



STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF BILLY JOEL'S SONG "WE DIDN'T START THE FIRE"

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ABSTRACT

The present study is descriptive in nature and aims to provide a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Billy Joel's song. It explores the rapid and transitory allusions to over one hundred significant events spanning 1949 to 1989, as referenced in the song following its release on the album *Storm Front*. These events are presented chronologically, reflecting occurrences for which Joel suggests "his generation" bears no direct responsibility. The song's fast-paced stanzas incorporate fleeting references to 119 notable political, cultural, scientific, and socio-economic developments, highlighting the breadth and intensity of historical change. Stylistics, as a discipline, occupies a crucial position in the study of language and literature, offering a dynamic lens through which the structural and expressive dimensions of texts can be analyzed. To uncover the song's deeper meanings, this study employs the linguistic and stylistic framework proposed by Leech and Short (2007), which allows for a detailed examination beyond broad linguistic observation. Through this approach, the research identifies Joel's use of metaphors, anaphora, alliteration, and other figures of speech, which collectively animate ideas and create narrative cohesion. