

# *2014 Peace Poetry Contest*

*Alachua County Schools  
Grades K-12*

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



The text of all the poems contained in this book are printed exactly as submitted. Do to space and color restraints, we were unable to include special illustrations and designs that accompanied poems. But you can view the originals on our website at [www.vfpgainesville.org](http://www.vfpgainesville.org).

# Acknowledgments

Veterans for Peace would first and foremost like to thank all of the participants in the 2014 Peace Poetry Contest. This year we received approximately 370 poems from students of all ages in Alachua County with diverse interpretations of peace. Without the poetry submissions, there would be no Peace Poetry Contest and none of the dialogue that comes with it.

The purpose of the Peace Poetry Contest is to encourage young people to think about peace and describe their ideas in a creative way with no rules and no direction. The result of this process is a dialogue about peace and nonviolence that will hopefully develop into peaceful worldviews applied to real world situations when the now-young poets grow up to be the future leaders of the world.

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 2014 Peace Poetry Contest a success.

UF English professor, Dr. Sidney Wade, was integral to this year's contest as head judge of the poems. Dr. Wade also enlisted her team of graduate students to help judge the large number of submissions. Thank you to Elaina Mercatoris, Erin Jones, Tara Tatum, Sam Grenrock and Paulette Bane for your time and effort.

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville has hosted the Peace Poetry Contest five years in a row now, and Veterans for Peace is grateful for their support and continued cooperation.

With the sustained support and work of everyone involved, Veterans for Peace believes the Peace Poetry Contest will continue to grow and prosper, spreading the ideal of peace to more and more people each year.

Thank you for making this year's program a success.

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The birds is  
singing in the  
trees  
the wind is  
blowing the flowers  
are blooming and it  
is not snowing  
and when I look  
in your eyes you  
make me fill like  
love.

*Morinae Morrow*

*1st Place, Grades 1-3  
Idylwild Elementary School*

Peace is nice and you are too.  
Pie is a pie sliced for two.

*Nazari Wheeler*

*2nd Place, Grades 1-3  
Wiles Elementary School*

In a world with peace you will see kindness and love  
Everybody will be lovely  
Everybody will be friendly  
There will be no unfriendly people  
No unfriendly war  
In a world with peace nobody is mad  
At least we think

*Kira Caza*

*3rd Place, Grades 1-3  
Oak Hall School*

Peace smells like wet grass in the morning sun.  
Peace feels like a new born baby in a warm blanket.  
Peace sounds like chimes in the wind at night.  
Peace tastes like cold milk and warm cookies.  
Peace looks like a garden after a long rain fall.  
Peace is the stars; warm, bright, indicating my way.

*Trinity Grafft*

*1st Place, Grades 4–6*

*Queen of Peace Catholic Academy*



A man in a suit and tie with badges showing he's a veteran knocks on the door. With a slip in his hand he tells my mother something. Sadness fills me suddenly. I know something, that I don't. I see a tear drip down my mother's face, and the man leaves. She turns around and mumbles. She looks at me, sadness in her eyes. She tells me my dad, the dad I played ring-around the rosy with, was shot and in the hospital. I immediately ask when I can see him. She answers, "Now, we'll see him now." As we drive, I sob a bit, but I keep quiet. I don't want to upset my mother more and make her cry, I hate seeing her cry. When we reach the hospital, we go in. My mother asks the nurse in the red and white cap where my dad is. When I see him, he's hooked up to wires and monitors, but he is alive and the war is over, so I have peace.

*Mya McAfee*

*2nd Place, Grades 4–6*

*Jordan Glen School*



When I think of peace, I think of God,  
Golden streets, and angels.  
I also think of when a baby's born.

Peace is like being free, free like a bird.  
A calm river enchanted with lily pads.  
Wind on a calm river.

Peace is when you let go of all your mad thoughts.

