

2018 Peace Poetry Contest

Alachua County Schools Grades K-12

A collection of the winning poems from the ninth annual Peace Poetry Contest in Alachua County schools, grades K-12, sponsored by the Gainesville Chapter 14 of Veterans for Peace.



About the Peace Poetry Contest

This is the ninth year that Gainesville Veterans for Peace has organized the Peace Poetry Contest in Alachua County, where all students, grades K–12, are encouraged to submit one original poem focusing on their interpretation of “peace.”

Veterans for Peace members believe that peace-making and hope for a peaceful world begin in our community, our homes and our schools. That is why we invited students to participate in the contest this year; a peaceful possibility lies in the younger generations of today who will be leading, transforming and inspiring the world tomorrow.

We want to honor the ideal of peace through the perspectives of young people. Peace is a uniquely human conception and affirms the human spirit. It is especially important to remember that peace is not merely a goal but a human right.

This year we received 351 poems from all grades, and the poems were judged by a panel of community poets and writers. The winners were asked to read at the Peace Poetry Reading, and their poems are published in this book.

Veterans for Peace would first and foremost like to thank all of the participants in the 2018 Peace Poetry Contest. Without the poetry submissions, there would be no Peace Poetry Contest and none of the dialogue that comes with it.

Parents and teachers also play a large role in the Peace Poetry Contest every year by encouraging their children to participate, sometimes awarding extra credit and providing other incentives. Thank you for helping make the Peace Poetry Contest a success.

The community judges, all poets and writers, were integral to this year’s contest. Thank you to: Rhonda Riley, fiction writer and longtime Gainesville resident; Ann Kennebrew, theatre maker and Executive Director of Ignite Applied Theatre; Barbara Brody, intuitive life coach and storyteller; and Syraj Syed, narrative specialist, educator, public health advocate, and community builder.

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville has hosted the Peace Poetry Contest nine years in a row now, and Veterans for Peace is grateful for their support and continued cooperation. Specifically, thank you to UU and VFP member Mary Bahr who helps with the arrangements for the Reading, and to Erin Parish who operates the sound equipment for the Reading.

Peace Scholarship

Earlier this year, Veterans for Peace announced the annual Peace Scholarship award, a college scholarship program for Alachua County students. The scholarship competition was open to eligible high school seniors, college students, and adults who need financial support to succeed in college and who have demonstrated a commitment and leadership in activities involving peace and social justice and/or nonviolent social change.

Peace scholarship applicants were asked to provide a brief autobiographical statement and evidence of leadership and/or personal initiative in activities in an organization (including volunteer or paid work) relating to peace and social justice, conflict resolution and/or nonviolent social change. Applicants were also asked to provide two letters of recommendation. In the end, VFP awarded peace scholarships to four students in the amount of \$750 each. The scholarships were awarded to:

Ryan Robinson is a high school senior at St. Francis Catholic Academy and a member of the National Honors Society and Math Honors Society.

Don Balcita is a Santa Fe College Engineering major and military veteran who plans to pursue a career in renewable energy and financial equality for all.

Taisha Saintil is a University of Florida African American Studies, Criminology and Political Science major who plans to become a social justice attorney.

Jamouri Bryan is a Santa Fe College International Studies and Civic Engagement scholar who plans to become a multicultural affairs counselor in higher education.

To learn more about the VFP Peace Scholarship so you can apply next year, visit vfgainesville.org. There you will find detailed instructions and the application for the scholarship. If you have specific questions, contact VFP member Paul Ortiz at ortiz-prof@gmail.com or 831-334-0131.

Winning Poets

Grades 1–3

Asher Case, Grade 3, Jordan Glen School, High Honors
London Fernandez, Grade 3, Wiles Elementary School, High Honors
Halle Golden, Grade 3, Lawton Chiles Elementary School, High Honors
Sadie Parker, Grade 3, Boulware Springs Charter School, High Honors
Miko Shitama, Grade 1, Jordan Glen School, High Honors
Harper Fitzpatrick, Grade 1, JJ Finley Elementary School, 3rd Place
Fisher Eakin, Grade 3, Jordan Glen School, 2nd Place
Evenia Dawn Dasilma, Grade 2, Healthy Learning Academy, 1st Place

Grades 4–5

Yuyang Chen, Grade 4, Littlewood Elementary School, High Honors
Samya Clark, Grade 5, Alachua Elementary School, High Honors
Isabella Roberts, Grade 5, Hidden Oak Elementary, High Honors
Hyeonseo Jeh, Grade 4, Wiles Elementary School, 3rd Place
Dylan Fitzpatrick, Grade 4, JJ Finley Elementary School, 2nd Place
Caroline Washburn, Grade 4, Wiles Elementary School, 1st Place

Grade 6

Kyrsten Bradley, Grade 6, Micanopy Academy, High Honors
Lilliana Hill, Grade 6, Fort Clark Middle School, High Honors
Lillie Nesty, Grade 6, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy, High Honors
Kylie Maddux, Grade 6, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy, 3rd Place
Launa Magee, Grade 6, Fort Clark Middle School, 2nd Place
Michael Weston, Grade 6, Howard Bishop Middle School, 1st Place

