

Conflict

Peace



**An Anthology of Poetry & Artwork
by Weald of Kent students
Summer 2024**



Artwork

The original illustrations featured in this anthology are winning entries from a whole school competition that invited creative responses to the theme of “Peace : Conflict”.

Competition Winner (front cover): ***Sophia S***, Year 10

Runner Up (back cover): ***June C***, Year 9

Commended Entries (included within this anthology):

Lottie A, Year 10 (page 3)

Evie M, Year 10 (page 7)

Katie A-S, Year 8 (page 13)

Nancy B, Year 7 (page 17)

Jess B, Year 7 (page 23)

Lola S, Year 7 (page 33)

Freyja S, Year 7 (page 47)

Conflict : Peace

An Anthology of Poetry & Artwork

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Foreword

An anthology of poetry written by young poets is a special thing. With so much else competing for their attention, it's brilliant to see young people turning to poetry, with its special weight of words, to express what's on their minds.

The 2024 poetry competition run by Weald of Kent Grammar School certainly sparked students' imaginations. What do "conflict" and "peace" mean to a young person who's trying to make sense of their own life, and is at the same time being bombarded with news about the sorry state of the world? These poems look at peace and conflict on a global level, absolutely, but they also look at them in a personal light. War 'with venom dripping from [its] teeth' (*If I Was War*) may be lurking, but falling out with your best friend is important too.

These poets slide themselves into other lives in different places, and ask difficult questions. How would I behave – how would I really behave – if I found myself in that situation? And when the answers come, they are always honest: 'If dragons plagued the sky, I'd hide' (*Where I Should Be*). However, the flip-side to our heightened awareness of war and conflict in today's world is an appreciation of just how important peace is. It's a fragile, oh-so-precious 'state of mind' (*Peace and Conflict*) that both 'celebrates and sustains lives' (*A Poem for Peace*), and mustn't ever be taken for granted.

The winning poems demonstrate a broad interpretation of the competition's theme. I was bowled over by the anger and nightmare imagery of *Wasteland Generation* with its 'dystopian dancefloors' and 'blinding hysteria', while *Watered Grave* shows a quiet, watery sinking away that's echoed in its interesting layout. The playful tone of *My Loverboy* instantly caught my attention, and I love the way it blends fairytale and reality. *Walking Out The Door* scratches away at a single moment, using repetition and rhythm to find its way forward. The neat rhyme scheme and lyrical language of *Peace and Conflict* are extremely effective, and contrast with the beautiful simplicity of *A New World's* homage to nature. I take my hat off to anyone who chooses to tackle a specular poem – that is, one that can be read both forwards and backwards – and several poets in the collection do exactly that. The message of *Conflict* reverses itself seamlessly, turning despair to hope, and highlights the slippery divide between peace and conflict. And finally, the song-like quality of *Hope* leads us here: 'even after bitter strife/ the seeds of peace can bloom to life.'

The themes in this anthology are big and difficult. 'When did it get so ugly?' one poet asks (*Children of Chaos*). Yet underlying everything is hope, and the open space of each day. For these young poets, the world is waiting, but the most immediate challenge is to be themselves, comfortable in their own skin and story. Because 'when I'm me, I'm flying' (*I Do Not Know Who I Am*).

Nathalie Abi-Ezzi

Senior Competition Winners



Wasteland Generation

A generation gazes up to an apocalyptic sky
Red light forming ribcages across the horizon.
Clouds hum with engines replacing where
Birds once dropped in and out of song.

In the brittle air lingers unrest
Blood trickles on the trail of breeze
Complimented by diesel's bitter scent
The perfume of our parent's sins.

On dirty streets littered with newspaper
And carcasses of the future fairytales once forged,
We run from classrooms into blinding hysteria
Leaving sacred insanity of teenage riot in our wake.

Pouring out onto dystopian dancefloors
Flitting bat-like through the shells and debris.
Creating our own wasteland cabaret,
An anarchy of sequined mania.

While revolution scratches at our necks
Leaders pull the noose tighter on our TVs.
They choose to be deaf to the children's screams,
Their silence creates a cacophony of their demise.

So, while the world crescendos into collapse,
Our hungry hearts become laced with rage.
The ribbons holding our flesh together begin to thread
As reality of a burning world chases childhood away.

Sylvie H, Year 11

Winner Senior Competition

Watered Grave

A body – motionless

Senseless

Weightless

Floats. Hair spooling around her like a web of dawn.

In the sun, a galaxy of freckles and scars peppered her skin. Her eyes worn deep, and resolve stretched thin.

Cracked lips slightly parted, eyes weary and closed, this blue abyss that kissed wasn't too bad she supposed.

Her heart that had beaten violently now gentled with the tide, its pounding and thumping stilled with waterlogged lullabies.

Any sense of overcoming washed away to the shore, and everything –
all

at

once

held weight no more.

She became a faint glow in an infinite dark, a flickering fire no more than a spark.

Only enveloped in the quiet and still, she succumbed to the water, swallowed up whole.

Fully deluged in a watery wasteland. Floating. Drifting. In a liquid cosmos.

Her skin turned pallid, a slight twitch in her fingers, the last signs of life still stubbornly lingered.

Until it ebbed away like the waves on a shore, softly shrinking till nothing at all.

Below in the depths, the sea her grave, a silent salt coffin in a world she couldn't save.

Levina De B-V, Year 10

Commended Senior Competition

"1, 2, 3"

They did not always call him crazy.
At first, they pitied his situation
or admired his courage.

But as 1 day, 2 weeks, 3 months,
passed, they started to whisper
about the silence,

In his head or in the absence
Of words, they did not know.
However war was still shrieking –

He shivered sometimes,
as if a chill had crept from the crack of
closed door. His eyes trembled on white walls,

His nails dug deep into the skin
of his wooden chair
which was adorned with crescent moons.

3 months, the bombings ceased.
2 weeks, the war stopped.
1 day, celebration had begun.

The birds resumed their songs
And children squealed with laughter and
Mothers wailed a plangent poem.

Yet the man had not emitted a single
sound. He ate, slept and moved
like any normal human would.

