

Lyrics to Protest Songs in WAR AND MILITARISM

Eve of Destruction

P. F. Sloan, recorded by Barry McGuire in 1965

The eastern world, it is exploding
Violence flarin', bullets loadin'
You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'
You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'?
And even the Jordan River has bodies floatin'

But you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to say
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' today?
If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away
There'll be no one to save, with the world in a grave
[Take a look around ya boy, it's bound to scare ya boy]

And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Yeah, my blood's so mad feels like coaglatin'
I'm sitting here just contemplatin'
I can't twist the truth, it knows no regulation.
Handful of senators don't pass legislation
And marches alone can't bring integration
When human respect is disintegratin'
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin'

And you tell me
Over and over and over again, my friend
Ah, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Think of all the hate there is in Red China
Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama
You may leave here for 4 days in space
But when you return, it's the same old place
The poundin' of the drums, the pride and disgrace
You can bury your dead, but don't leave a trace
Hate your next-door neighbour, but don't forget to say grace
And, tell me over and over and over and over again, my friend
You don't believe
We're on the eve
Of destruction
Mm, no no, you don't believe
We're on the eve
of destruction.

Click [here](#) to see a music video with news clips of the time to illustrate the theme.

Question:

1. Make a list of the issues that are raised in this song. Which ones are still of concern today?

War: What is it Good For?

Barrett Strong and Norman Whitfield, recorded by Edwin Starr in 1969

War, huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, oh.
War huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, say it again y'all
War, huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, listen to me

Oh, war, I despise
'Cause it means destruction of innocent lives
War means tears to thousands of mothers' eyes
When their sons go to fight and lose their lives

I said
War, huh yeah Good God
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, just say it again
War, huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, listen to me
War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker
War, friend only to the undertaker

Oh war, is an enemy to all mankind
The thought of war blows my mind
War has caused unrest within the younger generation
Induction, then destruction. Who wants to die?

War, huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, say it say it again
War, huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, listen to me
War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker
War, it's got one friend that's the undertaker

Oh, war has shattered many young man's dreams
Made them disabled, bitter and mean
Life is much too short and precious to spend fighting wars these days
War can't give life it can only take it away, ooh

War, huh y'all
What is it good for?

Absolutely nothing, say it again
War, huh yeah
What is it good for?
Absolutely nothing, listen to me

War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker
War, it ain't nothin' but a heartbreaker
War, friend only to the undertaker

Peace love and understanding
Tell me is there no place for them today
They say we must fight to keep our freedom
But Lord knows there's got to be a better way

War, huh y'all
What is it good for?
You tell me, say it, say it, say it, say it
War, Good God, huh yeah
What is it good for?
ooooh war !

Click [here](#) to see Bruce Springsteen perform this song in 1985.

Click [here](#) to see a film of Edwin Starr performing the song in 1969.

Click [here](#) to watch a music video with news clips of the time.

Question:

1. For what reasons do the writers of this song oppose war?

We Didn't Start the Fire

Billy Joel, 1989

Harry Truman, Doris Day, Red China, Johnnie Ray
South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio²

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

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

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

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

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

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

U2, Syngman Rhee, payola and Kennedy
Chubby Checker, "Psycho", Belgians in the Congo

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

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

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

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

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

Birth control, Ho Chi Minh, Richard Nixon back again
Moonshot, 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

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
But when we are gone
Will it still burn on, and on, and on, and on

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

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

Click [here](#) to watch the fascinating music video of this song which follows a series of American families attempting to live the American dream of a house and family.

Questions:

1. This song summarizes 119 important political or cultural people or events from 1949, the year of Joel's birth, to 1989. What is Joel's theme?
2. There have been many parodies of this song. Keep the same message and update it by writing a verse about current issues. Below is a version about events in 2010:

Oil spill in the gulf, health care, Time Square scare
Blagojevich, Big Ben, Conan's gone then back again
Wikileaks, iPads, Lindsay's back in rehab
Bristol's dancing with the stars, Tiger's bustin' up his car

<http://www.shmoop.com/we-didnt-start-the-fire/meaning.html>

The Universal Soldier

Buffy Sainte Marie, 1964

He's five feet two and he's six feet four,
He fights with missiles and with spears,
He's all of thirty-one and he's only seventeen,
He's been a soldier for a thousand years.

