

# Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

by Eleanor Coerr

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

**Note to the Teacher:** This guide is not intended to be followed exactly. Feel free to pick and choose among the suggested activities based on the needs and interests of your particular group. The book deals with several very sensitive and difficult issues--terminal illness and death; the consequences (and fear of) atomic/nuclear war--so you will want to tailor the discussion questions and activities to the maturity level of your students. You are encouraged to make adaptations or to supplement the guide with activities of your own creation. Numbers following page references indicate the paragraph number on that page.

## General Instructional Objectives

1. Students will use discussion questions to recall details, interpret characters and events, read critically, and respond creatively to the novel.
2. Students will expand their vocabulary through word study, class discussion, research, and activities.
3. Students will learn to expand their response to a novel by completing a variety of related activities.
4. Students will have opportunities to exercise artistic and craft skills to help interpret their reading.
5. Students will gain experience in a variety of different writing forms.

## Specific Instructional Objectives

1. Students will practice research skills to learn about Japanese life, customs, and religious beliefs, about the effects of radiation, and about leukemia.
2. Students will learn about the end of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bomb and will evaluate the reasons for and consequences of the decision to use the bomb.
3. Students will have an opportunity to consider attitudes about death and ways of confronting and dealing with terminal illness and death.

## Word Study Activities

1. Students will keep a 3x5-inch card file of the words listed under *Word Study* for each reading selection. At the top of each card, students will write the vocabulary word. Under that, they copy the sentence from the book containing the word. Next, they

write a brief definition of the word as it is used in context. Finally, they write an original sentence containing the word. Students can arrange their word cards in different ways--alphabetically, by categories of various kinds, by parts of speech, by words they know and words they need to study, etc.

2. With a partner, students can quiz each other on the meaning and spelling of the words.

## Introductory Activities

1. Learn about the events leading up to the end of World War II, including the development of the atom bomb and the decision to actually use the bomb.
2. Read some descriptions of or find some photographs of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Compare the cities before and after the bombing. How were the cities made habitable again?
3. Do some research on the effects of radiation on people, and the sources of radiation and the various types of radiation exposure.  
*(Note: Activity #3 for Chapter 1 has students research leukemia. If you prefer, that activity could be included here as an introductory activity.)*
4. Find out about traditional Japanese home and family, especially the 1940's and 1950's.
5. How do you think you would feel if you were told you had a serious, even life-threatening illness? If a family member or a close friend developed such an illness?

## Chapter 1 Good Luck Signs

**Synopsis:** Sadako Sasaki, age 12 and "born to run," finds good luck signs as her family prepares on the morning of August 6, 1954, to attend Peace Day ceremonies in Hiroshima. For Sadako's parents it is a day to remember those who died when the atom bomb was dropped, but Sadako eagerly anticipates the carnival following the memorial services. The family--Mr. and Mrs. Sasaki, Sadako, her brothers Masahiro (14) and Eiji (6), and sister Mitsue (9)--gather at their altar shelf. Mr. Sadako prays that his family will be spared from the atom bomb disease called leukemia.

**Word Study:** memorial, p. 11(1); leukemia, p. 13(1); carnival, p. 11(1); radiation, p. 13(2)

### Discussion Questions:

1. **LITERAL:** What things about Japanese life does this chapter show that are different from typical U.S. life?
2. **LITERAL/CREATIVE:** What good-luck signs does Sadako find? What do you consider to be good-luck charms or signs?
3. **INTERPRETIVE:** Compare Sadako's view of Peace Day with her parents' view of it.
4. **CRITICAL:** What examples of *irony* do you find in this chapter? (*Teacher Note: Introduce or review the concept of irony if necessary for your students.*)

### Activities:

1. Find out why the Sasaki family repeatedly uses the word *chan* after names. What does it mean? Is there an equivalent in English?
2. Do some research on traditional Japanese religious beliefs such as those practiced by the Sasaki family. Report on your findings to the class.
3. Learn more about leukemia—its causes, its symptoms, its treatment.

