict. This idea is clearly written into the Constitution of Japan. When I learned this in class, a question suddenly came to mind.

“Wouldn’t it have been better if pacifism had been included in the Meiji Constitution?”

However, when I looked into it, I found that the Meiji Constitution was established in 1889 and came into effect the following year, in 1890. In other words, it was a time when Japan had not yet experienced a major defeat in war. At that time, Japan was driven more by the desire to stand shoulder to shoulder with countries like Britain, the United States, and Russia, and there was little interest in the importance of peace.

Eventually, the Second World War began. Ordinary civilians who had done nothing wrong, young people who lost their lives as kamikaze pilots, and even children with futures ahead of them became victims. Cities were burned by air raids and atomic bombs, and the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima still remains today as a structure that conveys the tragedy of that time. In this war, about 2.3 million soldiers and about 800,000 civilians in Japan—3.1 million people in total—lost their lives. Worldwide, it is said that 30 million soldiers and 55 million civilians were killed.

After a war that lasted as long as six years, “pacifism” was finally set forth in the new constitution. In addition, principles such as “respect for fundamental human rights” and “popular sovereignty” were established. Earlier, I said that war might have been “necessary,” but what I meant is that it was through war that people finally became aware of the value of peace and wrote it clearly into the constitution. That said, I do not believe that it was necessary to go as far as taking lives.

If Japan had learned earlier from the horrors of wars overseas and thought not “we want our country to become stronger,” but rather “we must never repeat the same tragedy” ... then perhaps Japan could have realized the value of peace and life sooner and created a constitution that protected people’s rights much earlier.

War is a tragic event that happened in the past. Precisely because of that, it is something we must never forget. I strongly believe that we must continue to pass it down and keep learning about it.

Even one hundred years from now, even two hundred years from now.

For the World and Its People to Remain in Peace and Happiness Forever

**Heda Elementary and Junior High School,
8th Grade, Mitsuki Nagashima**

At 11:30 p.m. on August 5, my family was on our way back by car to Shizuoka after finishing a visit to my mother's hometown, Kumamoto. When we passed through Hiroshima City, I saw the Atomic Bomb Dome for the first time in my life.

Until then, I had only ever seen it in pictures and videos, so honestly I did not have a very strong image of it. But when I saw it right in front of me, it was far larger and more powerful than I had imagined. At that moment, I also realized that the date would soon change and that August 6, "Atomic Bomb Day," was approaching. Although it was late at night and already dark, many people had gathered around the Atomic Bomb Dome and the nearby square, and the police were directing traffic.

Seeing that scene, I strongly felt that even now, eighty years after the atomic bombing, this event must never be forgotten. I also felt strongly that atomic bombs and wars, which cause innocent people to suffer and carry deep sorrow, must never be allowed to happen again.

On the evening of the day we returned to Shizuoka, I watched footage of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony on the news. The images showed many people offering a moment of silent prayer and laying flowers. While watching that footage, my family and I talked and said, "The atomic bomb is too heartbreaking to even want to hear about, but we still have to keep telling these stories." It is true that stories about the atomic bomb and war are painful and do not make us feel happy. However, without knowing the fact that ordinary, joyful daily life was destroyed by a single atomic bomb and that hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives, we cannot truly understand the preciousness of peace. That is why I came to think that passing these stories on is so important.

I also thought about the war between Russia and Ukraine, which is still continuing today. The fighting has already gone on for three years, and the number of people killed or injured is said to exceed one million. When I think about that reality, I struggle with the question, "What can we do?" However, at the very least, instead of avoiding stories about atomic bombs and war because they are frightening, I believe the first step is for more people to face them directly and think, "We must never repeat the same mistake again."

If these feelings spread, then we should be able not only within Japan but across national borders to help one another and create a peaceful world together. And I believe that this will

lead to a future in which everyone can live happily with a smile on their face.

Re-examining the Atomic Bomb

Gyoshu Junior High School, 2nd Grade, Shinsuke Hoshina

My great-grandmother was an atomic bomb survivor.

I learned this two years ago, in the summer.

Have you ever thought seriously about the atomic bomb? Until I learned that fact, I hadn't. To me, it felt like something that had nothing to do with my own life.

My maternal great-grandmother was born in Nagasaki as the second of four sisters. Soon after she was born, the war began, and the family evacuated to the mountains.

One morning, her mother set out for the city to buy daily necessities, taking the eldest sister and the youngest child with her. That day was August 9.

None of the three ever returned. Their father had also been conscripted into the military—and he never came back either.

At that time, my great-grandmother was only five years old.

After that, she was taken in by her father's relatives.

Reading this far, some of you might think she was "lucky to have survived the atomic bomb."

But the atomic bomb took away what was most important to her.

In the household that took her in, she was treated cruelly. When she said, "I'm hungry," she was thrown out into the fields and forced to work. When she said, "I'm lonely," she was beaten with a broom.

