




their talent or the situation that made them do something special. The idea that there are different types of people (good, bad, honorable, dishonorable) is false.

While the free will debate continues to charge forward it is important to keep these things in mind. The complete loss of control can be an unpleasant thought, but in reality we would have little control even with free will. Our beliefs do not change the way the world works, but they change how we act. They can help us understand, and therefore begin to accept, the laws of the universe. In the end after discrediting the concept of free will, we will find ourselves accepting a lot anyways.

## Kids Philosophy Slam

 We are pleased once again to print the winning entries for the Kids Philosophy Slam. The topic for 2007 was "Compassion or Violence: Which has a greater impact on society?" All of the participants deserve congratulations and recognition, including the winning students and Capitol Hill Magnet School in St. Paul, Minnesota, which was named the Most Philosophical School in America, for the efforts of its student body. **Congratulations and keep your thinking caps on!**

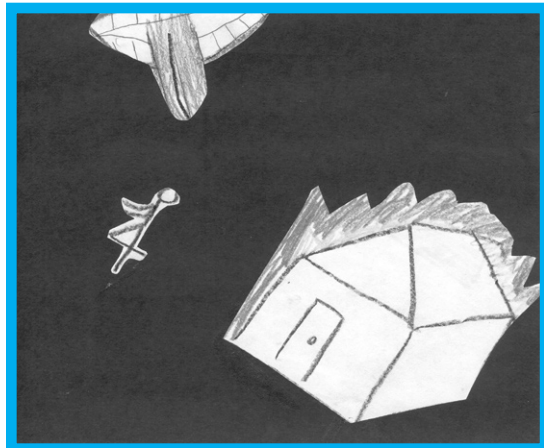
### 2007–Most Philosophical Kindergartner in America:

Ani Carignan, Illinois.



Even if you do not like somebody you help them.

### 2007–Most Philosophical 3rd Grader in America:



Violence is war,  
Shooting an innocent man,  
Killing.  
Emotions . . . horrible emotions . . . terrifying emotions.  
Like a bad memory or thought.  
Also, words, the tongue, saying mean things.  
Like something as unimportant as saying a favorite movie is stupid,  
Or lying or something as small as lying, can turn into something as big as war.  
Violence is mostly thought of as war and killing,  
That is violence.  
Everybody should think about the possibilities. Violence makes a gigantic impact on society.

Wesley Wells, Oregon

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The Kids Philosophy Slam is a competition designed to make philosophy accessible and fun for kids of all ages and abilities, to encourage philosophical dialogue between kids and adults, and to promote a greater awareness of philosophy and education in everyday life. Each year the Kids Philosophy Slam poses a philosophical question to students nationwide such as "What is the meaning of life?" Students can respond to the question with artwork, poetry, or essays. Winners are selected in each grade level from kindergarten through high school. Over \$5,000 in prizes are available to students and schools. The topic for the 2008 Philosophy Slam will be announced in October, online at [www.philosophyslamslam.org](http://www.philosophyslamslam.org).

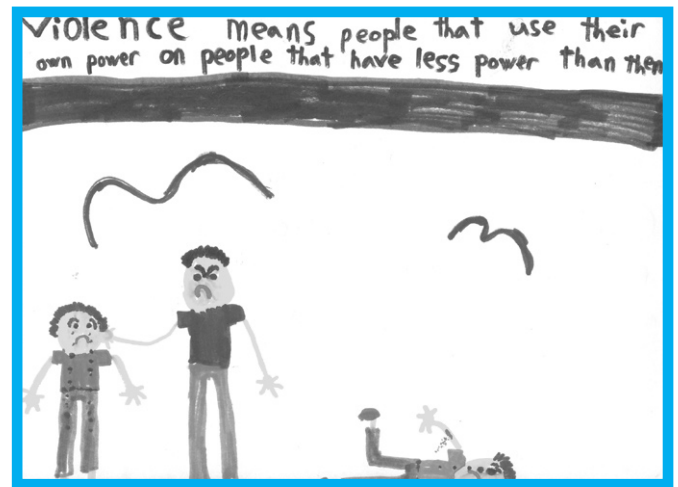
### 2007–Most Philosophical 1st Grader in America:

Claire Thatch, Maine

I think compassion. Because if people see it they might do it too! Compassion shows love. It soothes people. But violence is bad. It can hurt. People love it when you soothe them. They do not like violence..

### 2007–Most Philosophical 2nd Grader in America:

Posy Stoller, Illinois



Violence means people that use their own power on people that have less power than them.



## 2007–Most Philosophical 4th Grader in America:

Cotrina Johnson, Virginia

Bang! Pop! Crash! All sounds of violence. But inside my home there is evidence of loving and caring people. So which has a greater impact on society? Violence is an abuse or unjust exercise of power. Being a threat to others or causing injury to others is also violence. People think that is how they should act in order to be cool and in their friends' gangs. Well it's simple to see that more and more generations are growing up to be violent and out of control. Violence is becoming a serious problem for today's society. For example on yesterday's news, viewers watched a report of a man who babysitting and burnt, shook, and caused the little boy who was only four to have brain damage. He buried the little boy alive in just a diaper.

On the radio there is another type of violence using words. Rappers are cursing, and using violent words. Kids look at them like "Wow! I want to be like them when I grow up." Rappers rap like the only people listening to them are adults. Kids get a hint of what they're saying though too. But rappers don't think of that. Kids say the things rappers say to each other and everything rappers say aren't kid appropriate.

The type of violence that effect children the most is right in their home. Children who are being mistreated or abused look at violence as physical contact. It could be someone in your very own class. It could be the person that sits right beside you in class. They could be smart, funny or even the teachers-pet. But at home it's a different story quiet, shy, ashamed and yet they are the coolest people in your class.

All of these things do happen every day. Our world is worsening every year. But the few people that do have compassion shouldn't be discouraged because of what others do or say about it. But if all the violence could be replaced with compassion, our generation would grow up knowing right from wrong. We will take adults' position in society. One day we will have children of our own. Our kids will be taught what we learned growing up as kids. So let this be a wake up call to anyone who is violent or to parents who sense violence from their children. So parents need to pay attention to what their children watch on TV, listen to on the radio, and experience outside when they're playing with their friends. A kid may say "My mom's too controlling" but I say keep being controlling. Our generation will be thanking parents for keeping our lives on the right path.

## 2007–Most Philosophical 5th Grader in America:

Hannah Davis, Minnesota.



Violence had a greater impact on society because our world seems to be obsessed with violence. The media, such as television shows, newspapers, and newscasts flood us with scenes of blood and gore. Whether false or real, we drink

it up. We have a natural hunger for violence that comes from survival instincts. Jane Goodall's studies show that one of the unfortunate characteristics we have in common with chimpanzees is our tendency to start colossal wars. This is relatively understandable, as violence will more likely result in animals and humans acquiring their basic necessities. However, we have gone beyond the realm of comprehension in our thirst for bloodshed and our failure to act on our morals.

As a result of all this exposure to violence, many people no longer blink an eye at images of real violence, war, and devastation. Some kids even laugh at the idea of gory deaths. In this way, slowly, we are driving all the compassion out of our country. If any real violence happened to any of us, we would show ourselves to be cowards. The next generation may grow up to watch shows of pure death, laughing and cheering as acts of violence are portrayed on-screen.

I am a ten-year-old kid who wants to protect myself from the appalling images in our lives. But if I do something as normal as read a book next to a newspaper reader, I will see a violent story without trying to, and have an urge to read more. I have turned the television on to put a movie in the VCR, and have seen much of this violence in five seconds. Our schools have become more and more anxious, until the point where not only do we have fire drills and tornado drills, we participate in lockdown drills. Not only do we have endless drills, but real events have a hair trigger reaction. We have had a lockdown when the police chased a criminal on the highway. These episodes can frighten kids greatly by making them think there is a gun-toting criminal right inside the building. When a thirteen-year-old girl was assaulted, a note was sent to children on the other side of town, petrifying them to no end. These episodes can frighten many of us out of our wits, and they are only random selections out of a modern human's normal life.

