

JEANNETTE RANKIN

First Lady for Peace



by Jackie Beyer

For children and their families everywhere,
that they may live in a world of peace.



*“Once men and women have decided that they don’t want war, a
way will be found to dispense with it. Of that we may be sure...”*

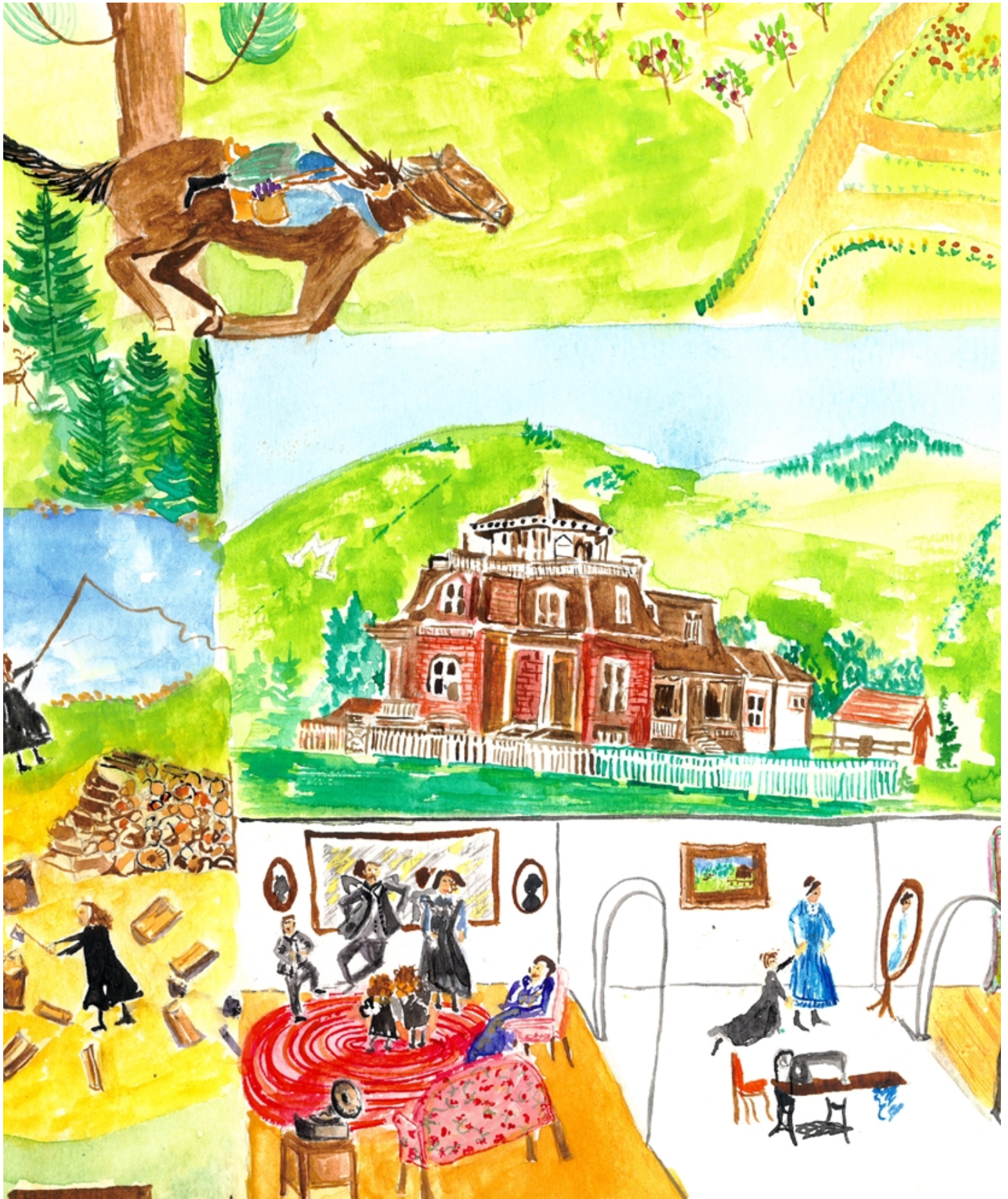
Jeannette Rankin

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Once upon a time there was a woman who believed in peace. She believed that humans were capable of living in a world without war. She spent her whole life teaching people about her ideas many of which were so popular she was elected to represent her state as a Congresswoman two different times! The first time there had never before been a woman in the United States Congress in all of history.

She believed all children should have the opportunity to grow up in safe healthy households where they would have happy childhoods like hers. She also thought their parents should be protected from dangers at work.