Grade 7

Christine Cama, Grade 7, Kanapaha Middle School, High Honors
Angela Gattone, Grade 7, Jordan Glen School, High Honors
Autumn Grant, Grade 7, Micanopy Academy, High Honors
Thais Rody, Grade 7, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy, High Honors
Lucy Whitehead, Grade 7, Kanapaha Middle School, 3rd Place
Malak Ibrahim, Grade 7, Kanapaha Middle School, 2nd Place
Cormac Davis, Grade 7, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy, 1st Place

Grade 8

Sarah Al-Issa, Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, High Honors
Skylr Blake, Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, High Honors
Dylan Bruens, Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, High Honors

Trevor Davy, Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, High Honors
Sheyann “Alainia” Ervin, 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, High Honors
Amari Artis, Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, 3rd Place
Ty Wykoff, Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School, 2nd Place
Emilie Rosado, Grade 8, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy, 1st Place

Grades 9–11

Briana Boggs, Grade 9, Gainesville High School, 3rd Place
Hana Shitama, Grade 11, Eastside High School, 2nd Place
Lauren Gresser, Grade 11, Gainesville High School, 1st Place

Grade 12

Kirschtine Balbuena, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, High Honors
Aviva Bush, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, High Honors
Blake Cotter, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, High Honors
Julian Newman, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, High Honors
Michael Shaver, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, High Honors
Aisha Cobbs, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, 3rd Place
Doga Oruc, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, 2nd Place
Kate Kverneland, Grade 12, Buchholz High School, 1st Place

Animals and Dreams

All of the worry would come to an end
If people in the world would just play with a friend.

Animals playing together,
In the calm and peaceful weather.

The world would be clean without use of a mop,
The whole world's pollution would come to a stop.

All the people's dreams could be coming true,
People working together in one big crew.

Asher Case

Grade 3, Jordan Glen School

High Honors, Grades 1-3



Beautiful Peace

Peace is like a beautiful sunset on a warm summer night.
Peace is like the pages to my book of life.
Peace is like a never-ending trail of happiness.
Peace is like a tired bird sleeping in its nest.
Peace is like a mysterious measure of kindness.
Kindness is peace.
Peace has a very deep heart.
We could be the start of peace
If we all play our part.

London Fernandez

Grade 3, Wiles Elementary School

High Honors, Grades 1-3

We Want Peace!

We want peace, that's no lie.
War is bad because people die.

Peace and love will always win.
We should put war in the trash bin.

Peace can do lots of things.
Love is what peace brings.

War is something really bad.
War is not right! It makes me mad.

Peace can be in anyone,
So give it a try, get in on the fun.

Peace can beat hate and war any day.
So let's work together and drive it away.

So if there is one thing I learned today,
Peace and love are the way.

Halle Golden
Grade 3, Lawton Chiles Elementary School

High Honors, Grades 1-3

Taking Care of People and Their Needs Brings Peace

Some people don't have a home
So they get help from the courthouse which has a dome.
Once a foster family takes them in,
Their needs are met and they have peace within.
Social Justice comes in many ways
Whether by groups, people, individuals, or loving displays.

There was a war, almost nobody could stop it.
Until somebody opened the door of life.
For those of us who have been given much, much will be required
To stand up for those who can't speak for themselves
Is something we all admire.

Sadie Parker
Grade 3, Boulware Springs Charter School

High Honors, Grades 1-3

Peace

I feel peace when I am all alone.
I feel peace when I am at home.
Love is peace
and
so is friendship...
...and so is how the river flows.

Miko Shitama
Grade 1, Jordan Glen School

High Honors, Grades 1-3



This is Peace

War is the opposite of peace.
People getting hurt and shot.
Fighting at school feels like war.
Yelling, "You're not my friend."

We can split people up to stop the fighting.
We can tell them to stop.

Peace is people saying nice things,
"Hey, you wanna come sit with me."
I can look up into the sky and think.
It is blue with ice cream-shaped clouds.

Harper Fitzpatrick
Grade 1, J.J. Finley Elementary School

Third Place, Grades 1-3

Wars and Walls

I wish there would be no more wars,
I wish no one would die brutally anymore.

I wish no more people would die,
I wish no more children would cry.

I wish they would stop building a wall,
No more barbed wire at all.

I wish I could learn about Mexico's lands.
The stories, the culture, the music and bands.

Why make a wall and a crazy rule?
I think Mexico is pretty cool.

Fisher Eakin
Grade 3, Jordan Glen School

Second Place, Grades 1-3

Peace Means

Peace is amazing
Peace is grand
Peace means you can walk
Hand in hand

Peace means no fighting
Peace means no war
Peace is the rich
Sharing food with the poor

We are all the same
Deep under our skin
So open your heart
And just let love in

Everyone deserves justice
Peace means to be fair
Peace means equality
SO THERE.

Evenia Dawn Dasilma
Grade 2, Healthy Learning Academy

First Place, Grades 1-3

Peace, Peace!

The blue ocean is a paradise of seabirds and fish.
But the cruising warships and torpedoes become uninvited guests!
Why?