## Chapter 2 Peace Day

**Synopsis:** Sadako runs ahead of her family with her best friend Chizuko to the Peace Park. Mr. Sasaki admires his daughter's strong, fast running. As they pass through the memorial building, Sadako tries not to look at the frightening photographs of the bombing, telling Chizuko she remembers the flash and heat of the bomb although she was only a baby at the time. After the memorial ceremonies, Sadako enjoys the delicious food, the many stalls selling things, and the fireworks, but she turns away when horribly scarred bomb victims come near. Finally, the Sasaki family joins the crowd at the river in launching paper lanterns lit by candles. Each lantern carries the name of a relative killed by the Thunderbolt, the bomb; the Sasaki's launch six.

**Word Study:** ceremonies, p. 18(5); prickled, p. 18(1); scarred, p. 18(4); Buddhist, p. 18(4); bean cakes, p. 18(6); lantern, p. 20(2)

### Discussion Questions:

1. **LITERAL/CRITICAL:** What reminders of the bomb does Sadako encounter? How does she react? How do you react to frightening pictures or disfigured people?
2. **CRITICAL/CREATIVE:** Find at least two similes in this chapter. (*Teacher Note: Introduce or review similes if necessary for your students.*) Write two more interesting similes of your own.
3. **LITERAL/INTERPRETIVE:** Whose name does Sadako put on her lantern? Why?
4. **CRITICAL:** Sadako was only two years old when the bomb was dropped. Do you think she really could have remembered it? What memories, if any, do you have from when you were two?

### Activities:

1. Find out why crickets would be for sale in the stalls at the Peace Day ceremonies.

2. Does your family observe any candle-lighting ceremonies? Describe them and tell what they mean.

## Chapter 3 Sadako's Secret

**Synopsis:** In early fall, Sadako is thrilled—her class has chosen her to be on the relay team in the big race on Field Day. Winning will be a sure step to Sadako's dream: making the junior high team the next year. Although nervous before the race, Sadako runs strongly. Her team wins, but she has a fleeting dizzy spell. As Sadako continues to practice running, the dizziness persists, but she keeps her ailment a secret from everyone. On New Year's Eve, Sadako makes special, magic wishes as the temple bells chime out the old year's evils. On New Year's Day she finds many good luck symbols to reassure her.

**Word Study:** bamboo, p. 22(3); chime, p. 26(3); shrine, p. 26(4); kimono, p. 26(4); amidst, p. 27(3)

### Discussion Questions:

1. **LITERAL/INTERPRETIVE:** Why does Sadako feel better on New Year's Day?
2. **LITERAL:** List the Japanese New Year's customs mentioned in this chapter.
3. **CRITICAL:** Why do you think Sadako doesn't tell anyone about her dizzy spells? If you had a physical symptom that worried you, would you tell anyone about it?
4. **LITERAL/INTERPRETIVE:** Describe the different feelings about the big race that Sadako experiences.

### Activities:

1. Sadako's father is proud of her for her strong, fast running. List the things about you that your family is proud of. List the things about yourself that *you* are proud of. Compare the lists.
2. Describe the feelings you experienced before a big event that you wanted to do very well in. What, if anything, helped you to stay calm? What might help you the next time you face a similar situation?
3. Draw or find a color picture of a fine silk kimono and label its various parts.

## Chapters 4 & 5

### A Secret No Longer & The Golden Crane

**Synopsis:** In February, Sadako collapses. Mr. Sasaki takes his daughter to the Red Cross Hospital, part of which is especially for people with the atom bomb disease. The dread diagnosis is made: leukemia. Sadako must remain in the hospital. Chizuko visits, brings paper and scissors, and makes a beautiful golden crane. She reminds Sadako of the old tale: If a sick person folds a thousand paper cranes, the gods will make her healthy. Immensely comforted by the golden crane and the legend, Sadako determines to finish the thousand and become well. Masahiro promises to hang all the cranes from Sadako's ceiling.

**Word Study:** pang, p. 29(3); x-rayed, p. 29(4); plumped, p. 32(2); lopsided, p. 36(4); mischief, p. 37(4); parasols, p. 39(2)

### Discussion Questions:

1. **LITERAL:** How does each member of the Sasaki family react to Sadako's illness?