*Joshua Bennett*

*3rd Place, Grades 4-6  
Alachua Elementary School*



## PEACE

I wish there could always be peace,  
If there was, our happiness would increase.  
People would not live in fear,  
If we had peace throughout the year.  
Our lives would be greater,  
If we knew there were no haters.  
People would live longer,  
Our love for each other would grow stronger.  
Close our people would be,  
Our lives would be free.  
Kids would play more in the streets,  
and everybody would be upbeat.  
Kool- Aid would be toasted with cheer,  
And everyone we love would be near.  
The world would be grand,  
And everyone would lend a helping hand.  
This is how I want my dream world to be,  
It is in the best interest of you and me.  
We should all stop and consider,  
It is better to love than to be bitter.  
Be kind always to one another,  
If not, expect punishment from your mother.

*Ty Nelson*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 4–6  
Newberry Elementary School*



## Peace

What I think of when I think of peace  
Is war turned to flowers.  
It's military men in uniform finally returning home  
From their treacherous destinations.  
It's seeing them excitedly delivering flowers  
To their family and friends  
Who have missed them for so long.  
Peace is the celebration of when military men and woman  
Return home safely to the life  
The left behind to defend our country.

*Jaecob Weber*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 4-6  
Alachua Elementary School*



## A Change

Fathers and brothers  
Sisters and mothers,  
Husband and wife,  
All of these people living a normal life.  
They laugh and smile like everyone else,  
But what they buy our country, no store sells.  
One day war has been declared,  
The faces of these people are definitely not scared.  
The camouflage uniform is worn with pride,  
Soldiers put their own life on the line.  
The call for war has begun,  
Songs of victory have been sung.

Missiles and bullets find their mark,  
Dust and smoke color the field dark.  
Many have fallen, many suffer from wounds,  
Bloodied faces do not hide their gloom.  
War hangs in the air like an overcast sky,  
When war occurs, people ask why.  
Why wage war when you can befriend each other?  
The problem today is that we think we don't need one another.  
We all see the flaws that others possess,  
But we all don't notice we cause each other distress.

If we all could combine and unite,  
What would be the use to fight?  
Great people have been lost to war,  
So why do we have the hunger for more?  
Countless rulers and presidents have passed,  
Yet peace is not showing signs of coming fast.  
Nonviolence is just a theory today,  
But rather violence is the largest obstacle in our way.

We don't realize what war does to us,  
How it corrupts us,  
How it changes us,

How it makes us hate each other.  
We see innocent people killed because of beliefs,  
Everyone involved never receiving relief.  
Countless people have been symbols of peace,  
But when will these conflicts ever cease?  
The day we see the person next to us and see how beautiful humans  
are,  
The day we see how war gives scars,  
The day we see that peace isn't far,  
Is the day that defines who humans are.

*Abdulrahman Abdullah*

*1st Place, Grades 7–9*

*Howard Bishop Middle School*

## The Path to Peace

Discord and unrest  
Thunder is rumbling like guns  
Soon it will begin

Clouds blocking the sun  
Not even a speck of blue  
Grey skies cover all

Lightning is flashing  
Bright outbursts light up the sky  
Explosions above

Threatening dark clouds  
Concealing moisture within  
Filling to the brim

Holding back no more  
Rain pounding the waiting earth  
Like marching soldiers

*cont. on p. 14*

Thunder is ceasing  
Serenity returning  
Rain and clouds retreat

Disturbance has calmed  
Bright blue sky and shining sun  
Quiet and peaceful

*Joshua Smith*

*2nd Place, Grades 7-9  
Howard Bishop Middle School*

## Keep the Peace

This is for Mahatma Ghandi,  
Martin Luther King Junior,  
The amazing Nelson Mandela,  
Keep the peace.

For the helpful United Nations,  
For the leaders of countries around the world,  
For the hard working citizens of this earth,  
Keep the peace.

For the Red Cross organization,  
The Nobel Foundation,  
For the bold Malala Yousafzai,  
Keep the peace.

This is for the victims of 9/11,  
The people who have offered their lives for peace,  
For the deaths of innocent in every single war,  
Keep the peace.

This is for us human beings,  
Everything else living,  
For our planet,  
Keep the peace.

