

2001 International Essay Contest for Young People

List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 63

No. of entries: 981 (Children's category: 475 / Youth category: 506)

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *The Earth Calls out, "Treat Life with Care"*
Jiang Weiqiong (Age 14, China)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *My Dream Will Come True*
Kandelaki Kathevan (Age 19, Georgia)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Self Lives by Getting and Forgetting Life Lives
by Giving and Forgiving*
Kejal D/O Hasmuk (Age 14, Malaysia)
- *with Respect to Life*
Nia Valentinova Neykova (Age 12, Bulgaria)

Youth category (2 entrants)

- *To Complete the Jigsaw Puzzle of Life*
Tomoka Mizuguchi (Age 17, Japan)
- *Beyond Respect to Love, Beyond Knowledge
to Experience*
Hofan Chau (Age 21, China <Living in
U.S.A.>)

2001 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Children's Category – 1st Prize]

The Earth Calls out, "Treat Life with Care" (Original in Japanese)

Jiang Weiqiong
(Age 14, China)

Dear humans, I am the planet Earth.

Today I want to appeal to you as your mother.

Ages and ages ago in space I had many children. And after millions of years your ancestors were born. I have loved all living things very dearly. Under my loving care they developed and grew up as good friends. Human beings, animals and plants all lived freely with the blessings of nature. It would have been better if this situation could have lasted forever, but when the humans began to prosper everything gradually changed.



You have fought many wars and my lovely body is scarred all over, but you don't stop your foolish behavior. Didn't I always teach you "not to be cruel to other life"?

You have been too greedy and you cut down so many trees that many natural forests have become deserts. My body is covered with freckles. Don't you want to live?

You have killed many animals that were once your friends and you have enjoyed your life at the expense of others. Animals come daily to tell me about their suffering. I am now full of wrinkles and my nature has become rough. I have sent lots of warnings through earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions, but you do not change at all. Where are the good children I once knew? I never thought you could behave so badly.

On top of this, you have poured dirty water into the ocean which is my blood, so it is now polluted. And you have infected the air with unhealthy gases so my body temperature has gone up, my skin has been peeling and there is a big hole over the South Pole.

Of course, I cannot allow you to disrespect your parent. You have not only killed many living things but you are in danger of destroying all life in the world. Where are the intelligence and reason you are so proud of?

You are my children after all, so I do not want to see you suffer. I want all the countries, who are members of my family, to stop wars and help other members who are in difficulty.

These days, there are some wise people who are trying to cure nature of her illness. Please make me healthy again. You cannot separate human life and your survival from what happens to the rest of nature. In order to live you must look after the natural environment. Humans must think carefully about what to do. If you go against nature you will not only get no profit from it but you will not be able to survive.

As a mother nothing can make me happier than to see my children growing up safely. You are the cleverest of all of them and I am proud of you, but you are not my only children and I love you all equally. So I want you to respect the other living things. I do hope you will listen to me and have long and happy lives and be good friends of nature.

From your mother, Earth

2001 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Youth Category – 1st Prize]

My Dream Will Come True (Original)

Kandelaki Kathevan
(Age 19, Georgia)

Imagine a large field of flowers... Every second a unique plant emerges from the ground. If we care for it, give to it some sun, water and love, green leaves and marvelous blossoms will grow up. But if we step on the plant, tear it selfishly from the ground or leave it for the winds, the field will die away. Life is just like this meadow of flowers. Our every move, breathe and thought leaves its deep mark on this field, and no rain can wash it away.



We know how precious is the rainbow in the sky, the first cry of the newborn child, the eyes full of tears of joy, the funny puppy playing with the bee. And what do we do afterwards? We throw bombs all around, then proudly do not buy ozone-deadly hair sprays. We murder mothers and then congratulate each other for building new orphanages, we slaughter animals and then create laboratories and watch the only one left from the breed. We courageously roar when running in the field of war, with the weapons in our hands. Then we sit and retell in the TV shows what new phobias the war had created. We do not know how to respect the life, how to care for it correctly. Meanwhile the field of life is trying to stop us with hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, because the planet is so close to devastation...

But what is the correct way to treat life? Take the flower and give it to the kid. Then watch his thankful eyes, his sincere laugh and joy, how he answers a smile with a smile. The children are the ones who can teach us the respect for the beauty around us. Their eyes tell us that, to honor all life, is to be thankful for every kind of existence, the unique differences between people, among plants and animals. Their smiles show that the African in Zimbabwe is the

partner of the Eskimos, that we are all equal and similar, sharing mutual responsibility for the planet earth.

Yes, even if we do not feel it right now, we all truly need each other, and with every new war, we kill the unique part of us, murder it forever. We need the earth, and with the new toxic fume we burn our air, the to breathe.

People have wasted so many centuries on greedy wars, selfish tree-cutting and mindless animal slaughtering. 21 century has come and we still live wrongly, never managing to establish harmony on earth. Now it is the last chance for us to survive, to make peace with nature and with people around us. We have to look deep inside ourselves, find the little kid with the flower, who is still living deep inside our hearts, listen to the song of our soul and throw the flags in the air, white and pure as snow, the flags of peace...

I grew up when the civil war was ravaging in Georgia, when everything was black, and tears were pouring out in the streets of Tbilisi, and mourning for the dead ones frightened the birds in the skies. But as I walked past the whistling bullets, I never gave up the hope that as a grown up person I would manage to change the world for good. I have seen Tbilisi as a swamp. But I believe in brighter future...

And soon a clear spring will burst from the mountain, not resembling any other flow. And no one will manage to stop it, a new page in the history... This new generation will bring peace to the hearts and harmony to the world. It will stick posters of peace on the evil faces and establish pacification-study schools in the storage rooms of weapons.

Right now, all I can do is to write essays like this one, hoping that it will change someone's manner of thought. In autumn I will establish a peace club in my University. It will unite people of Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Macedonia... We will create the little world to show the grown ups how to cooperate. We will come together and show all the Balkans that we can be partners, friends and couples...

In future, I will do all it takes to educate everyone around me about the importance of peace. I would establish schools where children, along with grown-ups would learn to love the earth, the nature and each other...

I see it now. Big blue sky and green trees, happy children and peaceful parents, friendship and endless handshakings, food for everyone and harmony for each and every person. Somebody will think, "she is dreaming", but I am not alone. The future generation is all dreaming like me, and we will make the world one big land of peace.

Self Lives by Getting and Forgetting Life Lives by Giving and Forgiving

(Original)

Kejal D/O Hasmuk

(Age 14, Malaysia)

After twelve years or more of schooling, we know how to figure the square root of an isosceles triangle (invaluable in daily life) but we do not know how to forgive ourselves and others (and the value of that). We know what direction migrating birds fly in autumn, but we are not sure which way we want to go. We have dissected frogs, but have never explored the dynamics of human relationships. We know who wrote "To be or not to be, that is the question," but we do not know the answer. We know what pi is, but we are not sure who we are. We may know how to diagram a sentence, but we may not know how to love ourselves. That our educational system is not designed to teach us the "secrets of life" is no secret. In school we learn to do everything – except how to live. Maybe that is the way it should be. Unraveling life's "mysteries" and discovering life's "secrets" may take the courage and determination found only in a self-motivated pursuit. The question that precedes "What is the meaning of life?" is of course "Is there meaning to life?" Well for me, life is for doing, learning and enjoying. It is not that there is nothing more left to learn after we declare ourselves 'graduates' in the 'School of Hard Knocks'. Far from it, "Commencement" does not just mean graduation, it actually means a new beginning. The more we learn, the more we can do, the more we can do, the more we can learn. So it is with life. When life seems truly excremental, we can moan and groan over our fate. Alternatively, we can, even in the midst of anger, terror, confusion and pain, tell ourselves, "There must be a lesson in here some place". So let us enjoy the learning process in our life. Well, the real teacher in our life is not just the experiences. It is not overheard conversations or lines from songs or what we read in books. The real teacher is YOU. You are the one who should and must decide all that comes in your way. If we listen carefully, you will hear or sense a voice inside our individual selves. It is the voice of one's inner teacher. It may not be the loudest voice "in there" but it is often the most consistent, patient and persistent one.