2. **CREATIVE:** Reread the poem on page 39. Write one of your own in the same form.
3. **CRITICAL:** Compare how Sadako feels before and after Chizuko's visit.
4. **LITERAL/INTERPRETIVE:** Why does Sadako decide to make one thousand paper cranes? What is special about the golden crane?

**Activities:**

1. Have you ever been a patient in a hospital? Describe the experience to your classmates—the sounds, the procedures, the people, what you wore and ate and did to pass the time, how you felt about being there, etc.
2. Practice the Japanese art of origami—paper-folding. Bring some of your creations to class and demonstrate how you made them.
3. Read more about the crane. What other legends are associated with it?

### Chapter 6 Kenji

**Synopsis:** While Sadako is well, she continues to make cranes with the paper everyone saves for her. Her flock grows to over 300. Gradually, however, the disease brings such pain, dizziness, and weakness that Sadako can do little but sit in her chair. One day in the sun room, Sadako meets Kenji, a 9-year-old who contracted leukemia from his mother's body even though he was born several years after the bomb. Kenji has few visitors and knows he is dying. Sadako admires his courage and makes him a big crane. Soon the boy dies; Nurse Yasunaga reassures Sadako that Kenji must be happy to have shed his tired, sick body and freed his spirit. Nevertheless, Sadako worries that she will die next. She has folded 464 cranes.

**Word Study:** recovered, p. 41(2); miracle, p. 44(3); blood count, p. 44(6); flustered, p. 44(7); sternly, p. 44(5)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **LITERAL:** List the symptoms of leukemia Sadako is now experiencing.
2. **LITERAL/CRITICAL:** What does Sadako do to comfort Kenji? What do you think you could do to comfort someone in a similar situation?
3. **CRITICAL/CREATIVE:** How does Nurse Yasunaga react when Kenji and Sadako each suggest they will die? Do you think this is the best response under the circumstances? Why or why not?
4. **LITERAL/INTERPRETIVE:** What does Nurse Yasunaga tell Sadako about Kenji after he dies? Why might she say this to Sadako?

**Activities:**

1. Use what you already know about radiation and leukemia, or do some research about them, to explain how Kenji could have gotten leukemia from the bomb even though he wasn't born until several years after the bomb was dropped.
2. Sadako spends a lot of time watching and listening to the maple tree in the courtyard. Draw and describe the characteristics of other trees you would find in Japan.

## Chapters 7-9 Hundreds of Wishes,

### Last Days, & Racing with the Wind

**Synopsis:** Rainy June comes; Sadako grows pale and listless. She is unable to eat the special treat of favorite food her mother brings and feels guilty for making her mother sad and wasting expensive food. In July Sadako improves enough to go home for a week and celebrate *O Bon*, the year's biggest holiday. But she is soon pale and tired again; back in the hospital, Sadako fights constant pain and the ever-growing, frightening fear of death. The family makes a final visit; Mrs. Sasaki presents Sadako with a gift she has always wanted for her daughter—an expensive silk kimono. Again, Sadako feels guilty but tries the kimono on. Exhausted, she folds one last paper crane: number 644. In mid-October, Sadako lapses into semiconsciousness. An autumn breeze makes the flock of cranes hanging from the ceiling rustle and sway. They seem to Sadako to be alive and flying out the window, beautiful and free. Sadako closes her eyes as her spirit joins the cranes.

**Word Study:** listless, p. 48(2); gruffly, p. 55(5); transfusion, p. 56(5); rustle, p. 63(3)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **INTERPRETIVE:** In what ways does Sadako exhibit courage? What helps her to fight her fears?
2. **LITERAL/CREATIVE:** What ideas does Sadako have about death? What do you think death might be like?
3. **INTERPRETIVE/CRITICAL:** Where does the author suggest Sadako's spirit may have gone? How does the ending echo Nurse Yasunaga's words after Kenji's death?
4. **LITERAL/CRITICAL:** Skim back over the book and list the various Japanese attitudes toward death and afterlife that are mentioned. Check any that are similar to yours.