*Mac Laborde*

*3rd Place, Grades 7-9  
Oak Hall School*

## Paradise

Partially Pessimistic Paradise Poem

There is no such thing as paradise.  
There are no clear blue seas.  
There are no palm trees.  
There are no monkeys drinking sweet coconut juice.  
There are no butterflies flitting over head.  
There are no perfectly shaped bunny-rabbit clouds.  
There are no sandy snow-white beaches or  
lush seaside forests.  
There is no such thing as paradise,  
for if there were, it would be ruined.  
There are no clear blue seas,  
for if there were, there would be sharks.  
There are no palm trees,  
for if there were, there would be tree ants.  
There are no monkeys drinking sweet coconut juice,  
for if there were, there would be monkeys pelting empty coconut  
husks.  
There are no butterflies flitting over head,  
for if there were, there would be spiders.  
There are no perfectly shaped bunny-rabbit clouds,  
for if there were, there would be hawk-shaped clouds as well.  
There are no sandy snow-white beaches or  
lush seaside forests,

*cont. on p. 16*

for if there were, there would be evil crabs and  
tigers too.

There can't be such a thing as paradise.

There can't be world peace.

There can't be truce.

Or hope.

Or love.

There can't be such a thing as paradise.

There can't be world peace, or truce, or hope, or love,

for if there were, there would be no measure of evil.

And evil would surely rise up.

There must be no such thing as paradise.

There must be poor people.

There must be homeless people.

There must be death.

There must be no such thing as paradise.

There must be poor people,

for if there weren't, there would be no charity.

There must be homeless people,

for if there weren't, there would be no pity.

There must be death,

for if there weren't, there would be no sadness.

There is no such thing as paradise,

but, if you embrace all things about the world:

The sharks,

The tree ants,

The monkeys pelting empty coconut husks,

The spiders,

The hawk-shaped clouds as well,

The evil crabs and,

the tigers, too,

then you may see life as a whole.

If you spread ideas like:

world peace and truce,

and hope,

and love,

then maybe evil can be kept at a minimum.



If you try and help:  
poor people,  
homeless people,  
then death may be kept at a minimum.  
And maybe, if you do these things, then maybe, just maybe,  
There may be such thing as paradise.

*Cole Duncan*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9  
Buchholz High School*



## A POEM ABOUT PEACE

Peace is when I sleep at night  
When I hold my blanket really tight

Peace is when I read a book  
You read the words and take a closer look

Peace is when I go to the beach  
Over the horizon, out of eye's reach

Peace is when my music is playing  
The words speak as the melody is fading

Peace is when I cuddle my cat  
As she purrs, I rub her back.

*Victoria Hickerson*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9  
PACE Center for Girls*

Imagine peace as a young mom.  
She spends her Sunday morning drinking coffee and relaxing.

Imagine chaos as her small child.  
He whines and cries at her feet,  
hungry and wild.

Imagine war as her husband.  
Degrading her every chance he gets,  
abusing her in his spare time.

Peace frantically runs around the house,  
trying to keep things in order.  
Meanwhile, War is feeding Chaos,  
not making anything better.

Chaos goes off to school,  
inflicting everyone he passes.  
Peace tries to get him to behave,  
but fails after multiple attempts.

At home, War abuses Peace violently,  
and leaves her hurt.  
This causes Chaos to act out,  
and more than ever.

In a perfect world,  
Peace can stand up to her husband.  
War is arrested and has to go away for a long time.  
Chaos is behaved, contradicting his name.

*Hannah Banning*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9*  
*Howard Bishop Middle School*

How do you find peace  
When it has hidden so well  
Where can you find it?  
There is no way to tell.

Peace is hiding;  
it must be, right?  
No one would have thought  
That it was hidden in plain sight.

Yes, peace is an easy find  
If only you know where to start  
It is in a place you would never look  
Right there, within your heart.

*Kenna Decker*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9*  
*PACE Center for Girls*

## “Golden Branches”

I see golden branches, crisp and brown, and watch red leaves come fluttering down.  
I feel the grass, brown and dry, and sit back to see the evening sky, but the colors fade from red to white, and I drift into a snowy night.  
The wind whistles through pale, naked trees, and children skip in snow, up to their knees.  
The bright, warm, sun melts, the snow away, and leaves me with a cool, pleasant day.  
I sniff a flower, once and again, and feel a smooth breeze against my skin.  
The hot sun rises in the sky, a butterfly flutters by.  
It seeks the shade of a tree, and perches on a branch, next to me, but soon, the sun goes down, and I grin at the branches, crisp and brown.