The yellow desert is lizards' and beetles' world.
But the rumble of tanks and canons break their dream!
Why?

The dark sky belongs to stars and the moon.
But the missile launched disturbs the peace and quiet of their homeland.
Why?

The green lawn should have the rolling soccer balls.
But landmine pieces keep kids' footsteps off the lawn!
Why?

We wish all kids who are in war have a desk, a smooth desk! Have a classroom, a clean room!

Yuyang Chen

Grade 4, Littlewood Elementary School

High Honors, Grades 4-5



Women's Rights and Racism

Women's rights

Just because I'm a woman doesn't mean I'm not tough
I bust down nine kids and do all the house stuff
My dream was to be a pilot and fly across the skies
But I knew in my heart because I was a woman they'd deny
So on I marched, I screamed, I ran,
My throat was parched
I didn't really care as long as I was heard
As loud as an aggravating early bird
Now I sit here in a jet
With everything on my mind except regret
but my mission is not finished not finished
not yet

Racism

I heard the cries coming from the black woman's eyes
And at first I didn't, but now I realized why the tears were sprouting from her eyes
Her son was shot by the neighborhood cop just for being black
And to myself I thought "how could people be so cruel? Didn't they learn niceness at school?"
The screaming, the reacting, the gunshots, the flame
Only thing it did was put me in shame and think about how two can play at this game
I saw them march with signs that start with "We have peace," "Racism End"
The thing the white man said made my back bend
They were beat, hit, sprayed with a hose but still no mercy came upon those
They had sit-ins where the brave will sit
Doesn't even take two seconds for them to scream
But they did not care one bit
Why can't we just hold hands
and sing and dance
and give all people a brand new chance?

Samya Clark

Grade 5, Alachua Elementary School

High Honors, Grades 4-5



Peace Poem

A peaceful world
Hard to find
A hopeful world
Undefined

Peace is not rude or unkind
Peace is but a state of mind
Peace is just a concept
As peace is but a word

Peace is beautiful
It is colorful
The water's bloom
The dolphin's gloom
Like beginnings meet ends
We're all friends

Peace is a palace
Of hopeful dreams
Of unicorn pillows
An island breeze

Peace is a common sense
That all should know

Isabella Roberts
Grade 5, Hidden Oak Elementary
High Honors, Grades 4–5



Peace

Peace is like a cookie.
It can be easily broken.
All over the world,
some break peace.
You can make peace with a smile.
You can make peace by caring
and sharing.
You can make peace with anyone
if you are hopeful, joyful and caring.
Make the world PEACEFUL.

Hyeonseo Jeh
Grade 4, Wiles Elementary School

Third Place, Grades 4–5

Only Love

I want to write about peaceful things
How about a peaceful place?

A peaceful place is somewhere there is no hate, only love
I don't know if this place exists.

This place would have no stealing,
No poverty, no struggling.

If people need things that they don't have,
they might steal.

Where I live, bikes get stolen.
Where I live, people kill other people.

Kids don't have enough food
And come to school hungry.

Kids have to care for siblings
And can't do their homework.

Peace is a place where there is no hate, only love.
In order to have more peace,
We need less poverty.

People would have a job and have money
For food. For a house.

If two people make the same mistake,
they should get the same punishment.

Humans deserve to be treated fairly.
We should all have the same rights.

Dylan Fitzpatrick
Grade 4, J.J. Finley Elementary School

Second Place, Grades 4–5

If Only

HOPE is a boat that you struggle to stay on.

HATE is the hurricane that tries to throw you off.

REVENGE is the thunder, lightning and waves that threaten to overturn you.

But,

PEACE is the sun after a bad storm.

FRIENDSHIP is something we struggle to juggle.

Out of fear,

We'll be called names for our color or other.

If only, PEACE was a treasure—

Gold is not all worth hoping for.

BETRAYAL is a dark sea drowning too many people with peace in their hearts.

Peace does not drown.

If only,

PEACE, JUSTICE, FREEDOM and RACE.

If only,

We had HOPE.

If only we had peace for the world.

Caroline Washburn

Grade 4, Wiles Elementary School

First Place, Grades 4–5



Hope

I wake up to the sound of a bomb,
I feel the ground shake,
I listen to the screams,
I smell the smoke and blood,
I roll into a ball of fear,
I hear a sudden silence,
I get up and look around,
I stop in fear as I watch the door...

I see the door open,
I go back to my room,
I open my window as smoke comes in,
I hear a gun and a scream I recognize,
It's my mother,
I sink down to my knees,
I start to cry,
I pray for peace and hope,
I pray for a better world,
I hear footsteps,
I get up and jump out the window,
I run far into the woods,
I see a cave and I run to it,
I try to speak but I have no words,

I wake up,
I hear no sound,
I look outside,
I walk back and whimper as I see nothing,
Everything is gone...

Kyrsten Bradley
Grade 6, Micanopy Academy

High Honors, Grade 6

A Sequel to the World

The world takes pain,
The world takes lives.
The past was unequal,
But now we strive,
To have a better world—
We can make a sequel.
A sequel to the world,
Much more equal.
There can be peace and equality—
We'll be together as one.