She grew up without ever knowing love, and as a result, became an adult who could not give love.

She eventually had children of her own. But she did not know how to love them properly and raised them with strictness alone.

Those children came to deeply resent their parents.

Even now, my great-grandmother and my grandmother have a very poor relationship.

I heard all of this from my mother.

I have met my great-grandmother before. At the time, she seemed very healthy. We talked casually for about two hours. But the topic of the atomic bomb never came up. I couldn't bring myself to talk about it either. It was only later that I learned she was an atomic bomb survivor.

I think she may not want to remember the atomic bomb at all.

Eighty years ago, in 1945, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki on August 9. To this day, more than 551,800 atomic bomb survivors have passed

away. But there must be far more people who suffered because of it. Some developed cancer or leukemia due to radiation exposure. Others lost parents, relatives, loved ones, or precious possessions, and had their lives completely changed.

And yet, there are still people who insist that “dropping the atomic bomb was the right decision.”

Even now, wars continue to break out.

Because of the world we live in today, why don't we take the time to learn about the atomic bomb?

How Can We Eliminate Nuclear Weapons?

Gyoshu Junior High School, 3rd Grade, Kosei Usui

Eighty years ago, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing the Pacific War to an end. At that time, many lives were lost, and many others were left with wounds they would carry for the rest of their lives. After the war, Japan, as the world's only country to have suffered atomic bombings, began movements aimed at the abolition of nuclear weapons. Through efforts such as establishing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, holding the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, and inviting representatives of many countries to peace memorial ceremonies, Japan has appealed to the world that nuclear weapons must never be used. Even so, the threat of nuclear weapons has not disappeared. Conflicts continue to occur around the world, and there are countries that hint at the use of nuclear weapons. Yet I realized that I do not really know what nuclear weapons are, or why they must never be used. That is why I decided to think again, carefully, about nuclear weapons.

An atomic bomb, or nuclear bomb, is a weapon that uses the energy released by nuclear fission, which occurs when neutrons collide with elements such as uranium or plutonium. Once used, it destroys everything and inflicts enormous damage on the opposing country. In addition, it releases a massive amount of radiation at the moment of explosion, causing people to suffer from atomic bomb-related illnesses. Examples of such illnesses include cancer and leukemia, and in some cases it has taken several decades after exposure for symptoms to appear. There were also people who suffered discrimination simply because they were atomic bomb survivors. As a weapon, it is extraordinarily powerful, but precisely because of that, it also causes long-term suffering to its victims. At present, nine countries possess nuclear weapons, but with the exception of the United States, none have actually used them.

Why, then, does nuclear possession continue? One reason is that simply possessing nuclear weapons gives a country enormous power. If a war were to break out with a nuclear-armed country, there is always the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used. That possibility

alone is a threat to the opposing country and serves as a deterrent to war. This threat is also used as a means to gain an advantage in diplomacy. Another reason is that it has become difficult to give them up now. If a nuclear-armed country were to abandon its nuclear weapons, it might be targeted by other nuclear-armed countries. Even before that, it would also lose the benefits it has enjoyed up to now. Because countries continue to possess nuclear weapons mutually, nuclear armament continues.

So how can nuclear weapons be eliminated? I believe there are two possible approaches. The first is for all countries to give up nuclear weapons at the same time. If the argument is that it is dangerous not to possess them because other countries do, then the solution would be for no country to possess them at all. If countries were to hold discussions and all nuclear-armed states were to abandon nuclear weapons, this situation would be resolved. However, in reality this is extremely difficult. Compared with their peak, the number of nuclear warheads in the world has decreased, but over the past thirty years no nuclear-armed country has decided to eliminate its nuclear weapons. Another problem is that even if weapons are once abandoned, they can be rebuilt. That leads to the second approach: countermeasures against nuclear weapons. These include early detection through monitoring systems, interception, or measures to minimize damage such as shelters and radiation treatment technologies. If these were fully established, nuclear weapons would no longer be an effective decisive weapon in war, and the risk of their use might be reduced. However, this approach also involves financial problems. It requires even more time, and for that reason it cannot be said to be better than the first approach.

Therefore, I believe that the best solution is for all countries to give up nuclear weapons simultaneously. To achieve this, it is important to clearly convey the dangers of nuclear weapons to nuclear-armed countries and gain their understanding. At this year's Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, nuclear-armed countries such as the United Kingdom, France, the United States, India, and Israel were also in attendance. There are ample opportunities to appeal for nuclear abolition. I believe that Japan should not act alone, but cooperate with other countries and make even stronger efforts than before. If even one country abandons nuclear weapons, that decision might spread to others. When Japan takes a major step toward nuclear abolition in the future, I think it will be necessary for me, too, to have proper knowledge as a citizen of Japan. I would also like to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki in person to deepen my own understanding even further.