

# What I Can Do for Peace

**Daisan Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Ootake Souta**

I wanted to write an essay about peace, but I didn't know what to write about or what exactly peace meant. That's why I researched the meaning of peace in a Japanese dictionary. It said that peace means (1) calm and protected, and (2) that there is no war and the world is safe and sound. When I read the word "war", I remembered studying about "The art of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and her small Terezín students" in my Japanese class in sixth grade.

The story is that Friedl, a Jew, taught painting to children in the Terezin camp in the Czech Republic. She was convinced that it would give the children strength to live, so she risked her life to teach painting, hiding it from the German soldiers.

When I was studying this story, there were two things that surprised me. First, children were forced to work from morning to night in those camps. Second, a Jew was not recognized as a person, and called by a number instead of a name. I tried researching more about the Terezin camp. There were many pictures and poems in the book "The Terezin Camp: A Pictorial Record" that were not included in my textbook. There were also pictures of barbed wire, skinny children who had been subjected to physical experiments, and of many people who had been killed and lined up on the ground. In the book by Anne Frank there was also a scene where a Jewish person had a number on their arm.

Until now, I didn't know anything about it. That 6,000,000 Jewish people were killed. That an ordinary girl risked her life to live in a hiding place so that the German soldiers would not find her. That people's character and dignity was attacked and that they were discriminated and prejudiced against just because they were Jews. That Japan also had a poison gas factory on an island during the war. I didn't know a single thing about it. When I learned all of this, I was shocked and felt frightened. Then I started to wonder. Why were so many people killed, discriminated against, and treated so badly?

Recently, we hear a lot about SDGs on the news. In it, there is a goal called "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions". I think the fact that it is still just a goal means that we haven't achieved it yet, and that the world is not yet peaceful and safe. What I can do now to make the world a peaceful and safe place, is to not discriminate or prejudice people because of their skin color or cultural differences. And also, to not forget and to learn even more about the history of war.

# The Letter from My Great Grandmother's Younger Brother

**Daisan Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Kawaguchi Wakana**

Until the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade at school, I had never thought about things like war and peace. However, in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, I started to think about war and peace through social studies at school.

Wanting to know more, I asked my mother about it, and from her I discovered that my great grandmother's younger brother had experienced war. I telephoned my grandmother to find out more, and further found out that there was a letter left by my great grandmother's younger brother, before he died in the war.

A few days later, the letter arrived at my place. The letter was written in difficult characters, and I couldn't read it. But I could tell that although he knew that he might be killed in the war, he was filled with confidence. My grandmother included a letter she'd written to me, explaining the content of his letter.

There were 3 letters from my great grandmother's younger brother: some written before departing for war and some written on a plane while heading to war.

My great grandmother's younger brother is said to have been killed in the war on an island called Saipan. The letter writes, "The battle in July of the year Showa 19 (1944) was the hardest. I worry about my mother and the rest of my family in my homeland so far away. Out here on the corner of southeast Asia in Saipan, I fight for my country." It is not known what happened after that. But I felt that the way he seemed to worry more about his mother and family than himself showed bravery and compassion.

On August 15<sup>th</sup> of the year Showa 20 (1945), Japan lost the war to America and the war came to an end. It was quite a while until my family was notified that he had died in the war. I think that my great grandmother must have been ever so anxious during that time.

Those people who risked their lives to go to fight in war must have experienced something so hard. When I think of how they risked their lives for their country in battle, worrying about their families so far away, it pains my heart. I don't want this terrible feeling and pain to ever happen again. Events to promote peace in the world and society are being held across the regions. I'd like to visit the Gokoku Shrine in Shizuoka and Yasukuni Shrine sometime to pay my respects to those who fought in war, just like my great grandmother's younger brother.

I want to be a strong person who can passionately pursue their interests, show appreciation in being able to live everyday in peace and happiness with their family, and be able to try and try again when faced with difficult challenges.

# My Idea of “Peace”

## Daisan Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Miyoshi Yuuka

I took advantage of my summer vacation to visit the Numazu City Archives of Meiji History to refer to “Listen, See, Think - About the War in Our Town”. In Numazu, I saw war historical sites, listened to the stories of people who experienced air raids, and was able to eat “Suiton”\*, a food that was eaten during the war. And what I felt most was the thought, “What is peace?”

I looked up the word “peace” in the dictionary. (1) calm and relaxed, (2) a state in which society is not disarranged by war or violence. I believe there are two types of “peace”: peace of mind and peace in society.

To be together with your family, to study with your friends at school, to sleep in a warm bed, to eat delicious food...all these things I take for granted every day. I couldn’t believe that even in the Numazu I live in now, there was a time 76 years ago when all of these things were not possible. But such a time really existed.

On July 17, 1945, there was an air raid in Numazu. 9,080 incendiary bombs were dropped, killing 274 people and injuring 505 others. There really was a time when 90% of the city of Numazu was burned to the ground and the scenery I see every day was nothing.

I listened to the story of an elderly woman who lost her leg in an air raid. With the whole town of Numazu on fire, everyone was running around crying and calling out, and there were many injured people lying in the streets. It really was a time of the exact opposite of peace.

I was born in a time of peace, but I will never forget the traces of war left in the town and the story of this old lady. I don’t think the current peace should be taken for granted. It is important to protect this peace so that it can last forever.

I learned about SDGs in school. They aren’t just goals in Japan, but worldwide goals. Among the 17 goals, there are 10 that have to do with peace. Without peace, I think it’s not possible to achieve the SDGs. If each and every one of us could have peace in our minds, every country in the world would surely be more peaceful than it is now. What I can do for the greater peace may really be just a small thing. But I will always try to keep a peaceful mind. And I hope that peace of mind will spread to my family and friends around me. I’m sure that if we collect many small fragments of peace, we will be able to connect it all together into a greater peace someday.

\*Suiton is a Japanese dish that is made by slicing flour dough by hand, rolling it by hand, and scooping it into small pieces, then boiling it in soup.

# World Peace

## Daisan Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Watanabe Yuzuki

I have never experienced war. That's why I don't know much about the hard struggles of a war yet. Because of this, I would like to learn more through this essay about peace.

First, I wanted to focus on nuclear weapons. In Japan, Hiroshima and Nagasaki were hit by nuclear bombs. The nuclear weapons that were used caused damage to many people. However, I wondered if there were other countries besides Japan that had been affected by nuclear weapons, so I did some research.

Then, as I expected, I found out that there were many "atomic bomb victims" in other countries as well.

For example, I learned that there are more than 1 million survivors in Semibaraminsk, where the Soviet Union conducted about 470 nuclear tests, which made me feel more uneasy than I expected.

In addition to this, many victims were born on South Pacific islands where nuclear tests were conducted. Nuclear tests involving explosions have been banned, but now there is a possibility of developing cancer if you are exposed to too much light from X-rays. Therefore, I am worried that the number of people damaged by radiation will continue to increase little by little.

Next, I tried researching the number of countries that are currently at war, as well as why they are fighting. 24 of the world's 194 countries are currently still at war. The war in Japan had ended before I was born, and in my heart I sometimes thought that as long as Japan was safe, that was all that mattered. However, Japanese people might live in those 24 countries as well. I think when Japan was at war, people from other countries were victims as well. Wars in other countries might not affect Japan, but I believe this thinking was irresponsible of me, since the same kind of war that killed so many people in Japan in the past is still going on in other countries.

Furthermore, even if foreign wars nowadays wouldn't involve actually killing each other, spies may steal information or do other things like sabotage. Some countries that are currently at war are having a civil war. There are 45 countries that are currently engaged in wars and civil wars, which makes me wonder why there would be a war even in one's own country.

How can all nations of the world reconcile? I believe that if we talk with people from other countries and find people who understand us, even if only a little, it will lead to a step toward reconciliation and peace.

# Passing on the Story of War

## Daigo Elementary School, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Naito Rui

My grandfather experienced war. In 1945, when my grandfather was just a little 5-year old boy, he lived with his family of 5 in a house along the Kanogawa River, east of the Fourth Elementary School in Miyuki-cho, Numazu City. The house had a large air-raid shelter that could hold about 15 people.

As the war got worse, American B-29 planes flew in and dropped bombs every day. When an airplane came, my grandfather's family would hide in the air shelter together with other people from the neighborhood. At times, they even hid in the Kanogawa River.

After a while of living like this, my grandfather and his family moved to Shirotori-cho, Gujo-gun in Gifu Prefecture. They took a steam locomotive from Numazu Station.

3 days later, around 1am on July 17th, a major air raid happened in Numazu, and the city was turned into a burnt wasteland.

The war ended on August 15th in 1945. After a while, my grandfather and his family came back to Numazu. But their old house burned down, so they moved to the place where their current house is located in the Daigo Elementary School District. According to my grandfather, it was a lodging house for people who worked at a munitions factory for a naval arsenal. He said he could see all the way from Numazu Station to the Negata Main Street, because almost all the buildings had been burned down.

The war was over, but for my grandfather and his family, life after the war was more difficult. There was no food, and even if they went to the farmers to buy some sweet potatoes, they couldn't buy it and only got sweet potato leaves. He told me that they used to drink a soup made from boiled sweet potato leaves.

They had no rice, so they caught and ate locusts in fall, and fished red swamp crayfish out of a ditch with running water.

When he entered elementary school and started to eat school lunch, he was served bread rations and bad skimmed milk powder every day. Some days, that was the only meal he had.

Besides that, after the war, family members got sick and it cost a lot of money to cure them, so their poor life style continued for several years. I take for granted that we have peace and plenty of food now, so I can't even imagine the hard life they had because of the war. I feel sorry for my grandpa, who was hungry every day.

I don't want there to be wars that recklessly take human lives. For this reason, I think it is important to tell the next generations about the war that caused so many people painful and scary experiences. Recently, I saw on the news that people who experienced the war are growing older, so the number of people who can talk about their experiences is getting lower. That's why I want to tell my future children and grandchildren the stories my grandfather

told me.

I hope that today's peaceful days will always continue.

## For There to Be Peace

**Daigo Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Ootaku Kokona**

I think the world needs to change a lot of things in order to have peace. There are many, but I think the main thing is war. In many places, war is still going on. I have been thinking about what we can do to end war.

I researched why wars happen in the first place. One of the reasons is an ethnic conflict. People of different ethnicities sometimes fight each other because of their different ideas. I think it is very important to accept other people even if they have different ideas. If we accept each other, we won't feel uncomfortable. In order to do this, I think it is important to have the mindset of doing things ourselves, rather than thinking that we won't do something unless someone else does it for us. It's not just about war, but about everything around us. For example, having a fight with someone. Fights are like small wars. War is caused by something colliding with something else. It's the same with quarrels. If one person says something unpleasant, but the other person is kind, there will be no fight. So if everyone in the world would be kind, there would surely be no war. In order to do so, I thought it would be a good idea to eliminate war through these actions and mindsets. It's not too late for us to make this world a better place.

There are other conflicts as well, such as conflicts regarding religions, resources, politics, territories, and so on. But if you think about it calmly, they may be conflicts that can be solved. If we do this, we will be able to avoid conflicts and be kind to others.

In addition, I recently read in the newspaper that there is a country called Somaliland, which was formed from the country of Somalia. I heard that the civil war in Somalia started in the 1980s. It is said that it is common in Africa for people of the same country to fight among themselves. At that time, the northern region of Somalia called itself Somaliland and said that it would secede from Somalia. Normally, this would lead to a new civil war over the right to rule, but in Somaliland, it was settled by a discussion among the clan elders. I thought that was amazing. Not only did they avoid a war, but they also created a system of democracy, including the establishment of a parliament and a presidential system. After that, Somaliland established a constitution through a referendum and became a state in its own right.

I was impressed by the way the people voted to decide the constitution and to promote the democratic system. From now on, whenever I have a fight or any other problem, I would like to solve it through discussion.

I hope that one day there will come a time of peace, when there are no wars in the world.

# A World without Wars

**Daigo Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Murofushi Ayana**

I think it's sad that wars happen. People kill each other, food is scarce, nutrition is inadequate, and many people die. Every person has only one life, so it is something precious.

My grandmother passed away on June 6<sup>th</sup> this year. Over the final 2 weeks of her life, my family and I cared for her in our house. She was sick and started to get weaker and weaker, and it seemed very hard and painful for her. When I was looking at my grandmother, I felt sad and cried, but I was able to help nurse my grandmother to the end, and there I learned how important life is.

An atomic bomb was dropped on Japan twice. One on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki. More than 140,000 and 70,000 people, respectively, died in an instant from these nuclear weapons. I lost one life, my grandmother's life, and it was so sad and painful, but the atomic bombings killed countless people, and I can't imagine how sad their families, friends, and people around them must have been.

I was thinking about how wars could be stopped. There have been times when I fought with my sister and didn't think about her feelings. For this to not become a kind of war, it is first important to listen to the feelings of the other person. If you can express your feelings afterwards, I think you will be able to get along with each other even if you have a fight. Just like when we have fights, if we try to talk and understand each other, I think wars can be stopped. I think it is a good idea to consider people's feelings and to let them get to know me through my opinions, too.

Next, I thought about how we could avoid fighting with violence and weapons. During the Olympics this year, it was great to see people from so many countries in exchange and competing with each other no matter if they lost or won. Competing in sports means that we can keep people from dying and all kinds of people from being sad.

I started swimming when I was 4 years old. I practiced every day, but there were times when I would get angry or get frustrated and shed tears because someone younger than me would beat my time. But when I went to a competition and saw my friends who got a better time than me, I wanted to cheer for them and also do my best. That's why I think competing in sports is good, because our own confidence will grow, we can cheer for the people around us, and we can see eye-to-eye. Competing in sports is possible because everyone is there. I believe that if we can interact with people from different countries through sports, we would not have to fight in wars.

# Peace and War

**Oooka Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Nagakura Nanaha**

When I heard about war, I thought about it. All I knew was that war was horrible and scary and takes the lives of many people.

So I asked my father, “What is war?”

He told me about stories from the second world war. “The Second World War was a war that started because Japan was running low on food supply and tried to snatch them from other countries”.

I was so surprised. I thought that Japan was being attacked unilaterally. Other countries were making it hard to get food. That’s why Japan had to take it.

My father asked me, “Nanaha, if it would have been you, what would you have done?”.

I have family and friends. I thought about how it would be possible to secure food in order to protect these people. I thought about it, but in the end I couldn’t find an answer.

Maybe I’m just too young or immature to have an answer. In the past, there was no other choice than war. I was shocked by this.

Later, my father said this to me: “Japan was at war to get food. We weren’t doing it just for the land. And there was a sense of protecting the family”.

In other words, the people that went to war and politicians of every country were doing it out of justice for their countries and families. I felt thankful for the people who fought for this righteousness.

But even so, if you go to war, you never know if you’ll come back. I want people to think about the families and people that were left behind.

War is very painful when it is being waged. And even more painful when it is over.

I strongly believe that even if there is happiness and peace beyond war, we must never start it no matter what. Happiness and peace are only possible with family and friends, and I want to continue living my life with the happiness I have now firmly in my heart.

# Something I Thought about for the First Time This Summer

**Ashitaka Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Yamazawa Chihiro**

“So this is war”, I sighed.