There can be no more war,
No more discrimination.
We can write our future—
We'll see everyone's elation.

Can you imagine?
There will be no more racism,
No hate, not just for show—
No more discrimination—
We should've had this decades ago...
But that means nothing—

We can change the world's fate!
The world may be crumbling...
But think about it—
This is the sequel!

We can have peace,
We can love each other...
See the vision?
There must be precision to mark our future,
To have positivity.

No more war,
No more hate,
Now peace—there's more.
We're ready, you see?
It's time to change our fate...

It's gonna be great!

Lillianna Hill

Grade 6, Fort Clarke Middle School

High Honors, Grade 6

I Have a Dream

“I have a dream”
Where black and white is just a color
People respect one another
“I have a dream”

When someone comes knocking on your door
Everyone will help them rich or poor
“I have a dream”

All cultures are welcomed everywhere
Wherever you go people will care
“I have a dream”

No one will care about their skin color
In God’s eyes we are all sisters or brothers
“I have a dream”

We will all be one nation
Then we should have a celebration
“I have a dream”

Cultures should come together
This should last forever
“I have a dream”

Life will be better that way
That will be one glorious day
“I have a dream”

Lillie Nesty
Grade 6, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

High Honors, Grade 6

No Dismay

Even though you're in defeat
You can still stand tall
People will still be there for you
Especially when you fall

Make an entrance
And watch your step
Have hope
That there will be no wreck

In the night
You try to run
But people are watching
And will come

And yet they tell you
Don't you dare leave
Everyone else
Is starting to grieve

Hate is spreading everywhere
And you try to escape
But you are running out of time
And should probably watch your pace

You must stay strong
And please don't get scared
Have peace
With people everywhere

Kylie Maddux
Grade 6, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

Third Place, Grade 6

World Peace Conversation

Are you tired of the constant hate?
Are you done with war and racism?
Are you fed up with injustice and inequality due to race?
Are you finished with environmental harm?

Yes, I am done with those things,
He said with a sigh.
However, there is nothing we can do,
People will not listen to us two.

I see that you might think it is out of reach,
And it may be some hard work.
I see no reason we cannot try,
For peace is a thing that should be world-wide
For everyone and thing.

People who are different should not have to suffer,
Because people are choosing who may have peace,
And who may not.
We are all people alike.
We should not be separated because we are black or white,
We should embrace our differences,
Not start a war because of them.
We should not hate what we do not understand.
We should simply look into it more.

I understand what you say,
Your words are wise, but
Far away.
For how can only two people convince
7,000,000,000 people
Who refuse to listen to what we say?
He said this as he started to walk away.

People think the only way to get peace is through war.
That violence is the only way,
To make someone listen or do what we say.
For it only takes two
To show many
There is more than one way
To settle our differences.

He stopped and stared,
Started to smile.
He told me he would be back
In a while.

Peace is not a war to be won.
Not a medal around a champion.
It is something that should be given,

Not fought for or taken.

Peace is a gift
That everyone should be able to open.
Not something you need to have a war for.
Peace is priceless,
Worth more than one million diamonds.
But it is not a crown on a king's head,
That only he can hold.
It is a gift from the gods,
For all people to share as one whole.

I know when people finally see their wrongs,
And open their eyes and see the second path
That has been there for so long.
They will let go of this want for power,
And see that the strongest power of all
Is the power of peace,
And all it brings along.

Launa Magee
Grade 6, Fort Clarke Middle School
Second Place, Grade 6

Peace Poem

Be at Peace
Tempest tossed seas of soul,
give me rest,
from doubt, and fear.
Sun find my face,
Light find my heart,
Song find my story,
Smile find my face.
Be at Peace
Be at Peace
For my Life is finite
And these storms
Have raged too long,
even Winter.

Michael Weston
Grade 6, Howard Bishop Middle School
First Place, Grade 6

Sincerely, Nameless, Faceless

Birmingham, Alabama
February 4, 1963

Dear Child of the Future,

It feels as if Jim Crow tightens his reign every day. Officers and whites, they say, "Get out of the way!" We have a right to vote, but then they make us pay. Where's equality in this land of the free? Jailed, hosed, and stomped because of our races...so many of us have died, and they've forgotten our faces.

Blacks are charged guilty in all of the cases. I feel like we will never be viewed as equals in Southern spaces. So listen here, little child, here's something you need to revise. Show everyone that we're all just allies.

Create a new world where no one dies,
Teach black and brown to keep focused on the prize,
Remember the past so you will rise,
Don't let Hate repeat the lies,
Only you can change the world...
Now, that you've seen it through my eyes.

Sincerely,
Nameless, Faceless

Christine Cama
Grade 7, Kanapaha Middle School

High Honors, Grade 7

Sister

"Ring" School's out "Bam" She's dead
That was the image in my head
She lifts her head up, shocked and dazed
The shooter fled, anxious and crazed
I ran to her—ringing in my ear
She looked confused and full of fear
I held her head close to my heart
Her eyes looked shattered, cracked apart
"Please stay safe and out of harm"
She whispered—fingers gripped my arm
Then teachers grabbed me around the waist
I struggled—blood I began to taste.

Angela Gattone
Grade 7, Jordan Glen School

High Honors, Grade 7

Hand In Hand

War doesn't solve anything
War has a very big effect.
Violence is never the answer
Violence is a dangerous wreck.
We all love and care for other people
So let's try to keep things equal.
Hate is a very, very strong word
So don't say it, or it can affect our world.
Racism is something we try to forgive
Not something we try to forget.

Autumn Grant
Grade 7, Micanopy Academy

High Honors, Grade 7

What Is Peace?

Peace is everywhere
Yet it is missing where needed
Peace is shining bright
Yet it is not seen

Peace is harmony
Yet our world is at war
Peace is love
Yet we hate

Peace is equality
Yet we aren't seen the same
Peace is justice
Yet we aren't treated the same

Peace is overlooked
Yet it is important
Peace is ignored
Yet it is needed

We need peace
And peace needs us

Thais Rody
Grade 7, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

High Honors, Grade 7

The Middle School Struggle

In my world I don't get called names,
I am not ignored because it's not my world.

End of third period, walking to lunch.
I bump into someone
"Sorry, excuse me," I say.
They call me the "N" word
"What!" I think.
This is what I mean when I say it's not my world.

Lunchtime, eating my sandwich and chatting with friends.
I look up rather quickly, but a second too long, at some kids who were black like me.
"Oreo," one of them says.
I look down, but I'm thinking, "What!"
Like I said, it's not my world.

As I walk in the empty hallway after school,
I pass a girl
I wave and smile.
She calls me the "B" word
I say something, but as I walk away I think, "What!"
Ahem, not my world.

Walking into first period I see a good friend
I wave.
She sees me and looks away,
I sit down next to her and say "hi."
She sees me and ignores me. "What!"
Not my world, not my world at all.

First period same time same place,
I sit next to a boy who has his own group of friends.
However, on this particular day he says
"Hello" and I say "Hello."
I was mad and annoyed because of my friend who ignored me.
Apparently he noticed,
he asked me if I was ok.
While I did tell him I was fine, what he doesn't know is that he brightened my day
and put a ray of sunshine on my dark horizon.

Sixth period I walk over to someone I consider my best friend and greet her happily
I had a tiring day and was happy to see her

continued on next page

I say, "Hi" happily
She says, "Bye" in a cold serious manner
Out of shock I turned and walked away
I almost started crying as I thought "WHAT!"
If it was my world, people would see each other for who they are:
No name calling
No ignorance
No opinions without justification
But it's not my world.

Lucy Whitehead
Grade 7, Kanapaha Middle School

Third Place, Grade 7

—

I Am a Muslim

I am a Muslim
At least that's what I tell myself
Yet, when I hear the slew of hateful words that come out of your mouth
Mussle, raghead, Osama
You make me feel nothing bigger than an ant
Every time I step out of the door
I am suffocated by the pollution that is religious prejudice
Your lack of understanding is heart breaking
A peace departs with every word you speak
No longer do I want to wake up to horrific headlines
Instead, I want to arise to a world of inclusivity
Where our political citizens are accepting of the residents they harbor
No longer will I tolerate the hatred because
I am a Muslim

Malak Ibrahim
Grade 7, Kanapaha Middle School

Second Place, Grade 7

A Peaceful Place

Peace can touch our hearts,
But violence can make us fall apart,
In the midst of the darkness of this place,
Lie people of every race,
They all love and care,
So don't cover them up with all the hatred and scare.

Peace is like an enjoyable time,
But violence is like an everlasting climb,
Peace brings hope to every life,
But violence can cause strife,
When you think in your mind above,
Know that you will see love.

Peace is a place that is calm and quiet,
It does not cause a riot,
A peaceful place is a world agreeing,
That of which I am not seeing,
A peaceful place starts with a small action,
And it can cause a chain reaction.

Cormac Davis

Grade 7, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

First Place, Grade 7

An end to all wars

I am emotional
I wonder how many more people will die
I hear the sound of crying and yelling
I see pain and suffering in everyone's eye
I want all wars to stop
I am a human being

I pretend that everything is fine
I feel like the world is falling apart
I touch people's hearts
I worry that many more will get injured and die
I cry when I hear about someone dying
I am angry at this world

I understand not every wish comes true
I say that it won't last long
I dream one day this wish will come true
I hope all wars diminish soon
I am a dreamer

I think that I'm not being heard
I would like to end all wars, for justice and for freedom
I am as invisible as a ghost

Sarah Al-Issa
Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School

High Honors, Grade 8

Outcast

I remember
That it happened over
and over again.

I remember them
calling me names,
Then crying that day.

I remember feeling like I was alone,
It felt like a virus
But went straight to the bone.

I remember I hated
as I waited,
for the torment to end.

I remember standing up to them
no more sorrow,
no more pain.

BAM!!!
I remember it hit me,
his fist like a stone,
and it went straight at me
and then I felt the pain.

So much for no more sorrow,
and so long no more pain.
I will be seeing you,
for the rest of my days.