The woman's name was Jeannette Rankin, and she grew up in the mountains of Montana. Jeannette had five younger sisters and one brother. The family lived in a home in Missoula, Montana that had some of the only indoor plumbing in town. During the summer they lived on a ranch in the country. Jeannette loved riding her horse around the large ranch.





After college Jeannette got her first look at big-city slums and the horrible living conditions of many people when she went to Boston to visit her brother Wellington. Children as young as six years old worked in dirty factories, men and women alike worked in dangerous conditions for long, long hours each day. This led to very unpleasant domestic life, which seemed so different compared to her delightful childhood. She saw children dressed in flour sacks and mothers that could turn a child over to the orphanage without crying.



Washington State was one of the first places to let women vote and Jeannette worked hard to help women get that right. One time she even put a sign up in a barber shop, a place women did not go in those days.





Then she was asked to lead Montana's suffrage campaign. Jeannette was able to unite various groups of people including miners, housewives, immigrants, and union workers to join together. She spoke to everyone she could, driving to remote ranches if she thought it would gain a single vote. She preferred to talk to common citizens and would speak outside pool halls and saloons, opera houses, dance halls, at women's teas, and even stopping picnickers to educate them. She would tell children, "Ask your fathers why they won't let your mother's vote." It worked and the suffrage bill passed giving Montana women the right to vote on November 3, 1914.



Jeannette thought she could help more children especially ones from poor families if she worked in the government so she ran for Congress. And in the fall of 1916, she won! They called her the ‘Lady from Montana.’

The first thing Jeannette was asked to vote for as a Congresswoman was if the United States should send troops to Europe for World War I. Jeannette believed that civilized people should be able to settle their disputes without war and that war’s effects on the family were too horrible so she voted “no.”

This caused a lot of people to be upset but Jeannette said that she didn’t care if she got reelected, but what history would say 50 years from now.



Jeannette Rankin on her first day in Congress April 2, 1917

She worked with the other Congressmen to pass laws that limited the number of dollars companies could make from the supplying the military because she thought the large profits encouraged war.

She tried to get laws passed that would improve the lives of America's citizens. At that time, people including young children, worked ten, twelve, or even longer hours a day for low wages. Jeannette helped limit the number of hours employees could work to eight, and set age limits so small children wouldn't have to work in factories.





She helped to make laws requiring companies to be responsible for providing safe working conditions in their factories and mines where many men and women were injured or even killed just trying to earn a living.

After her term in Congress Jeannette went to Switzerland and help found the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Returning to the United States Jeannette worked for a variety of peace organizations.



Jeannette bought a home in Georgia where the local children loved her She lived a simple life without plumbing or refrigeration. She taught the girls how to sew and practice parliamentary procedure. She let the boys listen to the baseball games on her radio.



Jeannette testifying before the House Naval Affairs Committee

As a lobbyist for the National Council for the Prevention of War she tried to get Congress to make war against the law. She brought documents and gave speeches that war was as bad as cannibalism and if people would just decide to live without it, war would be gone forever.

When World War II started brewing Jeannette worked harder, even leading a motor tour from Washington D.C. to Chicago to promote peace and encourage citizens to vote for politicians who were for peace.

Finally in 1939, Jeannette decided she had to return to Montana to run once more because she was afraid the government would try to send soldiers to Europe again. She was sure parents around the country really didn't want to send their sons to fight and maybe die. And she was right because she won a second time! But then Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Jeannette still didn't think war was a way for countries to get along so she still voted 'no.'



After this term she left the government in Washington, D.C.
and traveled around the world, studying peace and teaching
people about her pacifist ideas.



How do YOU view the world?

How do YOUR people live?

What is the solution of the women in YOUR country?