This summer, I watched 2 documentaries on war. They were about Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. Severe burns, dead people in the streets – I can’t forget those scenes. There were also scenes of people who had such bad burns, they turned pitch black. For me, it was



the first time to see this. I was scared and will never forget it.

During the Battle of Okinawa, American troops came and dropped bombs on the unsuspecting residents and burned them with flamethrowers, which was really horrible to watch. I knew that atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it was the first time that I learned about what was actually happening beneath those mushroom clouds. When I thought about the suffering of those people, I had an inexpressible feeling. How much must they have suffered. I thought, how could humans do something like this to other humans. I got unbelievably sad imagining that it was me or my family.

I thought the U.S. was horrible, but in the video it was said that the U.S. held a grudge against Japan. "Paying back what was done to us" or "Resentment will be paid back double" - I think this is what we can call war. I was scared about how there is no end to this thinking.

This year, the Olympics were held in Tokyo. I watched the opening and closing ceremony with my parents. Athletes from every country were smiling and it felt like everyone in the venue became one. Seeing this, I also got excited. During the competitions, I saw various athletes caring for each other, helping each other, and praising each other. I was happy to see that different countries, no matter who won or lost, were watching out for each other and getting along. It is said that the Olympics are a peaceful celebration, and I really felt that. Seeing this, I couldn't believe that there had been a war in the past.

I don't know the reasons why wars happened yet. I don't know why people who lived their normal lives just like us had to die. I will probably study and understand it better in the future. Even then, I think that no matter what, we mustn't start wars and take the precious lives of people. All human life is equal. There is no top or bottom. There is also no strong or weak.

In the end of the documentary about Okinawa it said: "Please know about what happened. Please learn about it". The people who experienced the war are getting older, so the number of people who can talk about it is decreasing. They are remembering and telling us things they don't want to remember because they have to tell them now. Hearing of stories about war might be scary, but we have to listen to them now. Nowadays, we can read about war experiences on the internet as well. Every year in summer, there are war documentaries airing on TV. We can also read about it in books. I would like to know what war was like in any way I can. I think that if we all learn more about war and strongly believe that we don't want this to happen again, we will be able to create a peaceful world.

# What I Heard from a Survivor of Hiroshima

Oohira Elementary School, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Ogawa Ko

Right at the beginning of the summer holidays, I went to Hiroshima. I was told that we can't go because of COVID-19, but I wanted to go no matter what and asked again until we went.

When I was taking pictures of the Atomic Bomb Dome, an elderly man on a bicycle started talking to me. "How old are you?", he asked, and I answered, "I'm 10 years old". He said, "I was your age when the atomic bomb was dropped. At that time, I was at the house of my grandparents. I was not affected by the bomb, but my actual home was hit by the hot air. I lost my mother, my 2 sisters, and my sister's baby all at once. To this day, we don't know where my mother and one of my sisters had been. I was raised by my grandmother. We suffered a lot because there was no food. The people in the neighbourhood taught me how to hunt sparrows, so from then on, I often caught them and cooked and ate the wings. We couldn't choose what we wanted to eat. We had to search for food ourselves to stay alive". I felt like crying when I heard his story. A boy my age losing his mother and sisters is already sad enough, but he also had to search for food. There was no time for likes or dislikes. I think he was dying to stay alive. Compared to him, I'm full of likes and dislikes.

Every day at 8:15 a.m., the time the atomic bomb was dropped, the elderly man goes to the Peace Memorial to pay his respects, and on his way back he feeds the sparrows near the Atomic Bomb Dome. He is feeding the sparrows to apologize and to thank them for saving his life.

Just one atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima extremely and took the lives of many people. It also destroyed the lives of happy families in the blink of an eye. Since the end of the war it has been 76 years, but there are still many people who suffer from radiation sickness, like cancer or leukemia. Later, the man showed me scars that he got from his two cancer surgeries. It was very painful.

There is still a lot of nuclear power in this world, and atomic bombs are being made even now. It is said that the current nuclear weapons are even more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and that a few hundred would change the shape of the earth irreversibly. It's terrifying. We don't need atomic weapons in this world. I hope that the world will continue to be a place where everyone on earth can live in peace and joy. Since talking to a survivor and going to the Peace Memorial Museum, I feel even stronger about this wish now. May there always be peace.

# **There Is No Good in War**

**Oohira Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Ooi Minori**

I believe that war should never happen, that war should never be waged, because it causes sorrow to many people, and it is bad for the country and its people.

In the Second World War, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Prefectures. Many people were harmed by the atomic bomb, and I thought to myself; “What good can come from dropping an atomic bomb?” I couldn’t imagine that people could do such thing, to kill people, and be able to feel happiness that the war has won. There are many people who are suffering in other countries, and all they care is about themselves.

Not only the atomic bombing, but the aftermath as well, there was black rain after the explosion of the bombs. It is called “black rain” because the sand that came from the bombs came falling down like rain. The black rain contained radiation, and those who were exposed to it are still suffering from it until now. The fact that they are still suffering means that they have been suffering for a long time, so it must have been really hard for them. They did not just drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Prefecture, Tokyo was also terrorized and other cities as well. So, this war means that the whole Japan is suffering before.