On the other hand, when we hear stories of compassion, we murmur, "Oh, that's so sweet," and truly happy—for a while. We are glad to hear of these stories, but are not left craving more. We do not end up with television shows of teddy bears and pink unicorns. Stories of compassion rarely spiral and create more and more compassion. Instead we go home feeling tranquil, calm and peaceful, then we plunk ourselves onto the couch, turn on the TV—often to watch violence. We still care about the compassion, but it cannot sway our attention from the violence. We go on like this, shoving the compassion aside to make room for the violence. The violence grows and grows, until we have forgotten the compassion completely.

This may seem as if compassion is disappearing from the world, but nothing could be further from the truth. All human beings have a seed of compassion, kindness, and love planted so firmly in our hearts that no amount of violence, war, and hatred can root it out. If we can find a way to nourish this tiny hope, compassion in the universe can grow and grow until it has completely reversed our society. Those who wish to stop the corruption of our world can make a difference if we try. I aspire to be one of those people.

## 2007–Most Philosophical 6th Grader in America:

Andris Bibelnieks, Minnesota.

Violence has a greater impact on society than compassion. The effects of violence are visible. Violence gets people's attention which leads to awareness and action. Violence is a catalyst for compassion.

If one is asked to name events which have had significant impact on society and how people function within a society, the events that come to mind are war, murder, crime of various degrees, and atrocities against groups of people or events which significantly impact animal populations or the natural resources of the earth. The reactions and consequences of these types of violent events are always far reaching. Wars divide countries into those in support of war and those opposed. War divides the population within a country and furthermore, within the country's societies into citizens who either support or oppose the war. This creates tension, disagreement, and visible debate as to what policies the society should enact to deal with the consequences of the war. Laws and rules



are enacted to control society and its actions. Crimes, for example the threat of a serial rapist at large in St. Paul, and other atrocities against human life result in people not being able to move freely about their community, feeling fearful for their children and family, and feeling like prisoners in their own houses or neighborhoods. In contrast, compassion allows us to go about our business as usual. Those that commit compassionate acts are viewed as good citizens and models for others that are often rewarded for their acts. However, most of the time compassionate acts are short lived in the public's eye. They might find their way into the newspaper, but it certainly isn't on the front page the next day.

Compassion usually results in the reaction "oh, wasn't that wonderful" or an outpouring of thanks or gratitude. No one responds to compassion by suggesting new legislation to protect citizens from uncompassionate acts or to require people to engage in compassionate acts. Violence, on the other hand, seems to call people to action to defend against the violence or retaliate against the wrong doers. People bond together for a common cause. Organizations and groups are formed to ensure that action is taken to prevent further violence from happening. Once formed, these organizations tend to continue to grow in size and membership, even after the violence has passed and hence have a lasting presence in society to make sure the violence doesn't happen again.

Violence is a catalyst for compassion. If a box sits in the corner of a closet, taped shut and unopened, it is often forgotten. The contents of the box are disregarded or not considered important. It is only when the box is opened that society takes interest into what was in the box and society begins to judge what was in the box. If the box contains something that is bad for society or is harmful, people are more likely to react and take action to correct the situation. Compassion rarely is what opens the box. Violence is more often the way the box is opened. For example, war or atrocities against large groups of people opens the box. Society becomes immediately aware of the situation of the people involved or the victims of the crimes through all of the different types of media. The awareness leads to compassion and often great acts of compassion or try and remedy the situation of the less fortunate individuals or societies. Hence, without the violence, there would be no compassion for those individuals or societies.

## 2007–Most Philosophical 7th Grader in America:

**Nick Brant, Minnesota.**

Some say compassion has an impact on society as strong as a comet plummeting into earth, if true then consider violence an entire asteroid. Violence has become a cornerstone of everyday life, and has entered every aspect of our lives. Even the simple act of saying hello nowadays means punching your friend in the arm.

