

AUDIO SCRIPT

[F1: Lecturer; F2: Artist; M1: Student]

F1: Class, I'd like to introduce Yōko Nakamura. Many of you have seen Yōko's work on display at the Wren Library. Yōko has kindly made herself available this morning to discuss her work. Now, we were talking about symbolism last week, so perhaps we'll start with symbols. Yōko?

F2: Yes, symbolism is very important to me. I'm often defined as an abstract painter, but if you understand Japanese symbolism, my art is more accessible. In Japanese culture, the natural world is full of symbols. For example, butterflies symbolize the souls of the living and the dead. They are symbols of joy and a long life. The cherry blossom, which only blooms for a few weeks each year, symbolizes our temporary time on Earth. Now, some of you might think that's depressing, but my vision is to celebrate life through art. After all, life may be temporary, but art can last forever. The real cherry blossom may wither and fall from the tree, but the cherry blossoms in my paintings never die.

F1: I think there's a question. Richard?

M1: Yes, Ms. Nakamura, I'd like to ask what the bird symbolizes in your art.

F2: Ah, you mean the crane. The crane is a very special bird in Japan. It is said that a crane lives for a thousand years, so it symbolizes long life and good luck. For that reason, images of cranes are popular at weddings and New Year celebrations. The crane is also popular in origami—the Japanese art of paper folding. You often see colorful necklaces made of cranes outside shrines and temples. There is an ancient legend that says if you make a wish as you make a thousand cranes, your wish will come true. So, when I paint a crane, I always make a wish.

M1: May I ask another question? I was wondering if any of your symbols represent bad luck. I mean, the black cats, for example.

F2: That's a good question, Richard. Black cats are symbols of bad luck in some cultures. But they symbolize *good* luck in Japan, especially for single women who wish to find a husband. Some animals symbolize both good *and* bad luck. For example, if you see a spider in the morning, it means good luck. But if you see a spider at night, it means bad luck. However, I paint spiders because I think they are cool! They work hard and play an important role in nature. So symbols can be personal. What do you think, Richard?

M1: Me? I don't like spiders at all...