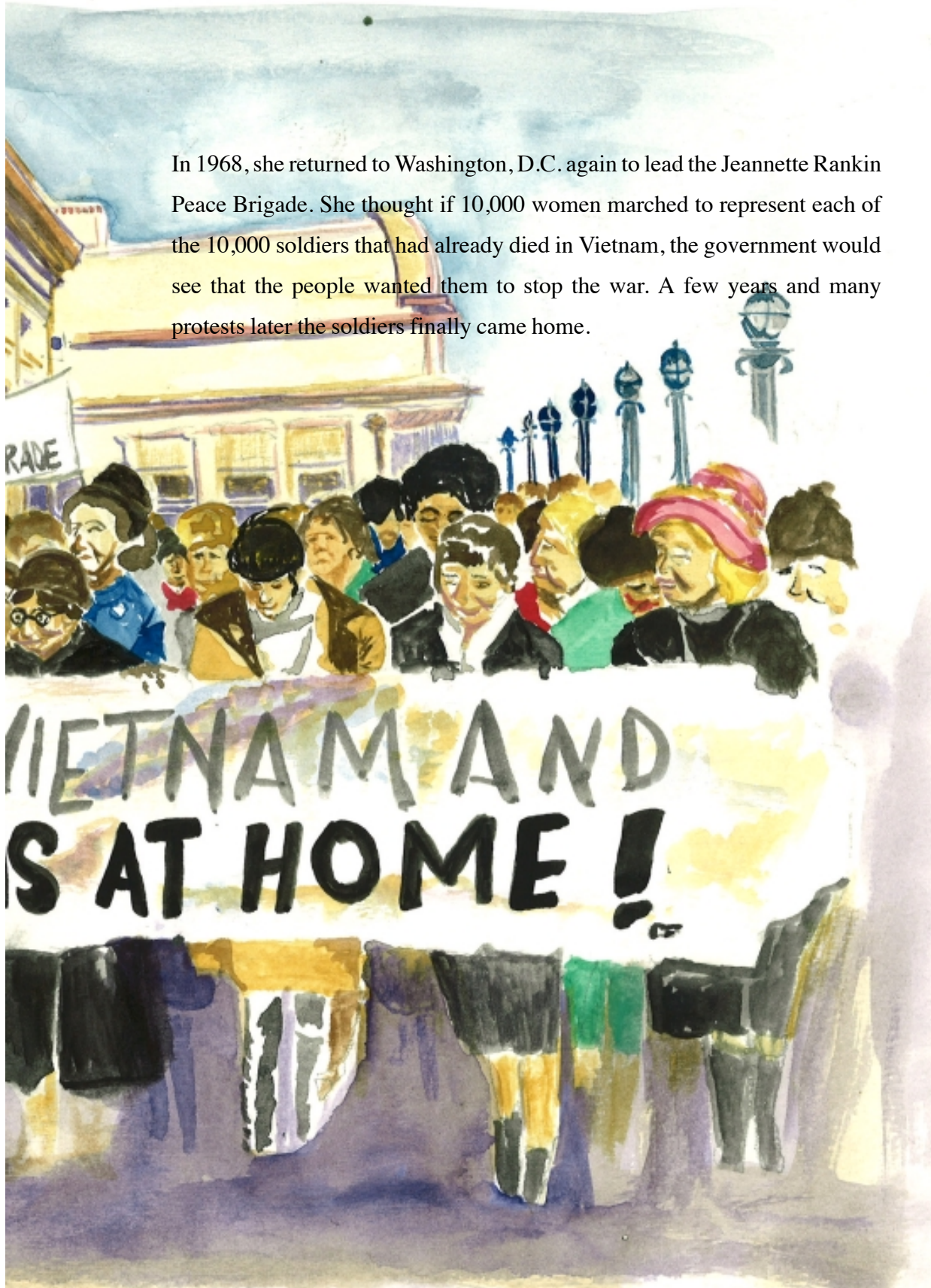
How can problem's about solving?