Where does this explosion and acceptance of violence originate from? I believe a key element of it comes from within our living rooms; it comes from within this terrible box where violence seems to ooze from every one of its corners. If you think this is Pandora's Box then you're wrong, no, no, this is much simpler . . . it is our televisions.

You don't have to believe me, you can believe the numbers. Such as 44.5—the average number of hours per week children age 8 to 18 watch television. How about, 200,000—the acts of violence, and 40,000—the number of murders, a child will see on television by her 18th birthday. Or, 1,000 the number of studies that have been done since the 1950s which document the effects of violence in television and movies. Most of those studies concluded that children watch a lot of television show aggressive behavior, attitudes and values.

Shows like Sopranos and C.S.I. allow kids to witness gruesome, grisly, and horrid acts of violence just by picking up the remote. They are regular staples on our television.

It's not only television shows; it is also the explosion of video games which entice kids to become active participants in violence. Games like Grand Theft Auto

put players in the role of a serial killer where they can kill whomever they choose. This both teaches violence and empowers players to commit violent acts.

Violence flows from television sets into our daily lives. A one day sample of headlines from the Minneapolis Star Tribune highlight the violent messages in our society: "Two men charged with murder in cabdriver's death," "Sjodin's killer headed to death row," "Police seek man who robbed Crystal Bank," "Woman guilty of using teens as sex slaves," "Teen suspect held in northeast Minneapolis rape."

It is doubtful that Vladimir Zworykin, father of the modern television, saw himself as a present day Pandora; however, the similarities are remarkable. Greek Mythology says out of curiosity Pandora opened the lid of a box Zeus had given her, and out flew hate, anger, sickness, poverty, and every bad thing in the world. By the time she closed the lid only hopelessness remained in the box. Think of the television set at today's Pandora's Box, and the violence showcased on television as all the evils of the world. The question remains, are we doomed to always live with violence because we chose to turn on the box and invite it into our living rooms, bedrooms and lives? Do we have the power and courage to turn the box off? And if we do, what remains of the violence we've already released into society?

## 2007–Most Philosophical 8th Grader in America:

**Amy Singleton, Hawaii**

Do more people use violence or compassion? Compassion is easier to some and violence to others, but violence makes a greater impact on society than compassion. Violence has a greater impact on society because people notice, remember, and are affected by it more and many use it every day, even if it's just self-defense.

Violence has a greater impact on society than compassion because people remember it. People watch and are riveted by it. It gets noticed more and has more attention paid to it. If somebody dies in a neighborhood by murder, the people living there aren't going to just say "oh well," as if they saw somebody give a hug to someone else. It affects them more and makes a bigger impact that lingers around for a long time. September 11th is a good example; even today people still talk about this incident. People remembered the event for a long time and will probably pass the story along to future generations.

Violence affects many more people than compassion does. It 'reaches' more people; for example a war, the Iraq war we are in right now. Many people die and their families and communities suffer from the loss. They can't just forget; the person that they loved is dead. This impact may not be pleasant, but it is greater than the impact compassion causes. For example, if someone had help with her homework this usually affects just that person, but not her whole family or community.

Self-defense is an understandable way to use violence. Malcolm X said, "It doesn't mean that I advocate violence, but at the same time, I am not against using violence in self defense. I don't call it violence when it's self defense, I call it intelligence." I agree with his opinion; defense is an intelligent way of using violence. Sometimes you can't just 'turn the other cheek'. Violence is defined as an unjust exercise of power and the physical force for the purpose of damage or abuse. If someone gets attacked the attacker is using a bad way of violence. Many people use violence and it may not be correct, but it still makes a greater impact on society than compassion.

Violence makes more of an impact on society than compassion because people notice, remember and are affected by it more. Also, many people use violence everyday even if it's just self-defense. We use violence to have peace. George Orwell said, "People sleep peacefully at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." The 'rough men' he refers to are soldiers who will protect you during a war, so you can 'sleep peacefully'. There are bad and understandable ways to use violence, but it will make an impact whichever way you or others around you choose to use it. Violence, rather than compassion, will always make a greater impact on society.