But it was as if all words, grunts, screams
were trapped by heaps of ash and soil
which thrust into his throat.

So "1, 2, 3" he repeated,
over, over, over
again. In his silent head.

Deetya R, Year 10
Commended Senior Competition

Year 9 Competition Winners



My Loverboy

I thought he was perfect, the only one for me,
Then I found out what he did and I could blatantly see,
That he was a heartbreaker, a cheater with nothing but good looks,
I guess my life will never be one of those fairytale books.

With princesses, princes and some sort of witch,
Who twisted the tale, giving it a switch,
Turning tranquillity into chaos, what a disaster,
Yet the prince and princess still live happily ever after.

How come the dashing prince in my book,
Turned out to be a romantic crook,
Unlocking my heart to which I gave him the key,
Shattering it to pieces, the only idiot is me.

I fell head over heels, entranced by his cologne,
Sometimes the hopeless romantics are meant to die alone,
Nurtured by novels, sonnets and plays about affection,
All I wanted was that classic connection.

My loverboy was my world, the axis upon which I spun,
But he's just a hindrance in my story and my story's just begun.

Georgia J

Winner Year 9 Competition

Walking out the door: a spoken word poem

You promise you won't leave me
like they all did before.
You say: "this is forever",
while walking out the door.
My hand is in your hand;
while you look the other way.
You can talk to me for hours on end
but now you've nothing left to say.

You say that I have trust issues;
You say it's in my head.
But I just can't believe you,
when my texts are left unread.
And when I pose the question: "what have I done wrong?"
You say: "what do you mean, our bond is still so strong!"

And then I start to doubt
maybe it is all in my head,
So then I just say sorry, for messing you around;
Because you promised you won't leave me
like they all did before.
But it's so hard to believe you
when you're walking out the door.

Megan H

Runner Up Year 9 Competition

A Pursuit of Peace

As both sides signed the treaty,
Peace was exhaled and its echo reverberated throughout,
The exhalation travelled far and wide,
Across many moons and tides.

Firstly, it travelled through the cities,
Gracing parliaments with its presence,
Amongst lost troops families it took pity,
And it flew with children whose smiles shouted freedom.

Secondly, it rang through homes,
It brought life into faces like an epiphany of joy,
It kissed children's foreheads goodnight,
And it lingered in grief over the widow's second pillow.

Soon it ran through the country and rolled over hills,
It chased roaring children through the meadows,
It lay amongst the marigolds and bathed in sunlight,
And it comforted the mothers left in solitude.

Finally, it came to lay in the poppy fields,
Where it found its home,
Nestled amongst the departed and their tributes,
Stroking the shoulders of the families left bare,
Wiping the tears of those left alone,
Laying to rest as it emitted its final message to those who cared enough
to listen.

Jemima B

Commended Year 9 Competition

Turning Conflict on its Head

Resolutions cannot be made without conflict
So do not try and convince me that
Peaceful methods are more effective, a better alternative
Because at the end of the day, haven't we seen that
Conflict must occur for a conclusion to be made.
So do not try and argue that
Evidence for peaceful solutions is in front of our very own eyes,
Gunfire and grenades,
Death and destruction,
Bombings and bloodshed,
Are not necessary, fatalities an avoidable part of the procedure.
Look, I must use my voice for those of us who state these methods
Are engrained into modern society.
Yet why do you contradict me? And say that it is clear that violent
actions
Become mirrored in our daily lives, become normalised actions in the
young and old.
It is obvious that your reasoning is faulty, that violent resolutions do
Good on the larger scale and that is clear.
So go on, carry on arguing with me, for you cannot change my opinion: it's
Simply the key to resolving the worldwide issues we face and
Clearly this method does pay off in the long run:
The peaceful solutions, all the debating and compromise, these take
patience and time.
Do not try and argue that that method is more desirable:
Conflict is essential to provide a quick, global solution.
So do not try and convince me that
Peaceful methods are more effective, a better alternative
Because at the end of the day, haven't we seen that
Conflict must occur for a conclusion to be made.
So do not try and argue that
Resolutions can be made without conflict.

Now read the other way...

Emily S

Commended Year 9 Competition

Year 8 Competition Winners

PLEASE



- This is our
Past and Present
Let's Not make it
Our Future - Bgs

Peace and Conflict

In shadows deep, where silence holds its sway,
A weary world, in turmoil, seeks release,
As whispers of the night, in soft array,
Plead the heart to find its longed-for peace.
Yet peace, a fleeting dream, a fragile wisp,
Caught in the tempest's cruel, relentless grasp,
Where swords clash loud, and souls in turmoil twist,
And hope, a flickering flame, begins to gasp.
But still, within the chaos, there resides
A seed of hope, where love and courage hide.
In whispered sighs of trees that sway and bend,
In rivers' gentle murmur, softly sung,
In every dawn that paints the sky to mend,
In every heart that seeks to right the wrong.
Through tangled webs of hatred and of fear,
Where bitterness entwines the soul's embrace,
There blooms a flower, fragile and sincere,
A beacon in the vastness of disgrace.
So let us nurture peace with every breath,
And let our actions speak where words fall short,
For in the face of conflict and of death,
It's love alone that builds the strongest fort.

Arundhati A

Winner Year 8 Competition

В лесу так тихо и прохладно,
Я нашёл лужу неглубоко.
Птицы чирикают высоко в ветках,
Шепчут тайны вместе с ветрам.

Солнечный свет танцует через листья,
Тени играют на мягких узорах земли.
Цветы кивают, будто понимают,
В этом мире улыбки растут.

Сердце природы бьется сильно и верно,
В этом мире всё кажется новым.

In the woods so calm and cool,
I found a little glistening pool.
Birds chirp high up in the trees,
Whispering secrets with the breeze.

Sunlight dances through the leaves,
Shadows play on ground's soft weaves.
Flowers nod as if they know,
In this peace, our smiles grow.

Nature's heart beats strong and true,
In this peace, the world feels new.