Dylan Bruens
Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School
High Honors, Grade 8

Peace isn't born yet

I hate you!

Yeah, you!

Walking on you makes my blood raise up high to the sky
And everyday I can't deny the drastic change of numbers each day
And my heart breaks knowing someone left you today.

I pray each night

Hoping the enemy doesn't get me tonight.

I see countless faces day by day

And just the thought of them fading away just like Cheshire the cat
can't you just imagine that.

Your cousin hate came to the party today

I mean, why not?

Violence was here to begin with

And we were just trapped in silence

They say it won't happen again

I said the same thing

About giving my George Washingtons away to the cashier.

So I can buy something useless. I find it ruthless.

That you can be so beautiful on the outside

But not have a single pint of love in your cup.

Ugh! The irony.

School Shootings have taken a toll into "2018"

More and more students are being killed at school.

This is a matter that needs to be dealt with

Before it's too late.

Students are being trained at school in case of this happening to them.

Hiding under desks, closets, bathrooms, etc. just for our safety.

This should not be a "normal" routine.

My mind gets trapped in the blood scene between foreseen and seen

But I'm only a teen

Carrying bags full of old books that feel like bricks
Yearning to weigh me down with megar of history
That we just can't stop repeating.
As a kid and a student I feel like this should all be new to me.

Yes, I know that we have people who are putting their life on the line
To make the world a better place. But we're just forcing peace. Our world really is
full with hate.

Our world is not peaceful. People live in a fantasy to bury the reality
Of what's really going on around them.
We find something wrong with our world
And just promise to fix it
Real action needs to happen fast.
The number of notifications that knock
On my phone each night
About one who lost its life
We can say that we've never truly seen peace's charm.

Let's hold hands and fight in a union not to see disunion
Of others who are just like us.
Put our minds together and stand with one another to
Patch up the holes that have been in our earth
We can create peace on earth.
But honestly, I think that something that has been broken for so long
Maybe can't be fixed.
Earth, I hate you!
I hate how impossible you are.
I don't like the violence.
Why can't we get a fresh start.

Skylr Blake

Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School

High Honors, Grade 8

Reality

Picking my head up off of my desk
Confusion plaguing me and screams surrounding me
I know this is a joke
I start to move almost by instinct
Shocked.

Sick to my stomach something smells metallic
Pushed into a corner told to keep my head down
Shaking in silence surrounded by noise
Loud bangs sounding off like roll call
I start to move I run out a door
Friends and teachers try to hold me back
Not thinking just running
Hundreds of students in one hallway
Death.

A sea of blood and bodies falling
Will I be on the news
It all seems funny and unreal
I'm laughing now
I slip and fall I'm drowning in blood
Confused.

Oddly comfortable with the noise around me
I've heard this before
Waking up in a thunderstorm
I have school in an hour
Terrified.

Trevor Davy
Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School

High Honors, Grade 8

Live In Peace

We are not soldiers.
Peace dwells in our chest.
Wars wage on regardless;
we need not invest.
Life can be a hassle
a perpetual night;
but the sun won't rise quicker
If we choose to fight.
So abandon your weapons;
& pitch forward friendly arms;
offer up a refuge devoid of violence & harm.
Life shouldn't be a battle where we solely survive.
Do not wait to rest in peace...
Live it while you are alive.

Sheyann Alainia Ervin
Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School

High Honors, Grade 8

A Broken People

A broken people
Unable to find the
ability to find hope
A broken people
Hanging themselves with society's rope
A broken people
Acting as if they were
savage uneducated beasts ready to pounce on the weak
A broken people
But they will rise
Let the weak say "I am strong"
Let the strong encourage
Let the poor say "I am rich"
A broken people
No matter how broken we are
They will rise
We will rise

Amari Artis
Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School

Third Place, Grade 8

He Is Coming Home

Walking home from school,
My heart racing, will he be there?
The overgrown weeds claw at my legs,
But I'm smiling as I open the door because the driveway was empty.

Trying to quiet the rumbling in my stomach,
I search the cupboard for a snack;
The barren shelf provides no nourishment,
Nothing except knowing that he has drank away all our grocery money.

Desperate for a distraction from my hunger,
I pulled my reading assignment from my battered blue backpack.

Slam!
Oh no, he's here!
Scurrying across the room to the closet,
My books falling to the floor, Bam!

I'm crouching on the floor,
Creeeek... the footsteps are outside my door.
The doorknob rattles like a rattlesnake ready to strike.
I'm not breathing.
I'm not moving.
I'm a statue.

A loud thud echoes through the house,
Then silence.
Only a few hours until I can go back to the place I feel safe.

"Good morning, Mr. Jones"

Ty Wykoff
Grade 8, Fort Clarke Middle School

Second Place, Grade 8



What does it take for war to stop?

Someone has died today
You don't know him
I don't know him
But someone knew and loved him
He had a family, a wife and children
He had a funeral
People mourned for him
It was a sad day for everyone
A tough loss

He died in a fight, a battle
One that might never be won
Thousands of others have died too
In that same war
On the same battle field

Men destroy other men
Every day
Every hour
Every minute
Right now
People kill people
We kill each other
But for what reason?
Why must this happen?

