



Like Kids Everywhere

Samantha Smith, Cold War Peace Activist
Maine

☀ Call to Action

Pathways to Peace uplifts young people's voices at the United Nations for international peacebuilding. Learn how you can help build peace in our world.
pathwaystopeace.org/

☀ Values

- Peacebuilding
- Cooperation
- Understanding
- Internationalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Build bridges. Get to know people. Even if they scare you, make the effort to find what you have in common with them. We have more in common with people from other cultures than we know. Be open to this truth, always.

Do not be afraid to appear vulnerable. Sometimes showing your own vulnerability is a sign of strength.

When Samantha Smith was 10 years old, she became very concerned about the threat of nuclear war between the Soviet Union, and her home country of the United States.

She wrote a letter to the president of the Soviet Union, begging him not to start a war. Several months later she received a letter from him, inviting her to visit the Soviet Union so she could see for herself that his people were very much like people everywhere, and that they wanted peace too. During her visit she made friends with young people her age, and several years later the presidents of the two countries agreed to begin dismantling their weapons. Sadly, Samantha did not live long enough to see the result of her peacemaking efforts: she and her father died in a plane crash shortly before the agreement was signed. However, her words still ring out, loud and true: "God made the world for us to share, and take care of," she said. "Please let's do what he wanted, and have everybody be happy too."

☀ Language Arts

What was the Cold War? What was life like for children during the Cold War? Did your grandparents build a bomb shelter under their house? Create a 5-7 minute video in which you explain what the Cold War was, how it started, which countries were involved, and what life was like—especially for school-aged children—at the time.

How can you follow Samantha's example to help heal division and mistrust in your community, country, and the world? Write a personal essay in which you explain how you will use her example to become an "ambassador of peace" in your community. How could you help heal division and mistrust between the people in your community? Give specific examples, using real-life

scenarios.

Create a series of five TikTok videos in which you offer solutions for making your community better and safer:

for example, by tackling problems like violence, or political division, or hunger. Use real-life examples from your community or region, and offer concrete ways in which the members of your community can work together to tackle these issues.

Choose two classmates you don't know very well or haven't talked to much in the past. Sit down and have an open, honest, and meaningful conversation with them about what you like, dislike, your interests, etc. Keep the conversation going for at least fifteen minutes. Afterwards, write a short narrative essay in which you explain how this conversation changed your perception of the two people you spoke to: What did you learn about them? What surprised you? What things do you have in common? What can you learn from them? What can they learn from you?

STEM Activities

Use this [resource from the Environmental Protection Agency](#)¹ to explore sources of radiation. Calculate your annual exposure to radiation from various sources (the sun, cellphones, food, etc.)

Using this [resource on how much the U.S spends on nuclear weapons](#)², graph how much money has been dedicated to nuclear weapons each year since 1940. How does it compare to the cost of dismantling nuclear weapons and disposing of nuclear materials/waste?

Research the cost of dealing with the aftermath of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (cleaning up radioactive waste, medical costs, etc.). Compare that to the cost of developing the atomic bomb in the U.S. Then calculate the human-to-cost ratio: How much money was spent to develop the bomb per person who died during the attacks?

In this [lesson plan from the Health Physics Society](#)³, students explore cell structure and radioactivity, and learn how radioactivity can cause cell sensitivity and injury.

The Cold War space race gave rise to several technological breakthroughs, including major innovations in computing and rocketry, as well as minor innovations affecting consumer products, like portable vacuum cleaners, wireless headsets, Velcro, scratch-resistant eyeglass lenses, and freeze-dried foods. Select one invention made during this era to research. What led to the invention? What problem was it solving? How much financial and human resources went into it? What was the impact of this invention?

Sustainability Innovations

Samantha's advocacy was the individual effort of a 10-year-old girl; but there have been many other peace and antiwar movements started by students and other youth. Review this [Khan Academy article](#)⁴. What do you believe was the end effect of these movements?

Review this Harvard Ed⁵ **article detailing the advancement of student activism over time.** Why is it important? How can students have a special impact on creating change?

In this McKinsey and Company report⁶, **diversity and inclusion in businesses is assessed.** How has this framework helped to shape business and politics? Would Samantha approve of its goals and impacts on the U.S.?

Sustainability Career Pathways

Diplomat. Diplomats help countries to establish and enact agreements (having to do with peace, trade, humanitarian aid, and the environment with other countries. They typically work in embassies, located around the world. Discover more about a career in diplomacy in this [introduction](#)², or in this [step-by-step guide for becoming a diplomat in the U.S](#)⁸.

Disarmament Advocate. According to the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) disarmament is “vital for sustainable development and global survival.” The U.N., governments, and NGOs all have jobs supporting the global reduction of arms. Do you want to help with this essential fight? [Learn more, and review job opportunities at UNODA](#)⁹.

Interviewer. Between radio, TV, podcasts, and the Internet, there are many opportunities to interview people--[just as Samantha did](#)¹⁰—and help to spread their work to a broader audience. [Explore the field here](#)¹¹. There are many other careers where interviewing is your job as well, from college admissions to helping people find jobs. [Learn more here](#)¹².

1 <https://www.epa.gov/radiation>

2 <https://www.brookings.edu/the-hidden-costs-of-our-nuclear-arsenal-overview-of-project-findings/>

3 https://hps.org/sciencesupport/documents/radiobiology_lesson_plan.pdf

4 <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/postwarera/1960s-america/a/the-student-movement-and-the-antiwar-movement>

5 <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/18/08/student-activism-20>

6 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

7 <https://www.internationalrelationsedu.org/us-diplomat/>

8 <https://diplomacy.state.gov/diplomacy/how-do-you-become-a-diplomat/>

9 <https://www.unjobnet.org/organizations/UN%20ODA>

10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoQ_Lji5V70

11 <https://superscholar.org/careers/news-media/talk-show-host/>

12 <https://www.zipppia.com/interviewer-jobs/>

