

# International Day of Peace - 21<sup>st</sup> September

## Introduction

International Day of Peace (also known as [World Peace Day](#)) was established by a UN resolution in 1981 and it was first celebrated in September 1982. The UN General Assembly decided to devote a specific time to concentrate the efforts of its member states, as well as of the whole of humankind, to [promote the ideals of peace](#).

Although conflict is a characteristic of human existence, it needs to be managed constructively. When associated with violence, destruction, and killing, it is no longer a healthy part of living. A violent conflict does not solve problems, it creates new and bigger issues.

The peace issue is also closely connected to the current level of world inequality. Billions of people live in extreme poverty which causes the death of 30,000 children every single day, from preventable diseases.

## Activity 1

Ask the class how they feel today (expected answers would be: *calm, relaxed, ready to learn, not nervous...*) and if children around the world have the same opportunities for education, hanging out with peers, etc. Depending on the students' age, try to list some of the ongoing international conflicts they have heard of.

## Activity 2

Ask students to work in pairs and write down all the [words related to peace](#) they can think of. As they do this, write the following words and expressions on the board:

WEAPONS A LOT OF MONEY HAPPINESS KILLING PEOPLE

JUSTICE LIFE NO WAR RICH ANGER VIOLENCE

SCHOOL HOBBIES RIDE A BIKE REFUGEE

Ask them to add to their list the words that can be related to **peace**.

Comment on and discuss their and your words and expressions, give examples, ask students to justify their choices.

## Activity 3

Draw a [peace sign](#) on the board and ask students about its history and meaning. Elicit the names of other [peace symbols](#): a dove, an olive branch, a rainbow flag (it. *pace*), a hand peace gesture, a peace crane, a lotus flower, a white poppy...

Cut out the flashcards with the pictures and names of peace symbols (pages 3-4 of this worksheet) and play a matching game on the board. With a more advanced class, you can also match the pictures to the short descriptions of the signs (pp 3-5 of this worksheet).

## Activity 4

Ask students to write an acrostic poem using the following words and expressions: peace, dove, olive branch, etc. The vocabulary from activity 2 is also on the board to help them. A weaker class can do it as pair work or group work. Encourage students to add illustrations (their own peace signs).

**Example**     *People united around the world*  
                     *End all the wars and conflicts*  
                     *All citizens helping each other*  
                     *Celebrate Peace Day every day*  
                     *Everyone holding hands in harmony.*

## Activity 5

Tell students that there are many different ways to promote peace. Ask them to arrange the examples below in order of interest to them (put 1 next to the one they feel most comfortable with, put 2 next to the second one, etc.). Discuss their answers as a whole-class activity.

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To work for peace I would...

\_\_\_ wear a t-shirt with an anti-war slogan.

\_\_\_ work in an NGO, such as Amnesty International.

\_\_\_ organise a school campaign against war.

\_\_\_ interview a peace activist on a TV programme.

\_\_\_ talk with my parents and friends about peace and war.

\_\_\_ sing songs against war.

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## Activity 6 (wrap up)

Ask students if they have heard of any famous people working for peace (Bono from U2, John Lennon in the past, Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins, Angelina Jolie, etc.), elicit some famous anti-war campaigns (hippie movement, anti-Vietnam war protests, etc.). Name some songs, films, or books dealing with peace or war.

Finish the discussion with a question:

Should we have a special holiday related to peace or should we fight for peace every day?

## Extra activity

Students can write the word peace in other fun and surprising ways, for example with their bodies!



The Lotus Flower



The Dove of Peace



The Rainbow Flag



The Peace Symbol



The Peace Crane



The Hand-Gesture Peace Sign



The White Poppy



### The Lotus Flower

The lotus flower symbol is found throughout much of Asia. It can be used to represent beauty, enlightenment, health, purity, and peace.



### The Dove of Peace

The dove, when portrayed without a halo, is a symbol of peace. Its origins are from the story of Noah and the Ark. When the rains that flooded the earth stopped pouring down, Noah sent out various birds to see if they would bring back any sign of land to his boat. One dove eventually returned carrying an olive branch.



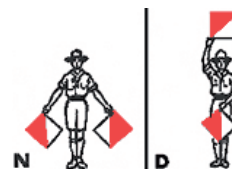
### The Rainbow Flag

The exact origins of the flag are unknown. It was first flown in 1923 to symbolise the ideas of international solidarity, economic efficiency, equality, and world peace. However, the first use of the flag during a peace rally was in Italy in 1961, inspired by similar multi-coloured flags used in demonstrations against nuclear weapons. It became popular with the *Pace da tutti i balconi* ("peace from every balcony") campaign in 2002, started as a protest against the impending war in Iraq. This flag has since been adopted internationally as a symbol of the peace movement.



### The Peace Symbol

The anti-nuclear emblem or the peace sign is one of the most widely-known symbols in the world. It was invented for the British campaign for nuclear disarmament. The symbol was designed from the naval code of semaphore - the code letters for N and D (nuclear disarmament). The first badges were made using white clay with the symbol painted black. They were distributed with a note explaining that in the event of a nuclear war, these fired pottery badges would be among the few human artefacts to survive the nuclear inferno.



The symbol was quickly adopted in the US when a friend of Martin Luther King Jr.'s began using it during civil rights marches. It has since become known worldwide as a symbol of peace and non-violence. The symbol was deliberately never copyrighted, so no one has to pay or to seek permission for using it. As a symbol of freedom, it is free for all.



### The Peace Crane

In Asia, the white crane is the bird of peace. The crane took on this symbolism after the bombings of Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. In 1955, an eleven-year-old Japanese girl named Sadako Sasaki was diagnosed with leukaemia from exposure to nuclear radiation. She heard that if she folded a thousand origami cranes, she would be granted a wish. So she began folding one crane after another. She died in the same year, but her story went out to the people of the world in a form of a book.



### The Hand-Gesture Peace Sign

This gesture is thought to have begun in Europe during World War II when a "V" for victory was painted on walls as a symbol of freedom from occupying forces. The sign was widely used by peace movements in the 1960s and 1970s as a symbol of the victory of peace and truth.



### The White Poppy

As far as it is known, white poppies were first produced by the Co-operative Women's Guild in Britain in 1933, and later one peace organisation undertook their annual distribution. In subsequent years, white poppies spread to other countries around the globe, and the white poppy became an international symbol of remembrance for all the casualties of war – civilians and armed forces personnel – and of peace. Some people see it as an alternative to the red poppy, others see it as complementary; on Remembrance Day some choose to wear both poppies, some one or the other, and some no poppy at all.