Maria G

Runner Up Year 8 Competition

Shooting a Shadow

I'm told to grin and bear it
And never to overshare it.
But with each critic and slam,
You keep me in a headlock kind of jam,
And lean in and whisper,
Words that follow and blister.
Words that define me.
Words that confine me.
And tell me to be gormless,
Bland and adornless.
You punch the sparks out of my eyes,
And stamp the warmth out of my cries.
You're a blade that never stops cutting,
And a wound that never stops hurting.
Yet I beg for mercy,
But you hate my diversity.
So I pull up a pistol.
Your heart like delicate crystal.
Your life is in my hands,
Like a time-bomb it stands.
So I pull the trigger to the mirror,
And watch the shattered pieces shimmer.
As an echo of your voice fades to the empty chatter of my mind.

Lily D

Commended Year 8 Competition

Year 7 Competition Winners



Conflict

Conflict will always be there
So don't say that
It won't last
Conflict is hurt
Conflict is pain
Conflict is violence
It doesn't include me or you
I don't care that
People need our help
They need to figure it out for themselves
So stop telling me that
It won't stay
Conflict will remain as long as we live
So don't try to convince me that
It will end

(now read from bottom to top)

Gracie A

Winner Year 7 Competition

HOPE

In fields where shadows twist and turn,
two hearts in conflict fiercely burn.
Their words are sharp and cold like knives,
feeding anger, pain and strife.

But deep inside a spark remains,
a hope that love can ease the pain.
A dream of peace, of kind, soft words,
a wish that healing can be heard.

Through anger's thorns, a light appears,
a path to clear away the fears.
With every step, the weight is less,
a gentle touch to heal this stress.

Words turn to bridges, strong and new,
each one a chance to start anew.
Hands once clenched tight now reach to mend,
and eyes once cold now see a friend.

In conflict's midst a promise grows,
a quiet peace that gently flows.
For peace, though small can be strong,
and guide us when the nights are long.

In fields now bathed in morning light,
two hearts find peace no longer fight.
For even after bitter strife,
the seed of peace can bloom to life.

Rebecca S

Runner Up Year 7 Competition

The Old World Has Gone

The old world has gone
Tears have invaded
No more
Peace
Tranquillity
There is nothing but
Screams, shouts
Blood, bombs
Never again will I remember
bird songs and stilling waters
I can only see
flames, blitzes and fear
We're no longer in
Safety
but
anger, sadness and fright
no more
doves have been flying high
the old world has gone

(can be read bottom to top)

Elisa W

Commended Year 7 Competition

The Song of Peace

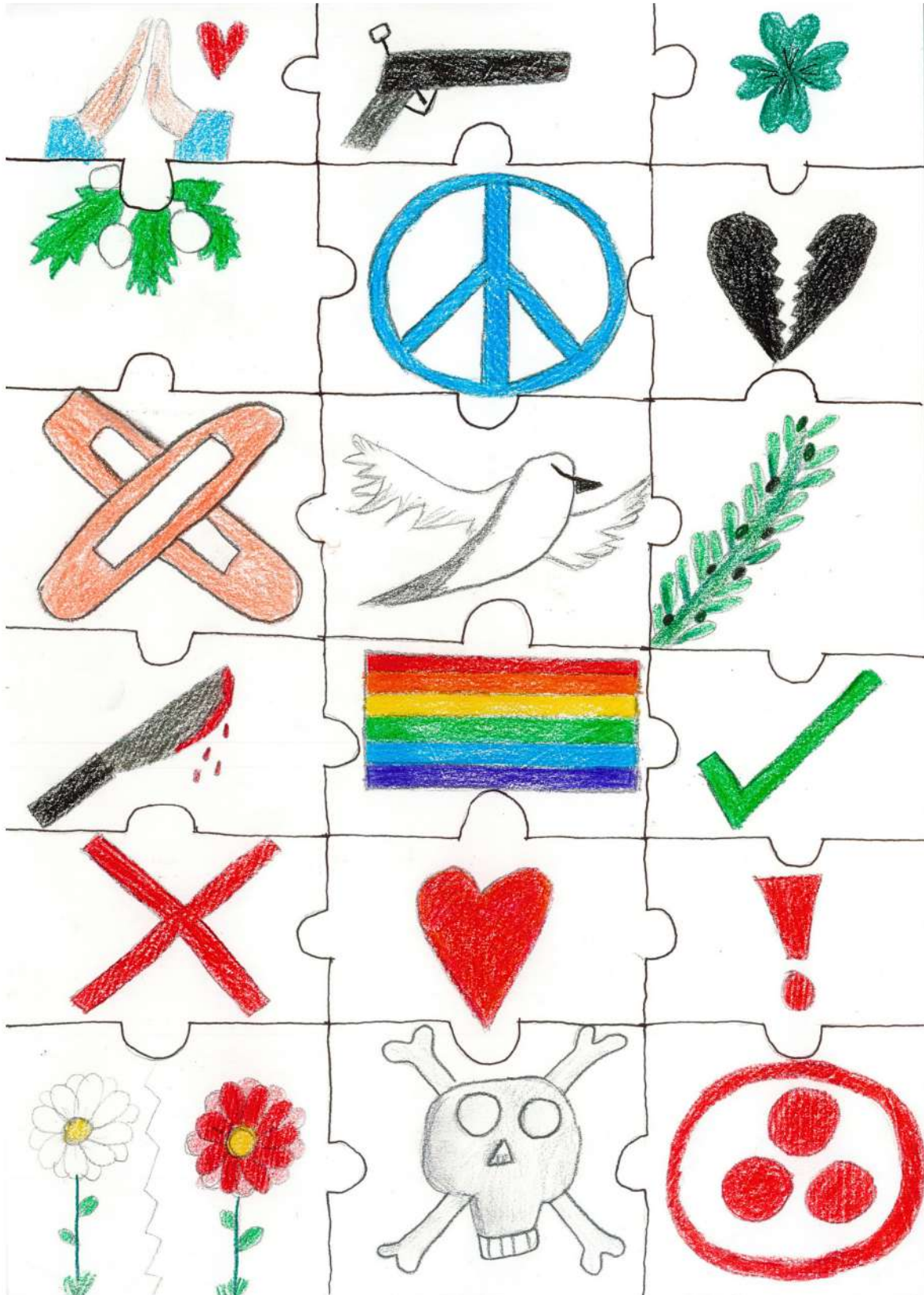
The smoke clears
blinding light
sung from beyond the grave
here comes the sun
brick by brick
buildings rebuilt
music flows through the streets
played not by the people, but by their souls
the cold melts away
and the green returns
as the animals come
Oh happy day
though there was war in the past
there is peace today.