At that time, Japan was not a peaceful country as well, people were killed for the slightest thing, and the law was not that even strong for people to follow. However, since Japan suffered a great deal from the Second World War, everyone learned that war was wrong and started to rebuild Japan and move towards peace.

The people who were suffering were given help, and countries joined together to protect each other, and now Japan is protected by peace. Even though Japan is at peace, there are still people who are suffering in their own countries because of war. There are also people who are suffering from poverty, cases where people can be killed for the slightest thing just like in the past, and there are people who live with no freedom.

I want to support each other with a kind heart and help those who are suffering so that these wars and suffering will soon disappear, and everyone can live a free and peaceful life.

# **The War I Heard about**

**Oohira Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Oomura Shuuto**

I watched the drama *Kono Sekai no Katasumi ni* (In a Corner of the World) and was surprised at how poor life was during the war. I wanted to know more about life during the war, so I decided to ask my 90-year-old great-grandmother.

My great-grandmother’s father was a professional soldier, so when she was in junior high

school, her whole family moved to Manchuria. Unlike Japan, Manchuria was not bombed and was peaceful. However, on August 9, 1945, my great-grandmother was playing with her younger brothers and sisters when there was a “whoosh” sound and that indicated that they were being attacked by the former Soviet Union at the time. They prepared to flee quickly and escaped by truck going to the train station that day. Then, they took the train going to the south. But even while they’re on the train, there was a sound that goes “whoo-dah-dah-dah-dah”. Finally, they arrived at a place called Dunhua, where they listened to the radio announcing the end of the war. But even after that, they were collected by the Soviet Union and taken to a hangar at an airfield, where they were sent away for a week to the mountains. Along the way, all the babies who had been carried on their mother’s back died along the way. My great-grandmother, who was talking to me was crying, as if she still remembers how hard it was. I felt a little scared because I couldn’t imagine the babies dying in their mother’s back whilst they are being carried. They lived in the mountains for a while, but then it got cold and they fled south again. 1 year later, they were able to return to Japan.

I knew that my great-grandmother came back to Japan from Manchuria, but I thought she came back right after the war ended. I had no idea that she had gone through such a difficult time that year leading up to her return. I was scared just hearing about the happenings at that time. My great-grandmother experienced this at the age of 15. It’s not just a matter of time in this era. In addition, there were many lives that could have been saved if the war never happened in the first place, such as the atomic bombing, the air raid on Tokyo, and the call for red papers.

My great-grandmother used to say, “There is nothing good about war.” The words of my great-grandmother, who had been through so much pain, were heavy for me to hear. We should never take lightly of the war that happened on Japan in the past. I want to protect the peaceful life we are living right now.

## **Seeing the Panel Exhibition “Atomic Bombs and Humanity”**

**Oohira Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Kanaeda Mao**

There was a panel exhibition called “Atomic Bombs and Humanity” in the city library. I went to see it with my female relative.

When I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, I went to the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima. At that time, I was still very young, so when I looked at the photos and displayed items, I only had thoughts to the degree of “Oh, this is so worn out!” or “Wow, amazing!” or “Ugh, gross!”. I didn’t even understand the atomic bomb well.

In comparison, the photos in the city library were fewer and there were not so many hor-

rible scenes. Still, when I was looking at one of the photos I felt extremely sad. The photo showed a boy of 7 or 8 years, carrying a dead baby on his back. Seeing him standing straight at rigid attention at the crematorium made my heart ache like it was being cut with a knife. He was much younger than me. The boy's parents must have died in the atomic bombing, or there were circumstances that prevented them from coming, so he must have carried the dead baby on his backs in tears. Seeing this boy having come to the crematorium all alone made me feel so bad and sorry for him.

This child's happy family was destroyed in a second by the atomic bomb, and he was thrown into a world of darkness. The lives of the baby, him, his father and mother, siblings – they were destroyed all at once. It was hard to think about this and I felt very sad.

There are hard and sad things as big as mountains in this world, but I was wondering if there was anything worse than this.

I was wondering if the boy in the photo grew up to be a healthy adult. Or maybe he had died from radiation sickness. I hoped that he was living a happy life now.

76 years ago, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the lives of hundreds of thousands of people were destroyed in seconds. I heard that many people are still battling radiation diseases and are living in and out of hospitals, even now. It made me wonder what those people were thinking about the last 76 years. Even though they survived, they must have endured many days of discrimination, even though the cause of the disease was not their own fault. They were often told that it might be contagious, that the skin would stick to other skin due to the burns from the hot air, and that even if they wanted to get married, they shouldn't because of the radiation disease.

Just because of 1 atomic bomb, many people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are suffering to this day. Not just their bodies, but also their minds carry scars. It really is dreadful.

Nowadays, there are nuclear bombs all over the world that can kill 5 or 6 times more human beings (about 7 billion people) on earth. We must never use atomic power as weapons to kill people. I don't think we should live in a world where towns are burned to the ground by the enormous destructive power of nuclear energy, or where innocent civilians are killed and exposed to radiation and suffer for decades. I want peace in the world to last forever.

## **Understanding the Horror of War**

**Hara Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Sato Sumire**

In 1945, the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending the Second World War. This war was fought between Japan, Germany, and Italy versus the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, and it lasted a little over 6 years, starting in 1939. Japan surrendered after 2 atomic bombs were dropped on it. The combined death toll of the

atomic bombs was over 500,000.