And now that we are all God's children, we must respect all life, even the animals and the plants. Even from a small insect to a big elephant and from just a small blade of grass to a big red wood tree, they too should be respected, for they are all His creation. The true way to respect all life is definitely not by being a hypocrite and having a bad motive behind every action, is also not just by uttering good words but is merely, in my personal opinion, by following the basic life principles, which are "Help Ever, Hurt Never", "Love All, Serve All" and "Simple Living And High Thinking".

Now, the question that arises is how to live in harmony. This is a question which neither I, you nor the books can answer. The answer comes only from the bottom of our hearts and our inner Self, where He resides. However, it is inevitable that to prevail peace on Earth, we must always be very considerate, co-operative, caring to all, always thinking of "You first" instead of "Me first". We are to give unconditional love to receive unconditional love, and feel that all livings are our 'assets' and 'possessions' to share and care. If you want peace with others, don't fight with them. Go on your own way. Live your own life but with civic-mindedness. If some walk with you, that is fine. If you walk alone for periods of time, that is fine, too. If you do not like what is going on somewhere, leave. Maintain a portable paradise within yourself. Move to that peaceful place where the first glimmer of a temptation to fight with others will not appear. When you are not against yourself and others, you will be at peace and so will the world.

Well, if each and every one of us could play our own role in prevailing peace on this Earth, words such as 'war', 'fights' and 'protests' do not exist. Nevertheless, some individuals might say, "What is the point if only I realize about world peace?" "I am not even 1% of the total Earth population". Well, my dear friends, remember that if each and every one of us, who makes up the 6 billion population starts heading toward world peace, this Earth is certainly going to be the best place to live, existing as the "Early-Heave".

My fellow earthlings, this essay of mine cannot be wrapped up in a string and handed to you as a tidy package because, frankly, neither can life, knowledge, love nor peace. These are all long-term processes and ongoing processes do not have tidy endings but merely transitions. But, it has been worthwhile taking this 'journey' to share my noble thoughts with you. Well, thank you for joining me – or should I say, letting me join you all to prevail peace on our one and only wonderful earth!

With Respect to Life (Original)

Nia Valentinova Neykova
(Age 12, Bulgaria)

The life is the most valuable gift for the man and we have to love and respect it. There are people who do not learn how to live completely all their life. They simply do not love the life or maybe they think that the man has some lives and they could live the present one like this and the others - otherwise. The man creates his complete life by himself in his own environment. The life is like a fairy tale in which the main character is the man himself. The people fortune could not be changed but people could adapt to it and so to create their life for future. The fortune is a strange thing, it offers to us a lot of ups and downs of life, it puts under test our feelings - one of these feelings is the love to the life.

Now I will tell you about two real cases with friends of mine. In these cases the different man's attitude to the life appears very clearly. The first case is with my cousin Christo. When he was doing his military service, he was cleaning his gun. He made an incorrect movement and he shot through his stomach. The doctors fought day by day for his life. The chance for being alive was very little but they did the impossible and saved his life. The joy of my aunt and uncle was huge all the more that their other son was blind and this is a big sorrow for every parent.

After that heavy accident, even my cousin's life was saved, as a consequence of the heavy wounds a lot of his internal organs were injured or removed. Because of this he could work anything. Maybe this was the reason that pushed him to drugs. We know that after the first attempt there is a second one and he became addicted to them. He did not help at home and every day he caused a new trouble for his family.

Instead of having joy that he had the chance to live, he could not appreciate this chance and he continued playing with his life. It is true he had the chance for surviving but will he have it for second time again?

His will for stopping is very weak, his body also and no one knows how long it will endure this poison.