He's a Catholic, a Hindu, an Atheist, a Jain*,
A Buddhist and a Baptist and Jew,
And he knows he shouldn't kill and he knows he always will
Kill for me my friend and me for you;

And he's fighting for Canada, he's fighting for France,
He's fighting for the USA,
And he's fighting for the Russians and he's fighting for Japan
And he thinks we'll put an end to war this way.

And he's fighting for democracy, he's fighting for the Reds
He says it's for the peace of all,
He's the one who must decide who's to live and who's to die
And he never sees the writing on the walls.

But without him how would Hitler have condemned him at Dachau*?
Without him Caesar would have stood alone.
He's the one who gives his body as the weapon of the war,
And without him all this killing can't go on.

He's the universal soldier and he really is to blame,
his orders come from far away no more,
They come from him and you and me and brothers can't you see
This is not the way we put an end to war.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGWsGyNsw00> Click here to view a 4:22 min video in which Buffy Sainte-Marie explains how she came to write this song, and then she performs it.

*Jain – A follower of Jainism, a religion founded in India in 500 B.C. whose believers are very respectful of the lives of animals.

*Dachau – notorious Nazi concentration camp

Question:

1. What moral statement is this song making? Do you agree with the musician's point of view? Why or why not?

The Times They Are A-Changin'

Bob Dylan, 1964

Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'.
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside
And it is ragin'.
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'.

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is
Rapidly agin'.
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slow one now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7qQ6_RV4VQ Click on this to view a grainy but effective video of Bob Dylan performing this song in 1964.

<https://vimeo.com/11205275> Click on this to view a music video with this song in the background and newsclips from the time illustrating the relevant issues in 1964.

Questions:

1. Whom does Dylan call on to recognize that the times are changing? What does he ask them to do?
2. Dylan speaks of the creation of a new order, but does not list the specific changes that are taking place. What do you think are some of the changes Dylan was demanding in the early 1960s?

Revolution

John Lennon and Paul McCartney, 1968

You say you want a revolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
You tell me that it's evolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
But when you talk about destruction
Don't you know that you can count me out
Don't you know it's gonna be all right
All right, all right

You say you got a real solution
Well, you know
We'd all love to see the plan
You ask me for a contribution
Well, you know
We're doing what we can
But when you want money
For people with minds that hate
All I can tell is brother you have to wait
Don't you know it's gonna be all right
All right, all right
Ah

Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah...

You say you'll change the constitution
Well, you know
We all want to change your head
You tell me it's the institution
Well, you know
You better free your mind instead
But if you go carrying pictures of chairman Mao
You ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow
Don't you know it's gonna be all right
All right, all right
All right, all right, all right
All right, all right, all right

Click [here](#) to see the Beatles perform *Revolution*

Question:

1. Why do you think some people in the peace movement considered this song a betrayal?

Blowin' In The Wind

Bob Dylan, 1962 Recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016.

How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannonballs fly
Before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

How many years can a mountain exist
Before it's washed to the sea?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head
Pretending he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Written in 1962, this song was voted by Rolling Stone magazine as the 14th of 500 greatest songs of all time.

Click [here](#) to hear Dylan sing this song with the lyrics superimposed on photos of him.

Questions:

1. What are the rhetorical questions asked in this song about peace, war and freedom?
2. The refrain "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind" has been described as "impenetrably ambiguous: either the answer is so obvious it is right in your face, or the answer is as intangible as the wind". *Gold, Mick (2002). "Life and Life Only: Dylan at 60". Judas!magazine, April 2002. p. 43.*

Which of these answers makes most sense to you? Why?

Where Have All The Flowers Gone

Pete Seeger, 1955

Where have all the flowers gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the flowers gone?
Long time ago

Where have all the flowers gone?
Young girls have picked them everyone
Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?

Where have all the young girls gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the young girls gone?
Long time ago

Where have all the young girls gone?
Gone for husbands everyone
Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?

Where have all the husbands gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the husbands gone?
Long time ago

Where have all the husbands gone?
Gone for soldiers everyone
Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?

Where have all the soldiers gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the soldiers gone?
Long time ago

Where have all the soldiers gone?
Gone to graveyards, everyone
Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?

Where have all the graveyards gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the graveyards gone?
Long time ago

Where have all the graveyards gone?
Gone to flowers, everyone

Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?

Where have all the flowers gone?
Long time passing
Where have all the flowers gone?
Long time ago

Where have all the flowers gone?
Young girls have picked them everyone
Oh, when will they ever learn?
Oh, when will they ever learn?

Click [here](#) to see an elderly Pete Seeger sing the song that he wrote in 1955, and the audience gradually join in.

Question:

1. What is the lesson we are encouraged to learn?