*Emma Donnelly*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9*  
*Jordan Glen School*

## Meditation

My eyes close  
and breathing slows  
to soft  
shallow breaths

The “thump!” of  
my heart  
begins to steady  
into a slow “bump...”

Tense muscles  
begin to loosen  
and relax  
with me

I exhale deeply  
in a relaxed sigh  
for finally  
I feel at peace

Thoughts jumbled  
into a mess  
within my mind  
disappear quietly

As they tiptoe out  
my head becomes  
clean, clear,  
and calm

A blank state  
of mind  
helps me brush off  
the anxieties I carry

Now I don't have

to worry  
about the world around me.

As I begin to  
slip into a trance  
of calm meditation  
I finally feel peace

*Madison Gravitt*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9  
Kanapaha Middle School*



Ants on the hill, small and red like fire against this rocky terrain  
Anything kind, dark obsidian, but miniscule, the more peaceable  
type  
Always the two rival pillars of sand

Somehow, neither side was ever truly conquered  
But war breaks out once again, ants attack on command  
You can see, here, where man finds his light bulb

Ants with heads and jaws much too large for their bodies  
Are the war machines of these armies  
Ants that would normally be workers, now function as soldiers

Expendable? Well, you wouldn't say that.

How funny is it, that war has not changed all that much

Birds fly overhead like bomber-planes, adding drama to this scene  
of ants

*cont. on p. 22*

Aye! This is suicide, but ants LIVE to serve their Queen  
The power of a super-organism, it is cooperation at its finest and  
most graceful  
No clear winner here, but, prisoners are taken

Some find they are now slaves, others, killed and turned to mush  
But it really isn't so bad!  
Mother Queens are not able to mourn

The battle has ended  
Mother's offspring must be fed and tended to  
Repairs must be made

The same fight, every day...  
Only aggravated by each other's presence, it would seem  
What is the purpose? What is the point?

Violence begets violence, they say  
Those moments of peace are precious

But humans... Are not ants

*Madison Simon-Collins*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9*  
*Howard Bishop Middle School*



Peace,  
like a grain of sand,  
it stays a bit,  
then gets taken away,  
by raging waves of war,  
or wiped away by cold violent winds.

Like a tree planted in the ground,  
it grows up strong and tall,  
until struck down by lightning,  
the fiery wars burn away the tree,  
still peace lives on,  
seeds plant themselves into the ground,  
and a forest flourishes.

Like sun rays,  
breaking through dark,  
gray storm clouds,  
ending the gloom and despair,  
lighting up the world below.

*Trustin White*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9*  
*Kanapaha Middle School*



## Peace

Man overseas in a deadly storm,  
has looked for peace.

A young women with five kids has looked for a place,  
where she can run away someday.

Children look out a window at the rain,  
and only hope for the sun to come so they can go out and play.

Outside the birds sing,  
and the old lady says, 'Oh be quiet, oh move away' for she craves  
peace.

A teenage girl who is stressed,  
In a broken family and in a way is blessed.

But she doesn't see that,  
She sees the beginning of a storm.

That will wash her away from her home.  
But thanks to her Godly father she has found that inner place,  
Where she can find peace.

The war that has broken out,  
Got the man running inside.

But as strong as they are, they stand up to the mountain that stands  
higher.

They win with hardly a finger—

What they now have is something that can't feel any better.

Peace.

### *Chacity Battles*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 7-9*

*Eastside High School*





## AND THEN...

Our earth is cracked and bruised,  
Scorched by a history of rivalry,  
Beaten beneath millions of failed journeys,  
Crumbling under a present that lives only for itself.

Our world is exhausted and grieving,  
Weary under the weight of so many burdens,  
Struggling to hold on to the last gasps of fresh air,  
Mourning the death of so many - loved but lost, living but not  
alive.

Our home is home  
To the heartbroken and the weary,  
To the fallen and the furious,  
Screaming out for change through every whisper, tear, and  
song.

Outcries trickle through the parched earth and dampen hardened  
souls,

Yet a world humming with outcries  
Is still not enough to awaken -to revive!-  
Our bruised and bloodied earth,  
This cracked and broken ground,  
This lost and mourning world.