When I learned that 9 countries have such nuclear weapons, I knew that there would be many more deaths in the future. I thought about what we should do in order to create a peaceful world without war and nuclear weapons.

I think the most important thing is to convey the horror of war. Originally, I didn't know about war when I was small. However, when I learned about war and atomic bombs in classes and on the news, I felt that it was scary that so many people lost their lives because of these. I was very relieved to know that Japan would not participate in any kind of war anymore. I want younger children to know the horror of war like I did, and be grateful that we can live in peace and happiness now. If they do, I believe that the young adults get ahold of this information, 10 or 20 years from now war will never happen again.

Every year on August 6th, the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and many people died, there is a ceremony being held called the Peace Memorial Ceremony. Elementary school students participate in the ceremony and make a pledge to act with a strong desire for peace. The pledge reaches and touches the hearts of many people. I hoped that the pledge of the elementary school students would reach the hearts of people not only in Japan but also across borders, especially in countries that war is still existing.

Other activities are also being conducted by people who have experienced war or lost loved ones to pass on their suffering and pain to future generations. I believe that these activities and ceremonies will continue in the future. I want many people to know how scary it is and at the same time feel gratitude that they can spend time with their families and friends and face their normal daily lives peacefully. I felt that we must also pass on the thought of suffering that was passed on to us.

Life today is completely different from life in the past. In addition to playing freely and sleeping on futons with family members as we do now, we used to have little food. Some people got sick and died before they could be killed. The more I researched, the more I came to believe that we are privileged to be alive. Without forgetting the war, I would like to cherish the happiness that I have now and spend each day with gratitude and great care.

## **Get across the Country!**

### **Ukishima Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Ochiai Wachika**

“Flash! Boom, boom, boom!”

There was a tremendous sound and the earth was shaking. The atomic bomb had been dropped. Everyone went into the air-raid shelters and waited for the bomb explosion to wear off. This is a memorable scene from “Barefoot Gen”.

This atomic bomb killed a lot of innocent people. There are people who got their skin

burned because of the said bomb. If you get a little burn on your fingers, it hurts so much. Imagine having your skin burned is honestly horrifying.

War is a horrible and an unnecessary way to kill people and to erase their memories.

So why do we have wars? Japan's current problems are Northern Territory issues, the Senkaku Islands issue, and the Takeshima issue.

What I felt was "How can Russia, Korea, and China claim these islands when they are actually a part of Japan?" I don't understand it.

China's argument for claiming the Senkaku Islands is that "China discovered, named and used Uotsuri Island from an earlier point in time". That's what they said.

Next, Korea claimed Takeshima, and their argument was "Korea has many documents about Takeshima, so it is our country".

Lastly, Russia, which has taken the Northern Territories without permission insisting that, "It became Russian territory as a result of the war. This territory belongs to us".

I thought to myself, "What a mess". These is what I found out searching on the Internet using my chrome book. But I guess they have their own arguments. But for Japan, it's not even a discussion at all. They are in direct conflict with what Japan has to say. If they hear Japan's argument, I think this is what they're going to say, "Okay, let's go to war".

No, no, no. What should we do in Japan to stop wars?

First, I believe that if the Japanese people learn about the horror of war and realize that war is a horrible thing to do and that it should not be allowed, they will stop the fighting.

So, I came up with an idea that even elementary school students can start with, and that is to have athletes from different countries to compete against each other by using sports, like they did in the 2020 Olympics. Even if we don't speak the same language, I think we can communicate with other countries by experiencing the fun, pain, and difficulty of the rules in the game.

I am a track and field athlete, so when I watched the Olympics, I really understand the hardships that marathon runners faced that time. That's why I felt like the need to cheer for athletes from countries other than Japan, saying "Go for it!". I want to cheer for the athletes even they are from beyond the borders of my country. We compete with each other whilst improving one another. When a new world record is set, I think, "Wow!" Barracking for athletes and showing respect for each other beyond the bounds of countries – a love for the Olympics encourages each of us to push our limits and I think, might lead to peace on earth.

# What Is True Peace?

**Kanuki Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Nakajima Rion**

Whenever I talk about war, someone says, “Japan is a peaceful country. I’m glad I was born in a peaceful country.” The word “peace” was always included in their statement.

I have never thought deeply about the meaning of peace. Or rather, I had never tried to think about it. However, after reading a book in the 6th grade, I began to think about what peace means.

If I had been asked, “Is Japan a peaceful country?” I would have included the word “peace” in my answer without fail. This is because Japan is not at war. But now, I don’t think so. On the contrary, I wondered if I could call it “peace” when there are some incidents or natural disasters that caused a loss of life. The reason why I started to think of this was because of the worst murder case since the war, which happened in the early morning of July 26, 2016. Many people lost their lives in this incident. The perpetrator chose to stab the physically challenged who could not speak. He thought “These people don’t deserve to live”. When I heard about this, I realized that there is no such thing as a person who don’t deserve to be alive. This incident must have been a shock to many people who thought Japan was a peaceful country.