The other case is with a friend of mine. His name is Svetlan. As a teenager he was a climber. There was a competition and an accident happened - he fell down badly and his legs were paralyzed. Since then he used a wheelchair. He succeeded in overcoming this big trouble and to say to himself that the life went on. He finished school and he worked all the time. He played again different sports - table tennis, wheelchair basketball. He simply liked the life. He is a radiant person, very intelligent and with a great sense of humor.

I told you about these two cases for making the difference between the people who love and who do not love the life, who respect and who do not respect it. When the man does not respect the life, he does not respect himself and the people around him.

The harmony between the people could exist only the life is respected. Not only the own one but of all human beings. It is a pity but this does not exist everywhere. There are people who are in harmony with no one and nothing.

Sometimes the animals are capable to make bigger harmony. The people have to be in harmony with all - people, plants and animals, so their life will be easier and more pleasant.

I think we have to live complete life. We live once and this life has to be in harmony with all. We have to be happy now and we have to live, as we want to live in future. The life is wanted and we have to respect it.

2001 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Youth Category – 2nd Prize]

To Complete the Jigsaw Puzzle of Life (Original)

Tomoka Mizuguchi
(Age 17, Japan)

I think it's strange how I came to be here, and for what purpose I exist. That's why I think every creature's existence is a miracle. It is unbelievable that so many miracles exist in this world. It makes me think it's a dream or a mistake.

I don't know the answers to these questions and maybe I never will. Perhaps the answer will remain a mystery, or maybe these isn't an answer... I don't know. But as long as I wonder about life, I would always be searching for an answer.

Life is the start of everything. Life is a chance given to us to experience this world. Just to possess this chance of existing is happiness itself. So I believe life is the most valuable thing we possess.

But nowadays, people find it hard to realize this most basic aspect, the value of live. We have become shortsighted and blinded with the riches that lie before us. Life comes first and richness after. War happens when this order reverses. Pollution, animal killing, cutting forests, happen when people step over the line where richness becomes life's purpose.

We thought all this sacrifice of other lives would contribute to our life, but how much have we really earned? Pollution has destroyed the ozone layer, killed wild animals and has caused illness. Cutting trees has helped global warming and caused abnormal weather. Killing animals has unbalanced nature. Everything is poucing back on us, endangering our lives. It is sad and ironic. What we meant for our good has brought us serious problems concerning our survival and disturbed the lives of other creatures too.

Earth is like an enormous jigsaw puzzle. Each piece is the lives of each creature. Earth becomes a whole beautiful picture when each piece is joined together.

But people have made a mistake in thinking that they are the only parts making this picture of Earth. How can Earth be made with just people when they themselves cannot join together? And how can people stick together when many haven't realized the value of life?

People have kicked other pieces aside to make themselves shine brighter. But just like a jigsaw puzzle, this picture of Earth will never be finished as long as the pieces stay apart.

We have kicked other pieces aside to make ourselves shine brighter. But just like a jigsaw puzzle, this picture of Earth will never be finished as long as the pieces stay apart.

We have to join hands with other creatures. We must recognize that there is no difference in the weight of each life. Each piece in the picture weighs the same. Whatever part it is, each piece has a meaning in its existence. If a piece is lost, no other can replace it and a hole will remain in the picture. No creature is more important than another and no race will survive alone. We must share the Earth.

To balance all lives together, we need to complete this complicated jigsaw puzzle of life. When this puzzle is finished, we will have succeeded in creating a beautiful harmony of life.

One important thing is to recognize the weight of life. But I think we will only know the weight of life when we face death. I often hear that people, who've faced death, suddenly see beauty and strength in a weed struggling between the concrete, and feel inexpressible joy in all living things. These people actually feel no difference in the weight of each life. They are happy just to be alive.

But this is something that cannot be fully realized by everybody. The first easiest step we can take is sharing. I think "sharing" will be the keyword for the Earth's future. The first sharing we can do is between ourselves, human beings.