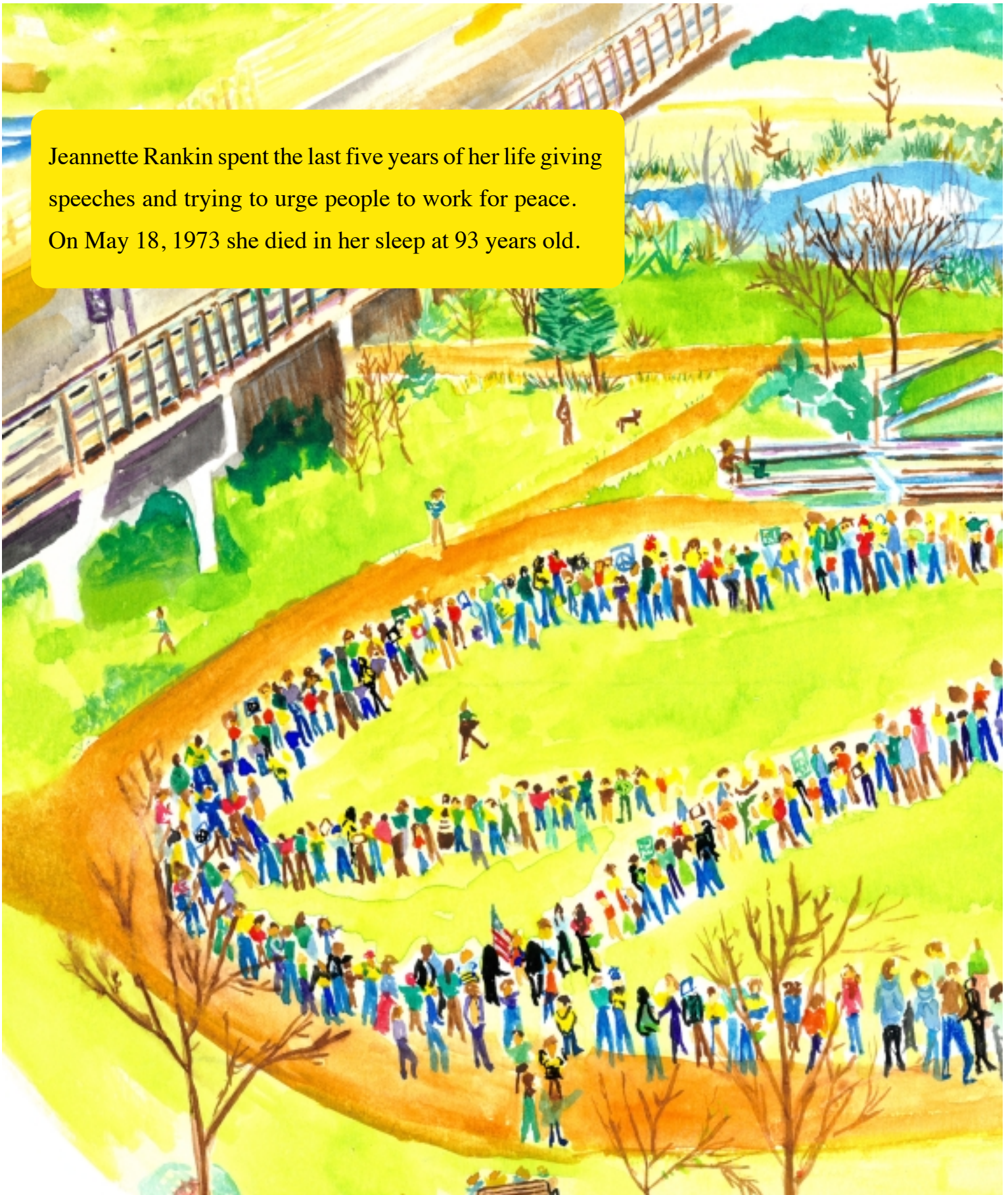
Welcome to the
JEANNETTE RANKIN PEACE PA...

END THE WAR IN
SOCIAL CRISIS

In 1968, she returned to Washington, D.C. again to lead the Jeannette Rankin Peace Brigade. She thought if 10,000 women marched to represent each of the 10,000 soldiers that had already died in Vietnam, the government would see that the people wanted them to stop the war. A few years and many protests later the soldiers finally came home.



Jeannette Rankin spent the last five years of her life giving speeches and trying to urge people to work for peace. On May 18, 1973 she died in her sleep at 93 years old.



Jeannette Rankin would be proud to see all the citizens from around the world standing together to promote peace today. The peace movement of the twenty-first century is larger than ever and able to organize on a global scale like she would never have imagined.



Jeannette said “Wouldn’t it be a shame if we died knowing we didn’t do everything in our power to promote world peace?”

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Other Resources:

Jeannette Rankin Peace Resource Center: www.jrpc.org

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom: www.wilpf.org

United Nations: www.un.org

Jeannette Rankin biography: www.peacewomen.org

Glossary

Advocate: one who pleads another's cause or in support of something.

Credibility: that can be believed; reliable. Dissenter: one who disagrees.

Environmentalist: a person working to solve environmental problems, as and water pollution.

Industry: any large-scale business activity.

Legislation: the making of laws and the laws made.

Legislature: a body of persons given the power to make laws.

Lobbyist: one who tries to get legislators to support certain measures.

Pacifist: opposition to the use of force under any circumstances; specifically refusal to participate in war.

Platform: a statement of policy, especially of a political party.

Progressive: moving forward; of or favoring progress, reform.

Referendum: the right of the people to vote on certain laws.

Social Reform: to improve life in the community.

Suffrage: the right to vote.

Jeannette Rankin was the first woman elected to the United States Congress. Born in Missoula, Montana, Miss Rankin was a leader in the women's suffrage movement, and later elected to represent her home state two different times. Representative Rankin holds the distinction of being the only woman who voted to give women the right to vote. An active pacifist she was also proud to state "The first vote of the first woman member of Congress was a vote against war." She is an inspiration for all young children, especially girls, to enter the world of public service and strive for change that will improve the lives of American families.

Jackie Beyer read a book about Montana when she was in fourth grade and finally moved to Missoula when she was 21 to attend the University of Montana. She first learned about Representative Rankin when she volunteered at the Jeannette Rankin Peace Center. She met her husband on a mountainside where they live in a small cabin on 20 beautiful acres. When not painting or enjoying Montana she works as a teacher.