**Activities:**

1. Draw a picture or make a model of a *Kokeshi* doll.
2. Sadako wrote letters to friends and pen pals before she became too ill to do this any more. Imagine you are Sadako in the hospital and write some of these letters.

**Epilogue:** A historical note follows the story telling how Sadako's classmates folded the remaining 356 cranes for her funeral, published her letters, and mounted a campaign to erect a monument to Sadako and all children killed by the atom bomb. In 1958 a statue of Sadako was unveiled in Hiroshima's Peace Park.

### Concluding Activities

1. Find out more about the long-term effect of dropping the atomic bomb: How were/are victims treated? For how many years did symptoms continue to appear in people? Are people still being affected?
2. In a travel guide, encyclopedia, or book on Japan, find a description and pictures of Hiroshima's Peace Park. Describe the park to your classmates and show them a photograph of Sadako's statue.

3. In the Introductory Activities, you were asked how you thought you would feel if you, a family member, or a close friend developed a serious, even life-threatening illness. Now that you have read Sadako's story, do you think you would react or cope any differently than you would have before? In what ways?
4. Complete Activity Sheets 1 and 2.
5. Read *Hiroshima*, by John Hersey, to find out more about the dropping of the atomic bomb.
6. Investigate the differences between today's nuclear weapons and the atom bomb. Discuss with your class why no atomic or nuclear bomb has been used in war since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Also discuss what safeguards, if any, the world has against such weapons being used again.

## SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES TEST

### Vocabulary

Match each italicized word with its meaning below. Write the letter of the correct meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- \_\_\_ 1. Sadako's family attends *memorial* services for people killed by the atom bomb.
- \_\_\_ 2. The *ceremonies* at these services include speeches by the mayor and Buddhist priests.
- \_\_\_ 3. Sadako looks forward to the *carnival*.
- \_\_\_ 4. The bomb blast *prickled* Sadako's eyes like needles.
- \_\_\_ 5. The faces of some atom bomb victims are badly *scarred*.
- \_\_\_ 6. The temple bells *chime* at midnight on New Year's Eve.
- \_\_\_ 7. People visit their family *shrines* on New Year's Day.
- \_\_\_ 8. Sadako forgets her secret for a while *amidst* throngs of happy people.
- \_\_\_ 9. Sadako feels a *pang* of fear as she enters the hospital.
- \_\_\_10. Mrs. Sasaki *plumps* Sadako's pillows.
- \_\_\_11. The first cranes Sadako makes are a bit *lopsided*.
- \_\_\_12. Sadako's eyes twinkle with *mischievousness* when her brother promises to hang all her cranes.
- \_\_\_13. One crane is made of green paper with pink *parasols* on it.
- \_\_\_14. Sadako knows that some people *recover* from leukemia.
- \_\_\_15. Sadako makes cranes and hopes for a *miracle*.
- \_\_\_16. Nurse Yasunaga is *flustered* when Kenji says he reads his blood count every day.
- \_\_\_17. The nurse speaks *sternly* to Kenji when he says he is going to die.
- \_\_\_18. Sadako becomes pale and *listless*.
- \_\_\_19. Mr. Sasaki tells Sadako *gruffly* not to worry.
- \_\_\_20. The wind makes the flock of paper cranes sway and *rustle*.

- |                          |                                      |                         |                         |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. stung or tingled      | f. amazing                           | k. makes full and round | p. make a musical sound |
| b. embarrassed, nervous  | g. without energy                    | l. roughly              | q. make a soft sound    |
| c. get back to health    | h. impish playfulness                | m. firmly               | r. in the middle of     |
| d. small, light umbrella | i. sudden sharp feeling              | n. places for worship   | s. festival             |
| e. marked on the skin    | j. formal acts on a special occasion | o. in memory of         | t. uneven               |