When will we reach a time when those outcries  
Will carve canyons through every layer of scorched earth  
And overcome and overwhelm every hardened heart of rock?  
When will we reach a time of change?

When we learn that the ends of all oceans can be reached  
Through the movement of one ripple,  
When we learn that one mountain must be built up  
By a million irreplaceable pebbles,  
When we learn that all trees must put down roots  
To sway with the wind, yet always stand steadfast.  
When the value of art is determined

By how many colors dance through the mind of a viewer,  
When the quality of music is measured  
By how deeply it resonates within the heart of a listener,  
When the worth of a child can be found  
In each smile, each habit, each mistake.  
When we, as a people, become  
Ripples, pebbles, and trees,  
When we, each of us, become  
An art, a song, and a child,  
When we are moved  
To not move at all,  
When we are silenced  
In awe of our ability to listen,  
  
Then, at last, we will see change.  
Then, at last, we shall know Peace.

*Selena Cho*

*1st Place, Grades 10–12  
Eastside High School*

## The Colors of Peace

There are one-hundred ninety-six countries,  
Sixty-five hundred languages,  
Seven billion people,  
But only one planet to call earth,  
One earth to call home.

And I like to think  
That we all stand on a little patch of green,  
Under the brazen yellow Sun,  
And striped blue skies.

But last week I stared up at the atlas on my wall  
And ran my fingers along

The colors of the countries.  
As sweet as some were,  
I couldn't help but see that  
There was much sorrow as well.

And although we live among blue skies, green grass, the yellow Sun,  
I can't help but wonder about those places that  
Are being painted with crimson red blood  
And haunting black shadows.

As the fighting goes on these colors shall  
Drain down the tributaries;  
Across the rivers that lead to the oceans.  
And we may not be able to dissolve them now  
But I know  
We shall do so in the future.

Because the picture we paint  
Shall be the canvas for our children,  
And for our children's children.  
So when we have returned to the earth as dust,  
I hope that you will join me in the newborn soil,  
So that we may paint over  
The spots of red and black  
That we never could when we were alive.

There are one-hundred ninety-six countries,  
sixty-five hundred languages,  
seven billion people,  
But only one star to call the Sun, one body to call the Moon,  
One earth to call home.

And I like to think,  
Maybe one day  
A girl just like me  
Will be standing over

A small patch of green,  
With the underlying crimson and darkness long covered up,  
Under brazen yellow and striped blue in the sky.

*Jessica Lee*

*2nd Place, Grades 10–12  
Eastside High School*

### A peace loving girl

She was beautiful

A plain white dress,  
A broche on her chest,  
Her glossy hair cascading past her shoulder,  
Her smile was heaven  
Her laughter a child  
She gazed with love filled eyes...

Whether it be young or old,  
Rich or poor,  
Everybody adored her,  
Wanted, and desired her

But the men frowned,  
And her smile disappeared,  
Then the men fought,  
Her hair dulled,  
And when the men killed,  
Her dress burned black

She stood to the side  
Her face covered in shadows,  
Darker than the world,  
Her shoulders dragging,

No longer watching...

But whether it be young or old,  
Alive or dead,  
Everybody loved her  
Wanted, and desired her

A peek from her shadows,  
And a little smile...

She was still loved

*Sangeun Lee*

*3rd Place, Grades 10–12  
Eastside High School*



*Veterans for Peace would  
like to specially thank  
Gainesville's own*

# **Bowfish**

*for performing at the  
2014 Peace Poetry  
Reading!*

**THINKING ABOUT THE MILITARY?  
MAKE AN  
INFORMED CHOICE.  
ADVICE FROM VETERANS  
ON MILITARY SERVICE  
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A Resource Guide For Young People  
Considering Enlistment

**<http://www.afn.org/~vetpeace/>**

**Gainesville**



**Chapter 14**

If you'd like to support the Peace Poetry Contest or the Gainesville chapter of Veterans for Peace, you can donate or send suggestions to:

Gainesville Veterans for Peace  
P.O. Box 142562, Gainesville, FL 32614

All checks should be made payable to Veterans for Peace, Gainesville. Thank you for your support this year!