Once the houses were rebuilt
and the injured healed
the music was louder than ever
soldiers come home from over the hills
men and their darlings dancing in the melted snow
adults and children alike
running out of their homes
into the shining streets
oh happy day
though there was war in years ago
there is peace today.

Sofia Z

Commended Year 7 Competition

Senior Competition: Shortlisted Entries



The Girl

Be careful of that girl,
there's a fire burning behind her eyes.
She could make kingdoms crumble
if only she stopped believing the
LIES...

...the LIES that steal her courage and dreams
Keeping her trapped in silent screams.
She wraps an "I'm fine" around her heart
But each desperate spark just tears her apart.

Watch out for that girl,
her tears blaze two molten streams
from her eyes to her chin,
years and years of
letting them win.

So if you find her scorched and scorned,
be wary now, you've been warned.
Her passion is a phoenix. You can watch it burn
but again and again it will still return.

Barely there, a flicker behind her eyes,
a flame that's done with all those LIES.
She'll spread her blazing wings and
take to the skies...

And only then will you see how I rise!

Julia C, Year 10

The Starved Artist

How vast are the living green hills?

Do the pretty skies and birds satisfy you, the artist?

Please, observe; look at the simplicity of your warm life.

Admire your creative wand and how it takes the world so gently,

Wraps it carefully in a pretty bow, and paints over it in vibrancy.

Keep your licks of paint to beauty, to nature, to life, to love.

Glaze over the fragile glass that creates the world.

Are you satisfied by it? By you?

Keep your writing to the sincerest themes.

Grass is greener in the breath of sun, and so are you.

Look outside, look at the earth's richness and put it into pen.

There it is. Hesitation. Supposedly for an unknown reason.

But the problem is obvious. And it is blooming.

You, the writer, hold yourself back from your mind's tales.

The bodily opposition?

You prefer the volume of the heart's self-loathing beats.

It is unwise, yet you ask yourself,

How deep can you cut the paper and etch words that cry?

You know you will be rejected anyway. It's supposed to be exposing.

Because no matter how much you write, you know there are few readers able to drink the words of your taboo.

Neither are they hardly bothered by your inability to turn the lights on whenever you enter the bathroom.

Or your ability to love being choked by ostracization on your own accord.

Your imperfectness. It's weird. It's disturbing. And quite frankly tragic. Undoubtedly.

And none of it fits the beauty, the nature, the life or the love of art. Unfortunately.

Now, ignore your palpitating throat. Allow yourself to become flowered by nature's embrace.

Don't put yourself where people can see you.

Keep your mind assertive to what you feed the pages. Keep the disturbed hidden. Keep yourself in-check and remember:

There is no greater joy to others than the comfort of familiarity.

Anon

BrainStorm

The lights blare through the air.
I can hear the buzz from the desktop:
Clattering.

Clothes brush my skin
like bugs,
scuttling and irritating.

Hair brushes my neck.
a rope, cinched around my throat.

People's voices pierce my eardrums
getting louder.
Louder.

Tears cascade like
scalding water burning rivers, through my cheeks.

My throat tightens;
I'm suffocating.

My world is loud.
My skin is on fire.

Elizabeth, Year 10

A Poem of Peace

Where is peace?

The notion of calm, the belief of happiness

I don't see it

I see war, and pain,

Suffering that is simply expected.

We're all stressed, all worried, all angry or upset or hurt because we lack peace;

Peace, promised for our next life, as if this one does not matter,

A stepping stone of feeling in the crashing river of conflict.

Fleeting moments of peace,

Seconds in which your mind is quiet, and your heart feels full

Present in life and mind,

Just seconds.

Then back to the war, the pain, the suffering explained simply as natural
As human nature.

Do we really live to suffer?

To cause suffering?

To wait for peace?

Or should we create our own peace, filled with love and warmth,

Feeling we can hold onto and smile.

Care for one another, help find us each our own peace, of mind, body and soul

Peace that celebrates and sustains lives.

Mary L, Year 12

Drüsje.

As the world caves in around my feet,
I crumple to the floor,
A cloud of dust billows all around,
Darting away once more.

I hear the swoosh of twenty swords,
Pointed inches from my head.
To them, I am a villain;
To them, I'm better off dead.

Or locked away and tied in chains,
Dragged to the pits of hell.
I've come to realise I feel nothing,
It's a feeling I know all too well.

They think that I'm the reason
For all the pain and blood shed,
But when it comes to war crimes,
They've done the worst instead.

They know I'm just a mortal,
That I'll hurt 'til I lay still,
But I know how to hurt me better
Than any sword ever will.

To them I am abnormal,
A scapegoat to the rich.
Call me monster, beast, demon.
Call me a Witch.

Libby McC, Year 12

Children of Chaos

The home we once knew was now forever painted in a different palette;
Where streets are ruptured veins laced with corpses – violence their last
memory.

Where clouds, once woven of silken dreams are now stained with
smudges of charcoal and a muddle of nightmares.

Where the porcelain trills and warbles of laughter are replaced by silence
fabricated with the murmur of gunshots.

Bleeding and broken.

That's what our world has become,

When did we let it get so ugly?

Even when the end comes, it will never truly end,

The harsh song of memories will still beat in my heart where wounds have
been cut too deep to heal with an invisible blade.

However,

Pain can be beautiful. It can transform. It can create.

Sumi S, Year 10

Conflict | Peace

(I) hate you

And I don't think I could ever

Keep being friends with someone who treats me this way.

I know that I need to

Leave and never look back.

The last think I want is for you to

Be so happy and carefree

Instead, I think you deserve to

Hurt.

