



Poems for Peace and from Conflict

AN ASL TWINS PROJECT PLAN

General Overview

This TWINS project aims to help students consider the idea of Peace versus Conflict personally, communally and globally by looking at poems and poets. They will share their understanding of the subject with their TWINS school by creating a booklet which can be shared. Some schools may like to also write their own Peace poems.

Method

- The TWINS Coordinators of both schools agree to share this project and set a deadline for its completion.
- The teacher discusses with the class the subject matter. Discuss examples of personal, community, and global conflicts. Discuss examples of peace in the same way. Discuss the emotions that the students feel when they are faced with conflict or peaceful situations.
- Ask the students to think of poems which convey either the idea of Peace or Conflict. Are they aware of any poems which were written during war time? How were these poems received by the public and what was the message that the poet was trying to send. The students could be asked to think about this for homework and to bring examples to the next lesson.
- The students should read each poem to the class and express how the poem makes them feel, what emotions do the words evoke?
- Ask the students to prepare a booklet of the poems they like or identify with and a brief description about the poet. The students can illustrate the poems to create a colourful booklet of poems and artwork.
- An extension to this project might be for the children to write their own poems on peace and conflict. These can be included in the booklet or an audio recording made to share with their TWINS school.
- The project booklets should be exchange at the agreed time.
- A follow up lesson should be scheduled to discuss the work received from your TWINS school. Read the poems and look at the similarities and any differences.

What will the students learn?

- An understanding of the nature of conflicts and the need for peace. Why there is a need for conflict resolution and the promotion of harmony.
- How poetry can mirror events and feelings and be used to promote peace or conflict.
- An insight into a global issue from own perspective and TWINS school.
- Imaginative thinking and personal development.
- Research skills and a wider understanding of literature.
- Broadening of English language vocabulary skills.
- Artistic skills

Summary

This TWINS project is a great way for students to share their understanding of a global issue with their partner school in a creative and interesting way.

Some Examples from the Great War:-

When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead (1915)

When you see millions of the mouthless dead
Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
Say not soft things as other men have said,
That you'll remember. For you need not so.
Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
"yet many a better one has died before."
Then, scanning all the overcrowded mass, should you
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
Great death has made all this for evermore.

Charles Hamilton Sorley was killed at the battle of Loos on 15th October 1915.

Aftermath

Have you forgotten yet? . . .
For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you're a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.
But the past is just the same--and War's a bloody game. . .
Have you forgotten yet? . . .
Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz,
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?
Do you remember the rats; and the stench
Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench--
And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?
Do you ever stop and ask, "Is it all going to happen again?"

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack--
And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then
As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?
Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back
With dying eyes and lolling heads--those ashen-grey
Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

Have you forgotten yet? . . .
Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget.

March 1919 - Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967)

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
-- Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, --
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

September-October 1917

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) was killed in action while leading his men on November 4th -- one week before the Armistice.

V. The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) who died two days before the landings at Gallipoli, on St. Georges Day April 23rd, from blood poisoning caused by a mosquito bite on his lip!

Some Examples from other Conflicts:-

What took place?
My city was set on fire
My people became faceless.
On my land, my breeze
on all the estampage of the Alien.
With your arms inter-locked behind
your back
for whom were you waiting?
Fire has writ large its message
indelibly on the clouds. **Tamil Poet Cheran – His poem is about the burning of the Public Library.**

From a collection of Poems called “Waiting for Peace’

The sorrow and grief, these black evenings,
Eyes full of tears and times full of sadness,
These burnt hearts, the killing of youths,
These unfulfilled expectations and unmet hopes of brides,
With a hatred for war, I call time and again,
I wait for peace for the grief-stricken Pashtuns.

By Zarlisht Hafeez, a female Pashto Poet writing about Afganistan.

To A Suicide Attacker

I'll ask you in the presence of God,
That in order to go to heaven
Why did you orphan my children?
Why did you widow a sick woman?
Why did you kill the son of an old lady?
Why did you kill the only brother of a weak girl?

Lines from Ahmad Fawad Lamay’s poem, in which, a victim of a suicide attack challenges the bomber.

Some useful links:-

<http://www.warpoets.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_poet

<http://www.pitt.edu/~pugachev/greatwar/poetrypage.htm>

<http://poetsagainstthewar.org/default.asp>

<http://www.warpoetry.co.uk/biogs99.htm>

<http://www.neh.gov/news/humanities/1998-03/honey.html> (War poets from Vietnam)

http://www.cepoets-cultural.lk/Deceased_Poets/Ven.S.Mahinda.htm (Sri Lankan Monk/Poet who fought for Sri Lanka’s independence from British rule)