

1988 Walt Whitman Association  
High School Poetry Contest Award Winners

FIRST PLACE

**Erika DiPiazza**  
**WHAT IS PEACE?**

Tell me, fair friend, what is peace?

Is it the solemn rustle of leaves on an October wind?  
Is it the hurried hush of gently falling January snow?  
Is it the joyful crash and gurgle after winter's deep freeze

—all the streams, broken free  
celebrating spring with the dancing,  
warming wind—

Is it the lazy tranquillity that pervades with the high heat of August?

What good is the peace of Mother Nature,  
if man only tears her apart?

Tell me, fair friend, what is peace?

Is it the times without war  
—or the time between wars?

Is it the time when great guns are silent?

Is it the time when cries in the night are not muffled  
—not wasted because they are ignored?

Is it the cooing laughter of a child who does not know that pain exists  
elsewhere in the world?

What good is the peace of humankind, if only a few may know it,  
for only pieces of time?

Tell me, fair friend, what is peace?

Is it joy within the soul?  
Is it laughter within the eyes?  
Is it found within the spirit?  
Is it something that only comes from inside  
the purest and cleanest of hearts?  
How can any quest for peace when  
the lessons remain unlearned  
because the pain is too much forgotten,  
—too prevalent, too recent, too—

The heart cannot sing until the life knows joy.

Tell me, fair friend,

what is peace?