Sometimes, people experience

This wave of faith that crashes over; it gifts strength and happiness just for a moment.

When I do,

It is only fleeting as

I see you in my mind and

It is like the walls around me have caved in, all confidence lost.

Alone.

Sometimes I feel

I just need to look at in **reverse**.

Ellie S, Year 10

Year 9: Shortlisted Entries



In the heart of the storm, where the thunder roars,
Where the earth trembles and the skies pour,
There lies a conflict, a battlefield of souls,
Where the war drums beat and the stories unfold.

In the trenches of the mind, where the shadows dwell,
Where the echoes of the past and the future tell,
Of the pain and the loss, the tears and the fears,
The war that rages, the battle that sears.

In the eyes of the innocent, where the light once shone,
Where the laughter and the joy, now a memory gone,
There lies a sorrow, a deep and endless sea,
Of the lives that were lost, and the dreams that were free.

In the hearts of the soldiers, where the courage resides,
Where the honour and the duty, in the battle abides,
There lies a sacrifice, a price that they pay,
For the freedom they fight for, in the dawn of the day.

In the ruins of the cities, where the buildings once stood,
Where the silence and the emptiness, now understood,
There lies a destruction, a testament to the war,
Of the lives that were shattered, and the dreams that were tore.

In the echoes of the future, where the hope still resides,
Where the peace and the unity, in the hearts abides,
There lies a promise, a chance to begin anew,
To heal the wounds, and the scars that are true.

For the war that we fight, is not just a battlefield,
But a reflection of the hearts that we yield,
And though the conflict may rage, and the war may persist,
In the end, it's the love and the hope that will persist.

Isabella A, Year 9

It's Just a Game

What's the time Mr Wolf?

I can't make out my friend's response over the hum of the fighter jets –
everyone's running –

I bet he called dinner time –

it seems like everyone in our town has joined in with our game,
running as if for their lives,
they must all be really competitive.

I really wish I could tell the woman with a squealing baby in her arms and
a deathly frightened look on her face that
it's just a game.

Come and get your lollipops!

Business is slow today as not many people come out of their houses
anymore.

It should pick up later when the men with eyes like a human's but stony
expressions like a robot's leave our neighbourhood.

I can hear people screaming from down the streets,
they sound hysterical and desperate,

I'm guessing word has got out about my new store opening –

they are going to be so disappointed when they find out I don't really sell
lollipops –

it's just a game.

Bluebells, cockle shells!

My friend swings the rope and I jump rhythmically.

She speaks about a young boy she heard crying and pleading through her
bedroom wall last night –

it must have kept her up because her eyes are bloodshot and puffy with
what I'm sure is exhaustion,

maybe –

I hope –

I tell her that the boy was probably upset because some other children
wouldn't let him skip on their rope.

I suggest that he play with us next time.

I don't know why he was so upset over a skipping rope though,
after all –

it's just a game.

Ten green bottles, standing on a wall!
My friend's grip on my hand tightens as a loud, wailing siren interrupts our song.
Everyone goes quiet.
We didn't even get to seven green bottles yet.
My mother calls me in and I traipse upstairs to sit in the bathtub until the siren ceases –
I hope my singing wasn't that bad –
who would want to break up our choir that fiercely?
we weren't hurting anyone –
it's just a game.

My friend's head whips round and I freeze.
Granny's Footsteps is very hard,
I can never stay still long enough –
even the slightest noise or sudden movement seems to make me jump nowadays.
My friend Sarah is very good –
she has lots of practice though –
she stands frozen often,
an expression of pure terror painted across her face.
What is she so scared of?

It's just a game.

Alice B, Year 9

Peace.

It's a funny thing
A distant blur to some
A painful memory for others
A tempting desire
A want
A need

But conflict is different
It spreads like wildfire
It weaves its way in and out of friendships
It pulls and tugs at its victims
It laughs in the face of evil
It waits just for the right moment
It burns and burns

Sometimes I wonder whether peace is real
Or just a fragment of my imagination
A fantasy
A wish of a young child
So innocent and vulnerable to the world's terrors
So unprepared for life ahead
In blissful oblivion of the future ahead

Whilst the world around breaks and buckles
Tears and rips
Builds and destroys
Laughs and cries
Freezes and melts
Inhales and exhales
And takes its last breath.

Hannah C, Year 9

The Book Beneath the Cover

There once was a girl
With golden hair and sapphire eyes,
A big wide smile plastered to her face,
but she could sense the looming dread,
All suicidal thoughts present in her head.
A sense of foreboding, losing herself from reality
to the point where she questioned her sanity.
You see, it wasn't always like this,
words were her power, words were her strength
others call them books, she called them friend,
She sat quiet, she was safe
But that soon lost its place.
She was used to catching the words you threw.
They came straight for her
but all she could do was clench her fists
and break them, letting them from her grip like birds
It was only peace and a sense of belonging
But to carry the weight like a wordsmith,
meant she bore the shame and ignorance.
She was hit with the arrogance of one
But this time, her hands remained open.
Instead she took the word with her to her grave.
Her cover remained as strong, independent and witty, but beneath the
book was a different story
All she needed was some empathy, a chance to live her life
If you had seen what was inside her head, she was tired, uninspired.

No, this was not the end of her
For she would not let it be,
She built up the courage to say.
"This isn't me."
Still to this day she struggles, it's an ongoing battle
But knowing it's never a lost cause.
She was hidden within her pages, she was young and she was fragile
Just a book amongst the pile.

Rose C, Year 9

I do not know who I am
Nor what I want to be
But I know what you want
Oh that's quite clear to see.

And I know I disappoint you
With my new hair and voice,
I still wonder if I'm faking
If I really have a choice.

Because it doesn't feel it
It feels like I am true,
But I see that scowl upon your face
What's a boy to do?

It feels like I am lying
When I say what you want.
But when I'm me, I'm flying
My story in an honest font –

I would try to correct you
But I know it's in vain.
You see, as we all do
You people cannot change.

And I thought you wanted
For me to be a perfect child
I think I was mistaken
You all see me as wild.

