

“WE DIDN’T START THE FIRE”

based on a song by Billy Joel.

ABOUT THE SONG

In 1989, singer and composer Billy Joel released a popular song entitled “We didn’t start the fire”.

It is a list of historical events and personalities from 1949 (the year Billy Joel was born) until 1989.

The lyrics of the song are a good summary of the history of that era focused on events, people and places, although some events included are rather trivial while some major ones are missing. But just hearing the mention of them, memories of the times are brought up to the listeners.

A lot of references are made to the Cold War (US vs. USSR), a problem his generation inherited.

Blender Magazine criticized his attempt to “Fit a cultural history of the 20th century into five minutes” as well accusing him of trivializing the Tienanmen massacre by mentioning it in the same line as “rock’n’roller cola wars”.

The song was a huge commercial success and it was nominated for the Grammy Award for Record of the Year.

The chorus part means that there has always been unrest in the world. It also discusses the fact that nothing done in the recent years is directly responsible for the problems in the world (We didn’t start the fire.) The problems stem from events in the past (it’s always been burning since the world’s been turning). Each generation attempts to fix the issues of the last (we didn’t light it). The last lines are referred to the idea that nothing is going to have any long term effects (But when we are gone, will it still burn on and on and on)

METHODOLOGY - TEACHER’S REPORT

I began the lyrical study by asking the students if they could think of any songs that discuss history and times passed. Then I showed them the song video-clip.

I asked the students if they knew anything about the song, the artist and when the song was released. They recognized a few items only, especially those in the last part of the song. I handed out the copies,

I played the song and asked them to read along. We had a discussion on what kind of information they can get out of the lyrics. Then I asked them to suggest some ways to carry out a project on this song.

The students decided that the first step should be to form six groups and that each group should be assigned a separate section according to the lyrics of the song. They should be responsible for decoding the lyrics and for searching these subjects in any form possible. I encouraged them to make the most of the available resources that would help them to identify information about their topics. Finally I asked them to complete the project in a month's time.

They wrote a paragraph for each topic. They also found relevant pictures and put them in order. They used the photos of the items to create a Pp. presentation for each section of the song and a Pp. presentation for the song separately. In the chorus section, photos of events not mentioned in the song lyrics were placed. When the due date rolled around they turned in with all their texts and the Pp presentations. They created a flip book with pictures and information. Finally each group taught the class about their part of the song.

The students gathered and synthesized information by using a variety of technological and information resources (database, computer network, videos, history books from the school library) to create and communicate knowledge. They also used spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes- learning, exchange of information and language skills development. All group members worked well and they equally contributed to the project. Smooth cooperation and knowledge acquired through research were the main targets and I think they have been successfully fulfilled.

I want to thank my students for their cooperation and willingness to carry out this project.

Also, special thanks to Mrs. Vlahou Vaitza and Mr. Papaharisis George, my colleagues, for their help and support.

Teacher: Andreadou – Fragoudi Barbara

“WE DIDN’T START THE FIRE”

A song by Billy Joel
Music Album “Storm Front”

C class Junior High School of Velvendo

Number of students involved: 28, divided in 6 groups.
Teacher: Andreadou – Fragoudi Barbara

1st group

Manola Eleni
Koutsiouki Maria
Stergiopoulou Katerina
Stamati Fotini
Pitsiava Nektaria

2nd group

Kollias Dimitris
Ropoutis Dimitris
Klingos Antonis
Tsiamis Anastasis
Papapliouras Nikos

3rd group

Bialas Thanasis
Kostopoulou Ioanna
Piperas Anastasis
Karavagella Marianna
Tzirimis Antonis
Dogana Katerina

4th group

Stergiou Efrosini
Karavagella Theano
Mathaiou Markella
Tsilika Katerina

5th group

Delipaltas Stelios
Vaitsis Haris
Kantartzis Stelios
Manolis Andreas

6th group

Goulioti Elli
Katliaka Dimitra
Samara Maria
Bali Marios

STUDENTS' REPORT

WHAT WE DID TO CARRY OUT THE PROJECT.

First we categorized the items – events, conflicts, culture, athletes and others. We looked up in history books to gather information concerning the events mentioned in the lyrics. We also selected relevant information and pictures from the Internet. We used these photos to create six Pp presentations, one for each section of the lyrics and one Pp presentation for the song. We used a world map to label the places of conflicts and we wrote down a short paragraph for each topic.

WHAT WE FOUND DIFFICULT.

The language in the articles was quite difficult. We used our dictionaries to find the meaning of the words but we think that this was very useful after all because we were given the opportunity to develop our language skills.

WHAT WE ENJOYED MOST.

The research we conducted, the cooperation among us and the flip book we created- which is the final product of our project. Also the fact that, while working on the lyrics, we became aware of people and events we haven't heard anything about before. Each group by presenting their own section, communicated information and knowledge.

WHAT REALLY WORKED.

The theme was quite challenging and the cooperation among the members of the group was excellent.

NEXT TIME.

We are thinking that it would be a good idea to carry out a project on the next two decades, 1990-2000 and 2000-2010, and to connect the subjects of the song "We didn't start the fire" to current events of today.

3rd Class Junior High School of Velvendo

March 10, 2010

“WE DIDN’T START THE FIRE”

A song by Billy Joel CD Album “Storm Front”

Lyrics

Harry Truman, Doris Day, Red China, Johnnie Ray
South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio

Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, Studebaker, television
North Korea, South Korea, Marilyn Monroe

Rosenbergs, H-bomb, Sugar Ray, Panmunjom
Brando, "The King and I" and "The Catcher in the Rye"

Eisenhower, vaccine, England's got a new queen
Marciano, Liberace, Santayana goodbye

CHORUS

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No we didn't light it
But we tried to fight it

Joseph Stalin, Malenkov, Nasser and Prokofiev
Rockefeller, Campanella, Communist Bloc

Roy Cohn, Juan Peron, Toscanini, Dacron
Dien Bien Phu falls, "Rock Around the Clock"

Einstein, James Dean, Brooklyn's got a winning team
Davy Crockett, Peter Pan, Elvis Presley, Disneyland

Bardot, Budapest, Alabama, Krushchev
Princess Grace, "Peyton Place", trouble in the Suez

CHORUS

Little Rock, Pasternak, Mickey Mantle, Kerouac
Sputnik, Chou En-Lai, "Bridge on the River Kwai"

Lebanon, Charles de Gaulle, California baseball
Starkweather, homicide, children of thalidomide

Buddy Holly, "Ben Hur", space monkey, Mafia
Hula hoops, Castro, Edsel is a no-go

U-2, Syngman Rhee, payola and Kennedy
Chubby Checker, "Psycho", Belgians in the Congo

CHORUS

Hemingway, Eichmann, "Stranger in a Strange Land"
Dylan, Berlin, Bay of Pigs invasion

"Lawrence of Arabia", British Beatle mania
Ole Miss, John Glenn, Liston beats Patterson

Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British politician sex
JFK, blown away, what else do I have to say

CHORUS

Birth control, Ho Chi Minh, Richard Nixon back again
Moon shot, Woodstock, Watergate, punk rock
Begin, Reagan, Palestine, terror on the airline
Ayatollah's in Iran, Russians in Afghanistan

"Wheel of Fortune", Sally Ride, heavy metal, suicide
Foreign debts, homeless vets, AIDS, crack, Bernie Goetz
Hypodermics on the shores, China's under martial law
Rock and roller cola wars, I can't take it anymore

CHORUS

We didn't start the fire
But when we are gone
Will it still burn on, and on, and on, and on...

ΠΗΓΕΣ

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