

# What Defines Peace?

**By Daniel Philyaw, Blue Springs South  
First Place Winner**

What defines peace? Is it an agreement, a pact of non-violence, the tolerance of another's way of life? As stated by The Merriam-Webster dictionary, the primary definition of peace is "a state of tranquility," however, an alternate definition is listed. Peace is "harmony in personal relations." To truly be at peace, is more than just the tolerance of another's beliefs, rather it is the acceptance of others in your life. Before we can be peaceful with others, we must conquer our own insecurities and prejudices. It was once said that, "When you find peace within yourself, you become the kind of person who can live at peace with others."

The ideal of pluralism can only be achieved when the human race ends its obsession with classification. In our society, we separate everything—there is right and wrong, black and white, Democrat and Republican, sinner and saint, and so on and so forth. This classification only leads to prejudice, stereotypes and even hate. We remove ourselves from others who see things differently and seek only the isolation and comfort of those who are likeminded. Because of this isolation, or refusal to consider that alternate points of view can exist, we put up stone walls of ignorance and shut out any attempt of understanding. These metaphorical walls have manifested into reality. Fences guard our borders and weapons back the authority of our convictions.

So how do we rid ourselves of the hate and find a way to break through the barriers that divide the human race? We need to construct our own solution. We need to draw up a blueprint with realization, tear down the walls with education, and build bridges of acceptance through cooperation.

Let's start by drawing up a blue print, or rather plan what needs to be done. In order to achieve peace, we must come to the realization that opposing ideas can coexist. A singular way of thought is not necessarily the best philosophy. Fredrich Nietzsche once wrote, "You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist." We must realize that acceptance and understanding will lead to peace and harmony.

Furthermore, we need to tear down the walls of ignorance and isolation. The best way to achieve this goal is through education. If we can learn to comprehend why others maintain certain beliefs, we are more likely to treat them with respect. Many of today's prejudices are created from misunderstandings and a simple lack of knowledge about another's culture, faith, or background.

Lastly, we must build bridges to other cultures by cooperating and finding common ground. This may be the most difficult step, but once we set aside our misconceptions about others, it becomes easier to learn about the world and even about ourselves.

If we make the effort to broaden our minds, peace and pluralism are attainable. Creating harmony is of great importance as we plunge deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and head towards a truly global age, so I urge that you start today. It is up to us to build the bridges that connect society and all of mankind.