Religion, nationalism, revenge
These are only a few causes of war
But they are not a good enough reason
Not good enough for the thousands or millions of lives being lost
Not good enough for families to be ripped apart

So remember
We are all connected
All of us
This needs to stop
And it starts with you
And me
And everyone else in the world
Every single one of us can make a difference

With kindness,
Love,
Hope,
and peace.

Emilie Rosado

Grade 8, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

First Place, Grade 8

Peace can be achieved.
It is found within one another.
Deep inside.
Where love replaces hate.
Peace.
What we should all wish to achieve.

Briana Boggs
Grade 9, Gainesville High School

Third Place, Grades 9–11

Violent Crossettes

When the fireworks turned
and the toy soldiers broke
we hid under blankets
of ash and smoke
and it matched the color of our eyes
and our hope.
When the fireworks turned
and the water balloons froze
a fragile shield coated our lungs
and our eyes began to close
while our hands covered our red-tipped ears.
When the fireworks turned
and we heard the locks click
the cherries rotted
and the dust became thick
and we knocked politely on your colorful stone door.
When the fireworks turned
and the steam was a private shade of jet blue
we watched the news on shattered screens
and waited while velvet leaves grew.
Dry whispers
We stood on each other's shoulders
and our pyramid with a rounded top crumbled
and the stars fell.
Peace is not far away.
You promised.
Let us in.
The fireworks turned.

Hana Shitama
Grade 11, Eastside High School

Second Place, Grades 9–11

Never Again

Tearful eyes as we turn on the news
Streets are filled with first responding crews

The first responders first on the scene
Only to hear terrified children's screams

18 shootings and it's not even May
Yet another student killed today

Backpacks fill the halls left behind
On this day, everyone wishes to press rewind

Friends and family all filled with strife
And yet another teacher gave their life

On this day we must unite
To stop the hate and win this fight

Our hearts are breaking, lives are shattered
And yet no change, but our lives still matter

Lauren Gresser

Grade 11, Gainesville High School

First Place, Grades 9-11



Crawling to the basement at night,
my brother clutching his ears with fright.

The music of a thousand bombs echoes in my head,
all parts of me filled completely with dread.

Is this to be the future of my country?
My America, 'tis of thee?

I can't wrap my head around what brought upon this war,
peace is all we called for.

Nuclear warfare will bring an end to advanced civilization,
who will be blamed for this causation?

In the distance fire consumes the horizon,
soon nobody will be left to wisen.

Our children waking up afraid to look at the sky,
they know it is where weapons drop from way up high.

Growing up with nothing but knowledge of war,
blood stains encrusted deep in their velour.

We can stop this future before it is too late,
we cannot let our country fall for other's bait.

We must rise to make peace though diplomacy,
so our sons and daughters can live in a world that's grand to see.

A hand hovers above a button of red.
An ounce of fear oozes in my head.

Is this the fate of our great nation?
Are we expected to all rise to the occasion?

I will not stand back and watch this fight go on with no end,
I will join the others looking to mend.

Now is the time to act without fear,
For if we give up, the end could be very near.

Aviva Bush
Grade 12, Buchholz High School

High Honors, Grade 12

The Enemy of the Truth

Everyone has a thinking mind,
Minds that are judgmental.
The people who leave footprints,
On the streets, laying low,
Are also the same people,
Assuming the truth.

The truth about the Asian man,
Who has more about himself,
Than a distant man can ever judge.

Between the lines of his perfect grades,
Beyond the story of his family's escape,
Beneath the details of his karate black belt,

Is a distinctive individual,
Who is worth learning about,
But was never revealed.

The helpless man,
Profiled without choice,
Is blended into the conforming crowd.

Perhaps it is a part of humankind—
To be helpless in one's tendency to judge
But it is the greatest enemy of the truth.

Kirschtine Balbuena
Grade 12, Buchholz High School
High Honors, Grade 12

A Lost Flag

He signed his life away,
To keep the flag a sway.
Not knowing what's ahead,
After the goodbye has been said.
He fights for you and I,
If he dies will you even cry?
Once he makes it home,
He will be forced to roam,
To survive at this so-called home.

Searching for a job,
Every night he will sob.
No one even cares,
Only worried about their own affairs.
He's given no aid,
Even though he was homemade,
Felt like he was betrayed.

He never knew it would be like this,
Now living life without bliss.
Not much to live for,
His brain and heart sore.
He's treated like shit,
His own life he will quit,
Now, his throat is slit.

Blake Cotter

Grade 12, Buchholz High School

High Honors, Grade 12

A Penny Made Plural

I see water mingling with the sky
On all sides, with jading shades of night's fly
Coating the hues of red, white, and blue.
The clouds, ruby sun, sea, and soldier too.
Our mission is a point A to point B,
Sleeping, and sipping wind with black coffee.
Glassware waves thump our Water Wagon's sides
And splash men holding human pesticides.

When a shell shot towards the ship at sea
Breaches the hull and silences my plea.
I'm here, I can sense, but I breathe not.
I glide under an ocean's afterthought.
I live not long enough to feel the rot
Of thought, and suffering despair I ought.
I wonder what I'll be amounted to,
And where our monuments will then accrue.