Artemis H-T, Year 9

It doesn't have to be like this

In the wake of war's cruel embrace,
Families shattered; hearts displaced.
A chorus of sorrow, a haunting wail,
A desperate attempt at peace continues to fail.
It doesn't have to be like this.

The battlefield, a beast with gnashing teeth,
Devouring love and happiness like a thief.
Smoke and fire paint the sky with dread,
As hope withers in the river of the dead.

In the night, silence screams,
A chilling echo of shattered dreams.
For wars horrific toll, no words can express,
The devastating loss and lasting distress.
It doesn't have to be like this.

We build fatal weapons,
Bombs counting down the seconds.
Dictatorship takes over, shadows of oppression loom,
In the suffocating grip of power's gloom.

Agonising cries
Ruthless shouts
It doesn't have to be like this
A lonely widow
A fatherless child
It doesn't have to be like this.

In another world, far from here.
They laugh and mock our fear.
They watch as we destroy each other,
Shocked by the pain we smother.

It doesn't have to be like this.

Scarlett H, Year 9

His mother carved his arteries,
But not to fight humanity,
His father taught him how to savour summer,
But not how to kill another,
He was born to explore,
Not to carry the burden of war.

One man's decision takes a boy's life,
He will never have a chance to make his girl his wife,
And the heart his mother sculpted,
No longer beats from being exulted,
His drag becomes adrenaline,
Can a killer still be a gentleman?

His heart, now worn under lock and key,
Was once worn on his sleeve,
And scars now litter not only his body but his mind,
He lives on memories of the life he left behind,
Can the killer within stop hunting for blood?
And instead, search for what we all desire: love.

Zara J, Year 9

Where I Should Be

I've always been an avid book reader,
Devouring romance, mystery and fantasy alike,
I always dreamed of lavish gowns,
Fancy balls, violent wars and close companions.
My mind runs away at the speed of an arrow,
Fired from the taut string of reality.
But deep down I know there is no valiant warrior,
If dragons plagued the sky, I'd hide,
If goblins and elves prowled the woods, I'd hide,
If swords were drawn and shots fired, I'd hide,
The characters from my childhood and recent reads,
Follow me where I go, a constant reminder of where I should be.
When I sit by myself in need of company,
Scenes play out in my head like films:
Violet and Xaden lovingly sparring,
Kate and Alex sailing from a broken past,
Pip and Ravi rejoicing over a fresh mystery.
My heart aches for the world I should be a part of,
And as I think of my life right here,
The joyful laughter floats away from me,
It used to crush me when they left,
Now their absence is as much company as their presence.
I'm at peace with the world I live in,
The mundane, solo life I'm living,
But still on days where the world pushes down, I hide,
And the weight on my shoulders is just too much, I hide,
I pick up a familiar book and escape from reality.
I know it's just fiction, but still deep down,
I know that is where I should be.

If I was war

If I was war

I'd take your heart and burn it

Until anger glowed like hot coals in your eyes.

I'd drown you in insults

And make you lose your mind

So you'll only listen to the words I whisper.

I'd give you a poisoned tongue,

With venom dripping from your teeth,

And words like bullets

That ricochet around the room.

And when your heart is scorched from the flames

I'd count the burns,

As you calculate the losses,

So you can't hide in your cardboard castle:

Or behind your suit of shameless lies.

I'd raise you higher and higher

Until you can taste the hope and victory

Then I'd let you fall and fall

Into the hands of the dead,

And from the hearts of your people.

But it wouldn't last –

Peace would creep through my barricade,

So I'd console myself

By watching your heart's fire go out.

Clarissa L-Y, Year 9

Only for the moon

You cry yourself to sleep
you sit alone at night
you wonder to the moon
“Was I wrong, was the damage only slight?”
You speak soft words,
none of them kind,
only in the mirror
and only in your mind.
Is this any way to treat a person?
You honestly don't know –
you've wilted like a flower
yet you're still expected to grow.

Poppy L-N, Year 9

I am my mother's savage daughter

I am my mother's savage daughter

I am

From her I got my attitude, my eyes

My struggle for school subjects and my confidence too

But I know that this struggle is one she went through as well

But now here she is, beautiful and bright

She did it, she did

And so I will too

She is savage

I grew up wanting to be like that girl from the movie Brave

Merida, she was called

She would mount her horse and go riding,

Her wild hair flowing in the wind

She shot arrows and held swords

And her voice was loud and strong,

That's what I wanted to be.

But then there's more,

She laughs and cries and is scared

And I do all those things too

So, like her,

And my mother of course,

I am savage, loud and strong

But I am soft and gentle, and I laugh and cry and care

Like her, I can love with all my heart

Like her, and my father (though that's different story)

I am sarcastic and make jokes

So I am my mother's daughter, savage and all

But there's more to us than that,

So don't stop at savage.

Years 7 & 8: Shortlisted Entries



In the dance of time, a paradox unfolds,
A cycle of peace and conflict, history beholds.
Wars waged in the name of tranquillity's grace,
Yet when dominion's peace is won, discontent shows its face.

The world spins on an axis of this endless chase,
A loop unbroken, quickened or slowed in its pace.
Unity, some claim, could shatter the cycle's core,
But satisfaction for all is a myth, an unreachable shore.

Emotions, those human tides, swell the equation's sea,
Adding layers to a puzzle complex in its decree.
No solution found, in this labyrinth without a key,
An equation unsolved, and perhaps, forever will be.

Compromise whispers a promise, a path to draw near,
To an answer elusive, through the societal sphere.
Yet emotions surge, a wave that interferes,
And human worth weighs, tipping the scales.
Smashing the image of a perfect balance we yearn for.

"Why must my concessions outweigh his own?"
A question of worth, in toil and sweat sown.
Human worth, a new variable, is not a solution alone,
It complicates further, the equation grown.

Critique is not my aim, but the cycle's truth I state,
Acceptance may be our fate, in this debate.
Adaptations to the cycle, a being's trait,
For if we were but machines, such equations wouldn't exist.