## Comprehension Test

### Part I Matching (2 points each)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number.

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| ___ 1. Promises to hang every crane Sadako makes.                      | a. Sadako         |
| ___ 2. Died on the day the bomb was dropped.                           | b. Masahiro       |
| ___ 3. Sadako's best friend.   | c. Chizuko        |
| ___ 4. Dreams of getting on the running team in junior high school.    | d. Eiji           |
| ___ 5. Takes Sadako to the hospital after she collapses.               | e. Kenji          |
| ___ 6. Sadako's little brother.  | f. Mitsue         |
| ___ 7. Comforts Sadako after a boy in the hospital dies.               | g. Mrs. Sasaki    |
| ___ 8. Brings Sadako a meal of all her favorite foods in the hospital. | h. Mr. Sasaki     |
| ___ 9. Sadako's little sister.   | i. Oba chan       |
| ___10. Has few visitors in the hospital.                               | j. Dr. Numata     |
| ___11. Makes a beautiful golden crane.                                 | k. Nurse Yasunaga |
| ___12. Allows Sadako to go home for a visit in July.                   |                   |
| ___13. Always in a hurry to be first.                                  |                   |
| ___14. Receives one of Sadako's cranes as a gift.                      |                   |
| ___15. Visits Sadako every day.  |                   |

**Part II Fill-In (2 points each)**

Write a word in each blank to make each statement true.

1. The Sasaki family attends the \_\_\_\_\_ Day ceremonies on August 6 every year.
2. The family prays at its altar for the spirits of its \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. The "atom bomb disease" is \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Sadako's mother makes her a silk \_\_\_\_\_ with cherry blossoms on it.
5. The Sasaki family lives in the city of \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. Sadako collapses while she is \_\_\_\_\_ in the schoolyard.
7. The first symptom Sadako notices of her illness is \_\_\_\_\_ .
8. The Sasaki family floats candlelit paper \_\_\_\_\_ in memory of their relatives killed by the bomb.
9. Sadako calls herself a \_\_\_\_\_ whenever she is slow or clumsy.
10. Sadako and her family call the atom bomb the \_\_\_\_\_ .
11. Sadako asks her parents to put her favorite food, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, on the home altar for her spirit.
12. The atom bomb filled the air with \_\_\_\_\_ , a poison that stays inside people for a long time.
13. Sadako is elated when her class chooses her to compete in the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ on Field Day.
14. Sadako considers the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ to be her special good luck omen in the hospital.
15. When Sadako gets very weak, she must have shots and blood \_\_\_\_\_  
almost every day.

**Part III True/False (2 points each)**

Mark each sentence with **T** if it is true and **F** if any part of it is false.

- \_\_\_ 1. Kenji became ill because he was nearby when the bomb was dropped.
- \_\_\_ 2. Sadako thinks spiders are a lucky omen.
- \_\_\_ 3. Sadako speaks comfortingly to the atom bomb victims at the memorial ceremonies.
- \_\_\_ 4. Once Sadako enters the hospital, she never comes home again.
- \_\_\_ 5. Sadako manages to make more than 600 cranes.
- \_\_\_ 6. Chizuko tells Sadako the legend of the crane.
- \_\_\_ 7. Sadako confides only to Chizuko that she is suffering from spells of illness.
- \_\_\_ 8. The bamboo class sends Sadako a *Kokeshi* doll to cheer her up.
- \_\_\_ 9. Sadako's illness keeps her from winning the race.
- \_\_\_ 10. The Sasaki family is not wealthy.

**Part IV Essay Questions (10 points each)**

Choose any *two* of these four questions to answer. Write one or two paragraphs for each of the two questions you choose.

1. Sadako is constantly looking for good-luck signs. Describe as many of them as you can, and tell how they affect Sadako's outlook.
2. In what ways does Sadako keep up her courage? How effective are these methods?
3. How do Sadako's friends and family try to help her? How does Sadako react to their efforts?
4. Some people were so badly burned by the bomb that they "no longer looked human" and spend the rest of their lives this way. Other people appear untouched by the bomb but eventually develop leukemia and then die. Which do you think is preferable, or the lesser of the two evils?