One May nineteenth, 1987
An Iraqi plane bombed 37
American marines. The families
Cried while a government united lied.
37 sons of mothers sunk deep
Below clouded ruby sunsets and slept.
37, each just a penny made
Plural to fit a government's budget.

Julian Newman

Grade 12, Buchholz High School

High Honors, Grade 12

Peace is what brings everyone together
It's the preserver of life
For the man in boots of leather
Fighting because of two power's strife

Knowing that he may never again see his wife
Or the faces of his children that he has never seen
As he holds so tightly on to that knife
Full of blood, feeling guilty and unclean

Not knowing the names of the men he has killed,
Where they have come from,
Or if they have families who are filled
With fear that they can't overcome.

He's having trouble making the decision
If he should take his life in this scheme.
Realizing without peace there will always be division
He finally wakes up from this horrid dream.

Within his now lucid mind
Feeling that something must be done
He decides to try and find
A way to fight without a gun.

Michael Shaver
Grade 12, Buchholz High School

High Honors, Grade 12

Is It Too Much To Ask?

I've grown tired of asking for peace.
Let me get that off my chest.
It just seems like nobody can fulfill my request.
I'm tired of living in a world where hate always trumps love.
I've turned to God, praying, asking for answers from up above.

I just have to tell you, I only want what's best for my country.
Isn't that what I'm supposed to do?
Being an American, in America, where they say dreams do come true.

So why don't we all step back and dream of something we want to happen.
My peers and I want peace, so why can't that be granted?
You know what, I forgot, my opinion is invalid.

For starters, I'm a child.
I'm black.
I'm a woman, don't you forget about that.
I can be mean.
Sometimes obscene.
A loud mouth at best.

Yet I'm a firm believer we need peace now
And I won't stop until it all works out
So I apologize that this poem may seem angry
I've just grown weary from all the waiting
Oh how I wish for peace.

For us to all get along.
A time of love.
A time of ease.
It's time for peace.

I pray I live to see this all come true.
Because, right now, it seems like we'll never pull through.
Right now, I have the courage to take a stand.
Hopefully we'll achieve peace hand in hand.

Aisha Cobbs
Grade 12, Buchholz High School

Third Place, Grade 12

Us

I work all day with so little pay,
return home to rest,
but my husband often has guests,
called ice and booze,
I should go hide before he gets loose,
my bruises won't last but people will surely ask,
I am used to lying,
not that hard of a task.
I spent my last penny,
bought food though not many,
I fed my little daughter then took a sip of water,
my stomach grumbled but I didn't feel the hunger.
When she turned ten years old,
a wealthy bachelor was told,
to marry her and have boys,
but she should be playing with her toys.
So I told them "No,"
school is where she has to go.
Because we search for opportunities to sieze,
and not for people to please,
fight for our human rights,
not for temporary might,
We are not properties to own,
or things to loan,
we don't live to cook dinners,
we are all also winners.

Doga Oruc

Grade 12, Buchholz High School

Second Place, Grade 12

Not One More

They hate when we break the silence
with our demands spouted between tears.
Our simple request is to lessen gun violence
and not witness bullets pierce our peers.

They say we're reacting off of feeling,
thinking with the heart, not head.
But just because it's not *their* lives guns are stealing,
doesn't mean the kids aren't dead.

It shouldn't be hard to connect the dots.
Assault Rifles can be purchased just by a stroll to the store.
This can't be fixed with prayers and thoughts.
We need to ban these weapons of war.

They only see the number, not each life.
Each scholar, athlete, daughter, and son...
it would've been harder with a knife.
And yet we're told to *respect* the laws of a gun.

I have family over in Norway.
They asked if I was scared to get shot.
It was 3 years ago and I said "No way..."
"...I'm safe in my country!" So I thought.

Have you heard about Lori, whose daughter is dead?
She coats herself in Alyssa's body spray
and lies covered in blankets in Alyssa's bed
and so far has cried ten pounds away.

I'll show you logic and I'll put down my tissue.
They think mental illness should be our biggest fear?
Well, mental illness is a global issue.
These mass shootings happen uniquely here.

In the middle of class, an alarm sounding
or the jiggling of the knob to the door
leaves everyone's heart pounding.
Wanting change isn't something we'll apologize for.

To speak or to remain silent, that's your choice.
But it's not the time for self-doubt
Your opinions are valid so use your voice
And soon we'll all vote them out.

Kate Kverneland
Grade 12, Buchholz High School
First Place, Grade 12

Thank You, Teachers!

Without the teachers of Alachua County who encourage their students to participate in the contest each year, there would be no Peace Poetry Contest. Veterans for Peace would like to publicly recognize just a few of these teachers who submit hundreds of their students' poems year after year.

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Kathleen Cook, Fort Clarke Middle School

Matthew C. Kron, Fort Clarke Middle School

Annette Roberts, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

Juliet Tinckham, Micanopy Academy

Kristina E. Tomlinson, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

Maria Tzounakas, Alachua Elementary School

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