In writing this peace essay, I read a book. It was a book about the atomic bombing. A man who lived in Nagasaki, at the time the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki was on his way to the air-raid shelter, and many people were injured there and there was a lot of screaming and groaning. In addition, the fire made it difficult to move, and bodies were lying all over the place. He had to fight to stay alive. Then one day, this person’s brother who was exposed to radiation was never to return. When I heard that story, I felt sad of course, to suddenly lose someone you love. It was saddening. Those people must have lost more loved ones than us, and they must have been going through a very hard and painful time because the place where they used to live were burnt down to the ground. But I only read about it in books, so I can’t really know how scary, painful, and difficult it must have been. It was probably harder and more painful than I thought it would be. But I thought that people who have experienced such things would feel that Japan nowadays is peaceful.

I don’t know what true peace is yet, but I’m sure there are many different opinions varying on different people. So maybe it is not so easy to say if Japan is peaceful at all. Even if we call Japan as a peaceful country, it may not be a peaceful country for someone else. That’s why I wanted to find true peace with everyone.



## **Glass Pear**

**Kadoike Elementary School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Fujishima Hina**

I think it's very sad and painful to see a child whose warm daily life has nothing to do with the war. During the war, there were many people who felt that way. I've read a book and, in this book, there is a girl who lived through the war.

During this time, Japan went to war not only with China, but also with America and England. Because of this, many men were taken to war as soldiers. The girl's brother was one of them. Thinking about it, if someone in my family was about to be taken to a dangerous place, I would do everything in my power to stop them. However, in those days, it was considered a great honor to be a soldier fighting for one's country, so if I stopped them or cried, my life would be in danger. I thought, "It's not right to fight and die on the battlefield."

In the end, the girl's older brother never returned and died in the war. Her brother, who was always kind to her and whom she loved so much, was gone. I thought it was sad and painful for the girl.

Those who were left behind had to give supplies to the soldiers in the midst of a difficult life. The sirens go off every day. If you don't stay vigilant, you and your family might die. I think it is very difficult to live with such situation, and it gives you anxiety every day.

Then, in the summer of the 20th year of Showa, the war finally ended. The war was finally over, the conflict that had caused so many deaths was finally done.

This year marks the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war. In today's Japan, the number of people who have experienced war is decreasing, and the number of young people who do not know the horrors of war is also increasing. I am one of them, but reading this book, I was able to learn more about the pain of life during the war and the sorrow of losing a family and relatives. War wipes out everything that is important to us and leaves us with nothing to gain. I don't want for that to happen again.

I hope that each and every citizen will think about the consequences of war and the benefits of living peacefully so that Japan can continue to be a peaceful country. I hope that this peaceful life will continue forever.

## **A War Like a Storm**

**Imazawa Elementary School, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Kiyama Taiga**

I didn't know anything about the war, but I learned a little bit about it in class. If I had been alive when the war was going on, I'm sure I would have felt the same way. (What can I do to help?)

I learned that the children of that time were working with the hope that a peaceful day would come soon. I realize that the word peace is easy for me to say, but it's not so easy to achieve. The men who went to war were making their pride look good for their country, even though the chances of their own survival were close to zero. The women had to cook with few ingredients to feed their children and work in manufacturing factories. It was such a crippling life.

War is a state where there is no peace on earth because countries fight each other. Even a single bullet, a gun, is enough to make the world without peace. That is why guns are so dangerous. If you use it wrongly, the world may be destroyed. It is a very scary thing. So, I don't want people to use dangerous things.

Second, I didn't know why the Self-Defense Forces are still around, but now I finally understand. The Self-Defense Forces are there to make and maintain the peace. I don't think we have completely achieved peace yet. Therefore, I believe that we must inherit the thoughts of the people of the past and make this country peaceful. I am sure that the people of the past were as strong as anyone in their desire to protect the country of Japan. I strongly and firmly believe that there will never be another war. That is why I want to cherish the peace we have now, to cherish our own lives, and do everything we can to help those who sacrificed their lives so that we can continue to keep the peace that we have now.

Lastly, I would like to do small things such as helping the people in need, listening to their needs, and doing what I can do to help them. I would also like to spend my time thinking about the feelings of others and not just prioritizing my own. I believe that if each of us can think about others and be kind, there will never be conflicts. So, I hope that we can all work together and live a happy life.

## Happy Peace

**Imazawa Elementary School, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Maeda Aoi**

Peaceful.

Being with your own family.

Playing with friends.

Being able to eat food.

Being able to study

Being able to do what you like.

Being able to go on outings.

Being able to make up after a simple quarrel.

To be able to live a normal life.

“Boom, boom, boom.”

Bombs are falling.

A peaceful life and a town that you love is burning to the ground.

The family who are always there for you is gone.

The friends that you were close to were also gone.

You can't eat.

You can't study.

You can't play just like you used to.

Everyday is a sad day, everyday is a painful day.

War is a terrible thing.

I am glad that I live in a peaceful place.

I want it to last forever and ever.

War should never happen again.

I want to start from what I can do so that this peace can continue and not disappear.

## **What We Need to Know**

### **Heda Elementary and Junior High School, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Ishihara Kira**

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, it is the anniversary of the end of the war. I heard a story about the war and it was a story that I couldn't imagine from the everyday life that I am living right now.