In the spectrum of feeling, from love to disdain,
We find the beauty of life, in joy and in pain.
Peace and conflict, the yin and yang's domain,
In their intertwined existence, they forever remain.

A silent scream

A silent cacophony
sprays up from the cliffs,
A flint eyed glance
and the droplets have hit.
They shatter the boundaries,
bombard the colonies
Wash out the traces of
whispers,
murmurs,
shouts,
screams,
roars.
Until the tides steal your words,
the waves are level once more.

Someplace silent

My soul is from someplace else.
I'm certain of it.
Someplace where the mind paces the tongue,
Someplace where everything is just silent.

Lily B, Year 8

Haiku about Peace and Conflict

*Rage from words collide,
Harmony finds their way through,
Peace thrives, conflict subsides.*

Amaia B, Year 8

Finding peace is hard.

People spend their whole life just to find it.

Conflict disguises itself

and calls you to it.

They look the same at the start

like sugar and salt -

there is a chance peace will fall upon you

and there is a risk that you will be at fault.

Finding reasons to start conflict is easy,

people losing their whole life just to resolve it.

Tilly C, Year 8

Lost

As the clouds race playfully across the horizon,
The sun waits patiently behind,
But slowly and shyly it **reaches** out,
Warm, glowing beams touch the ground,
The sun is **break ing** the bars of its cage,
Letting its true colours shine through,
Allowing the petals to escape their buds,
And blossom into beautiful *flowers*,
Just like I am, but where is my sun?
When the first **BOMB** dropped,
When the first domino fell,
Drowning in disbelief,
As my life spiralled out of control,
I lost her and I lost **EVERYTHING**,
Sadness. I'm **fa ll ing** through its fingertips,
Slipping through its deadly hold,
I **narrowly** escape its grasping clutches,
and land safely back in the world I know and love,
When past feels like present, the reality lines *blur*,
Grief has a grip on me, desperately trying to pull me back,
Back to its world of misery and pain,
But *friends* and *family* are my sun,
And they will hold on with everything they've got.

Lily I, Year 8

Peace and Conflict

In the world where chaos often reigns,
Where hearts are burdened and full of worries,
There is a deep desire, for a quiet haven –
Where peace begins.

Peace is not just the absence of conflict,
But the state of mind that changes life,
It's a light breeze that calms the soul,
A harmonious symphony that makes us –
Whole.

Peace is the language that unites division,
A refuge where love and kindness reside,
It knows no boundaries, no walls to build,
It's a warm embrace that can never get –
Cold.

Peace isn't a distant dream or a wish,
It is a reality that shines,
In the heart of those who believe that
In unity everybody can achieve peace.

Isabella K, Year 8

Echoes and Whispers

Beneath the surface of my skin,
A war wages deep within,
Where shadows dance and twist the soul,
A doubt's dark waters ceaseless toll.

In the silence of my inner seas,
A voice emerges, soft as the breeze,
it speaks of fear, of loss, of pain,
of love's labour lost, of dreams in vain.

The heart, a vessel, fraught with cracks
Leaking hopes, and slipping through the cracks,
Aches for peace in the relentless fight,
for truce in the dead of night.

Yet, in this abyss where light seems banned
A spark ignites by its own hand,
A defiant flame against despair,
A reminder that I'm more than air.

So let these words, a deeper creed,
Reflect the soul's most earnest need,
to reconcile the fire and the flood,
And find beauty in the heart's own blood.

Snigdha K, Year 8

Heartless

The police arrive
I dry my eyes
We welcome them in with a smile
Our house is normal, better than normal
But I am not, but why
Now we've begun the questions
My mum gives me a glare
I feel my heart beating
See my chest moving
My face white in despair
The tears fall down my face
Some catch on my hair
But then I'm asked the question
Did you do it?
My tears stop, my heart stops
My heart is no longer in my throat
It's no longer in me
So I sit there answerless, thoughtless,
Heartless.

Phoebe L, Year 8

Peace of Mind

Rest your mind, try to focus on the good.

Not the worry that eats you inside,

That submerges you in despair.

Instead, take deep breaths,

Inhale the air.

Spread your wings and fly free.

Be calm, be quiet, peaceful and serene.

Observe your surroundings.

Look at the nature and its greenery.

Or, get lost in your music.

Drown in the sound and its scenes.

Ignore the conflict that encircles you daringly,

And find peace in the earth, for some aren't as bad as they seem.

Rebecca M, Year 8

Conflict is everywhere, a truth we can't deny,
In every corner of the world, it's hard to defy.
But amidst the chaos, let's not lose hope or sigh,
For within these struggles, strength and growth lie.

In the battle we face, both big and small,
Conflict can push us to rise and stand tall.
It tests our resilience, our courage overall,
And teaches us lessons, as we navigate it all.

But let us remember, in the midst of strife,
To seek understanding, and choose a kinder life.
For empathy and compassion can bridge the divide,
And bring us closer together, side by side.

Mireia P, Year 8

Behind this obscuring scar, I battle with my mind,
A war within where self and soul collide.
In ceaseless strife, two demons entwine,
With self-hate's whispers, echoing inside.
The mirror reflects a face. It's adorned with brutal pain.
As every flaw magnifies a scar,
They all trace back to strain.
A fleck of peace, glimmers from afar.
Though this voice of doubt still will roar.
Our slashed wounds decide to heal,
And their depths, remain, a tranquil ocean's store.

Jess R, Year 8

Thoughts from my experience

She hurts me. I've never given her a reason to hurt me like she does but she does it anyway.

She pesters me, claiming to be my friend, but there's no comfort in her words. There's no sincerity, no kindness or trust on which the words are based.

I ignore her. She continues.

She isn't afraid to drop her 'best friend' act and assault me with her words. She insults who I am, what I like and what I look like. With anyone else, she's blunt with her insults. They get sworn at. Hit.

We tell her to stop. But she doesn't stop. If anything, she becomes more of a nuisance. She's a strangler fig killing a tree.

I'm terrified. I could tear her apart. And I want to. I'd win in a heartbeat.