## Activity Sheet 1

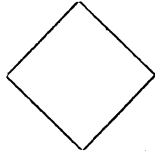
**Directions:** The Japanese foods listed below are all mentioned in the book. Put a check mark next to the ones you have eaten. Put an "X" next to the ones you would like to try. Then, in the space below the foods, write a recipe for one (or more) of them, or for another Japanese food you would like to eat. Prepare that food and share it with your class.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bean soup        | <input type="checkbox"/> egg roll         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pickled radishes | <input type="checkbox"/> pickled plums    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bean cakes       | <input type="checkbox"/> chicken and rice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rice balls       |   |

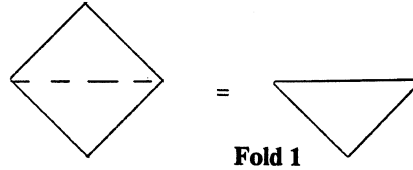
## Activity Sheet 2

**Directions:** Practice a very simple origami design to make a boat with a sail. Be sure to use strong but thin paper and cut and fold accurately.

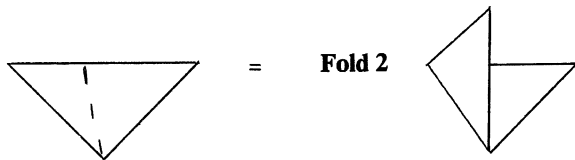
1. Start with a square of paper:



2. Fold the paper over diagonally:

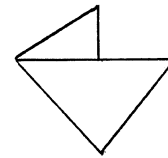


3. Reverse-fold the paper.  
a. Fold one corner back along the dotted line:



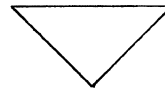
and **Fold 3**

new crease



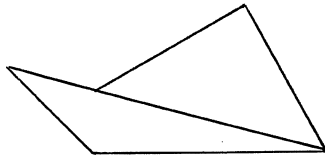
(First fold the front side back, then straighten it out, then fold the back side back.)

- b. Unfold the corner back to the original diagonal:



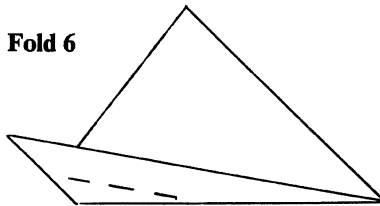
- c. Turn the corner back (inside out) along the new crease:

**Fold 5**

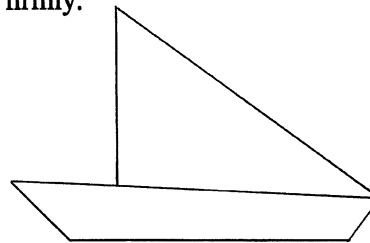


4. Fold back along the bottom corner so the boat will stand firmly:

**Fold 6**



=



If you would like to learn how to make a flying crane like Sadako's, see *Paperfolding Fun: Origami In Color* by Zulal Ayturr-Scheele (or another origami book with a crane design).

**Warning:** In this design you made 6 folds. To make a flying crane, you will have to make as many as 35 or more folds!

## ANSWER KEY

### Sadako and the Thousand Cranes

#### Vocabulary Test

- |      |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. o | 6. p  | 11. t | 16. b |
| 2. j | 7. n  | 12. h | 17. m |
| 3. s | 8. r  | 13. d | 18. g |
| 4. a | 9. i  | 14. c | 19. l |
| 5. e | 10. k | 15. f | 20. q |

#### Comprehension Test

##### Part I

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. d  | 11. c |
| 2. i | 7. k  | 12. j |
| 3. c | 8. g  | 13. a |
| 4. a | 9. f  | 14. e |
| 5. h | 10. e | 15. g |

##### Part III

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. F  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

##### Part II

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. Peace     | 8. lanterns      |
| 2. ancestors | 9. turtle        |
| 3. leukemia  | 10. Thunderbolt  |
| 4. kimono    | 11. bean cakes   |
| 5. Hiroshima | 12. radiation    |
| 6. running   | 13. relay race   |
| 7. dizziness | 14. golden crane |
|              | 15. transfusions |

##### Part V

Scored according to teacher's judgment.



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