My dream is to be a member of "Doctors Without Border". "Doctors Without Border" is a group of professional volunteers who give medical assistance in developing countries. These people are sharing their ability and life with other people. They are joining the human part of the jigsaw puzzle. I always thought that we needed to share the amount of medical assistances between other countries and this group is doing exactly that. By being a member, I will

understand the weight of life and contribute in joining human beings together by sharing my ability and life.

I don't know why I was born and what the purpose of life is, but I want to dedicate my life to saving other lives because I love living and feel grateful for being born into this world and I wish others to feel the same joy in living. I feel that by supporting to protect Earth's treasure, life, I will be able to show my gratitude towards the life I receive, and make full use of the chance I was given. Then, I will be proud of the part my piece has played in the Earth's jigsaw puzzle.

Beyond Respect to Love, Beyond Knowledge to Experience

(Original)

Hofan Chau

(Age 21, China <Living in U.S.A.>)

We have a saying in Chinese: "When living in good fortune, you often don't know it." Every so often, when someone visits our house I get to see it in new eyes again. Even though we live in the metropolis of Hong Kong, my parents have chosen to live in the countryside - in front of the sea and behind a forest. I am grateful that my parents chose to bring us up around dogs and papaya trees. The experience of living in relationship with nature has moved me to want to share this blessing. This summer I am working to help build a sustainable development village, so that my grandchildren can live in a world where such places still exist.

I think that while respecting life is a good first step, we need to move beyond it. Although respect has tones of reverence, it still implies distance. When we are asked to respect our friend's decision, or respect our neighbour's property, in effect we are asked to refrain from becoming involved. This restraint may be coupled with feelings of high regard, but nevertheless suggests an act of non-involvement. As plants, animals and people are being hurt and dying around us, we need to be involved.

It is not good enough to read about ecological cycles and food chains in textbooks. Children (and adults too) need to go out into nature and feel one's interconnectedness with life. I remember once going to an extremely beautiful part of China, and I was taken aback by its beauty - young pine trees growing in a valley out of ochre-red soil, and ink black rocks under the towering blue sky ... at that moment I was filled with so much love. I realised that the world is a vast place, and that humans are but a thread in a huge web. The world felt so perfect I knew it had to have meaning, and I felt such joy as to be part of that meaning! Perhaps you too, have been to a place that moved you with its beauty and know what I mean.

I fell in love with that place and I took a year out before going to university to be taught in the rural village around there. The children there, with their curiosity and openness, taught me

many things. In the city things can become so complicated, but there I learnt to be grateful for simple things - to have enough food to eat, to have a chance to go to school. I felt more alive there than I had ever been.

The kids and I ran around the hills spotting birds and drawing trees. We would talk about how people are poisoning the streams in order to fish, and I tried to start them thinking. I was both teacher and friend. I think educators need to be excited, model what they teach, and listen to their students needs and ideas. Educational psychologists now recognize that learning has to be authentic, and teaching needs to be a two way street. My students taught me so much, and continue to do so! Just the other day and one of the kids has written to discuss the meaning of life with me!

I think that is where we begin. We need to create environments for people so that they can experience love and curiosity for life around them. Because of this, I am now the first person in my university to major in 'Peace and Conflict Education'. I created this major myself, because the existing programs did not encompass what I wanted to study.

For me, peace is the state where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Education is the means to cultivating it. You know the saying, 'You can lead a horse to the water and but you can't make it drink.' Education is about offering that option. I believe that once children and adults experience love and their relationship to nature, they will want to drink from this wonderful stream.

We need to create experiences for people to see how incredible life is so they won't want to kill. We need to look into the mirror and recognize how each of us have the capacity to be beautiful and intelligent and good. Where should I begin? I need to be peaceful myself - I need to understand myself and how I relate to life around me. I need to learn to love the people around me better. I need to appreciate how blessed I am, from the food I have to eat, to the fact I exist. When I am peaceful, people will see what a wonderful thing it is to be peace and join me... but I am still working on it.

Want to walk with me?