Anxiety plagues me. Her words turn from flies swarming a meal to sparks threatening to start a wildfire. Dread floods my mind. It's too much. It's too much. It's too much.

I'm torn in three directions: wrath, fear and kindness.

Despite it all, I can't bring myself to do harm back to her; the burden of my kind nature; the price of silence.

Ashiana S H, Year 8

Wallpaper

I've taken down the wallpaper of clear blue skies and there's smoke
behind it,
tears behind it,
screams behind it.
Both peace and war can't fit.

All these countries breaking down like an enzyme,
it's only a matter of time,
before our breath becomes a crime.
Who will attack me because of the land that I live on,
The God I believe in or the colour of my skin,
completely skipping my qualities deep within.

I'm panicking.
My political views are torn.
My opinion is worn.
If I support them I'm 'the girl'
but if I don't I'm discriminatory.

I've hidden what's behind this wallpaper of clear blue skies and ignored it.
In this world both peace and war can't fit.

Sarah T, Year 8

Oxymoron Peace

Peace.

Freedom from disturbance,
tranquillity, calmness.

Her peace is lying in the meadow
listening to the cricket echo
and picking daisies inside the grass
as the whispers of time quietly pass
while the sun sizzled softly on her face
she must be enjoying her little own space.

His peace is watching his plant grow
and the dandelion being blown
behind each one is his silly dreams
telling his sunflower stories
their petals dance in the morning glories
smelling his zinnias reminding him his childhood
growing up full of colours until his adulthood.

Their peace is reading in the cosiest book corner
where the world fades away and their mind wanders
surrounded by the immortal fairy tales
in a world where dreams prevail
with no reality, no cruelty, nothing
bad, just a pure heart in love with reading.

But my peace is different.

My peace is full of noise in my headphone
just a Spotify playlist on a mobile phone
Saying 'Relatable' to every lyrics and sound
An escape from the chaos running around
Transporting me to a place of serenity and ease
For a girl, this is a very simple type of peace.

A noisy peace.

Yukki W, Year 8

Peace within the Ruins

Ruins scattered across the streets
People's tears falling to their feet
Children seeking comfort in their mothers' arms
Animals being evacuated from their ruined farms
The sound of bombs still ringing in their ears
They looked around and couldn't help the tears.

A child's cheer broke through the silence
Suddenly I forgot about the violence
As I noticed some children playing ball
With a piece of brick from a broken wall
Their laughter filled my heart with joy
I smiled at the face of a little boy.

I turned away at the sound of a high-pitched laugh
To see a small girl sitting next to a calf
The girls around her in their floral dresses
Were careful to avoid the muddy messes
As they bent down to pick a bouquet of flowers
Maybe such damage could have its own powers.

Elsie B, Year 7

Broken

Broken machines,

Broken hearts,

Broken souls,

Broken cars.

Broken minds,

Broken thoughts,

Broken families,

Broken moors.

Broken love,

Broken hate,

Broken time,

Broken plates.

Broken smiles,

Broken frowns,

Broken cities,

Broken towns.

Broken peace,

Broken war,

Broken light,

Broken stores.

No more love,

No more breaks,

This is war,

Death's here to stay!

Antonia B, Year 7

I'm fine

I'm happy but I've never been so sad,
I'm safe but I've never been so scared,
It's silent but it's never been so loud,
It's easy but it's never been so hard,
I'm loved but everyone hates me,
It's calm but it's never been so messy,
I'm surrounded by people but everyone hates me,
But I'm fine.

Through the darkness,

Through the light,

I'm fine.

Ruby B-S, Year 7

I HATE YOU

It always kicks off with 'I hate you,'
Something as small as where I'm sat,
or where she puts her shoes.
'I hate you' starts the earthquakes,
the war,
the volcanic eruptions of fierce words,
cutting each other like claws,
or gnawing on you like a tiger's jaws,
or stinging your eyes like soap.
'I hate you' can go a long way,
set you back so far,
miles away from hope of kind words.
Spite flies from my lips and cuts her down,
she comes back and so do I,
burning fire blazing from my hands,
machine gun screams,
and shouts of bullets,
knock me to the floor.
I feel so inferior to this anger,
it never leaves,
provocative as I am, I will never be immune,
to the force of this fury,

this evil power that possesses me like a curse,
that swallows me,
and I keep on shouting,
but really, inside I am weak,
the words have no meaning,
they are just words,
savage words,
cruel words,
my soul is lost in this conflict.
Let me go,
because who do I really hate?
Her,
or myself?
So I stand here,
a ventriloquist's doll to my anger,
making me speak,
'I hate you.'
Well, here is a message for you, anger,
'I hate you too.'

Beatrice E, Year 7

HOPE

In a world of clashes and strife,
Where battles ignite
A yearning for peace emerges, shining so bright,
Amidst the chaos, a desire for tranquillity takes hold,
A story of conflict and resolution, yet to be told.

Words, like sharp arrows, can wound and divide,
But compassion and kindness can help heal the tide.
Let empathy guide us through each interaction we face,
For peace is the bridge that can bring peace and grace.

In unity we stand, hand in hand, side by side,
Breaking down walls, our differences set aside.
For in heart of conflict, peace can arise,
When understanding and love become our allies.

Together we can build a world where harmony thrives,
Where compassion and forgiveness are the ties that bind.
Let's seek common ground, find shared humanity,
And create a future filled with peace and unity.

Grace McG, Year 7

Conflict

Conflict is the world's worst punishment
Conflict is endless pain
Conflict is suffering with no stop
Conflict is the ruthlessness of heartless people
Conflict is the endless family disputes
Conflict is the silent suffering of loved ones
Conflict is crying your heart and soul out
Conflict is hoping that you can
Conflict is telling your best friend you hate her
Conflict is loneliness with no end
Conflict is having no-where to go
Conflict is your family, friends up in flames
Conflict is shameless death
Conflict is anger with no end
Conflict is as sharp as a knife
Conflict is precisely pain
Conflict is the world turning against you
Conflict is the hiss of flames
Conflict is the shattering of lives
Conflict is preservation of evil
Conflict is the world's worst punishment.

Mila N, Year 7