It was about the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, a place I have been to many times. Whenever I go to Hawaii, I am always welcomed with open arms, but when I think about the war, I feel both grateful and sad. Think about of the attack in Okinawa by Japan on Battleship Missouri, which is now in Pearl Harbor. Even though the Americans must have been filled with rage towards Japan, they held back their anger, sending to sea the bodies of fallen Japanese soldiers. How could they be so kind, and yet the war still happened?

And what are the feelings of those who were willing to go to war at that time?

If it had been me, I would have wondered why I had to go. But one of the people who went on war said on the TV, “I wasn't afraid of dying at that time.” I was really surprised to hear that. I think he must have been really scared, and sad that he couldn't eat the food that he wanted, go to the places that he wanted to go, think of the things that he cares about, or even meet his family. I thought that he really wanted to live.

I also wondered how his family felt. They probably didn't want him to go, even if it was for the sake of the country (Japan), and they probably wanted for him to come back home alive and well.

When I heard about the war for the first time, I thought that I don't want the war to happen again, and that everyone should know that this horrible thing really happened in the past.

There are still wars going on in some countries. Why are we repeating the same thing over and over again? I want people to value their lives more. In order to do so, I want to be considerate and help each other or help someone who is in trouble. I believe that if everyone felt that way, we would have a peaceful world.

I hope that not only in Japan, but everyone in the world will be able to live a happy and a peaceful day every day.

## **A Peaceful World without War**

**Heda Elementary and Junior High School,  
6<sup>th</sup> Grade Yamaguchi Yuzuka**

I have been thinking about peace.

What does "Peace" mean to you? In my opinion, peace is the absence of war, which means the absence of fighting and quarreling. Ever since I was a little girl, I liked to listen to my grandma and grandpa's stories a lot. One of the stories I used to listen to was about the past, about the war.

I think I am not the only one who feels sad when we hear stories about war. This time, I heard a story about Mr. Nobuo Nishizaki, a former crew member of the destroyer "Yukikaze".

Mr. Nishizaki said that when he joined the Navy, his mother told him, "If you die, you are nothing. You must come home."

If someone had told me the same thing, I would have gotten scared and just run away. It made me a little sad to hear it, but I felt as if I was somehow entrusted to value life. I thought the message said, "Even if you go to war, you must come back alive." I thought that was the message for Mr. Nishizaki.

However, Mr. Nishizaki's waterborne special forces unit was no match for the overwhelming American offensive unit. Mr. Nishizaki suddenly remembered the words of his mother, "nothing would happen if I die" and that turned on his desire to kill, and he immediately fired his gun in selfless succession. Even now, 76 years later, he still feels remorse when he thinks of the lives he could not save because he ran out of strength when helping his wounded comrades.

When I researched about Mr. Nishizaki, I realized that everyone who experienced the war is still suffering until now. So, what we can do is to try to learn more about the history that is being taught at school. I also want to convey the wishes and the importance of the information that has been handed down to us, and to strengthen the bonds toward peace, so that we can create a peaceful world where each and every one of us can live with a smile and peace

of mind.

## From Past Battles to Future Peace

**Daiichi Junior High School, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Saito Tsukasa**

For me, who was born in the peaceful era of Heisei and has spent the same days, August 9th is just one day. But for those who experienced today 76 years ago, it's a particularly terrifying and unforgettable day.

A wartime panel exhibition was held at the Numazu City Library. The one photo I saw there filled me with sadness. The photo titled "Boy Standing at the the Cremation Site" (photographed by Joe O'Donnell) was taken when a buzz-cut boy, about an elementary school student, put his dead little brother into the fire. It seemed that he was standing upright and staring at the fire that his younger brother was about to burn. If I were in the same position, I thought the boy was courageous, and at the same time, the boy's eyes said, "I never want to succumb to the war that robbed my dear family! If I cry, I'm losing! I'll do my best to survive as much as my younger brother on the back." But I thought the boy's true feelings were not easy to imagine. I learned that Numazu City declared a peaceful city for the abolition of nuclear weapons on March 20, 1987. The world now has more than 20,000 nuclear bombs. This is said to be the amount that will annihilate humans on the earth 5 times. I thought that if countries all over the world did not make this declaration, the same thing would be repeated somewhere.

I learned that there are some war ruins in Numazu, and I was very surprised that the place where we live now was also damaged. I spoke to my grandfather, who experienced strafing when he was a child. My great-grandmother was struck by an American aircraft at a wartime evacuation site. She said she was saved by jumping into a stream with her 3 children, including my grandfather. It seems that many adults and children have been sacrificed around them. The lives of innocent people were lost, and young children lost their parents. When I heard that story, I couldn't even imagine how a child who had lost his parents grew up. At that time, I thought that the anxiety and inconvenience felt by a deceased child was incomparable to what I feel in my life. When I heard the story again, I felt uncomfortable and painful. It turned out to be a war in which an irreplaceable and precious life was lost in an instant. War is a truly horrifying event.

We have not actually experienced a war. Furthermore, the number of people who have experienced that time is decreasing. That's why I think we have to know and tell a lot about war.

Nothing may change where I now hope that no country has a nuclear bomb. However, I think it is important for as many people as possible to wish for peace in the same way. I am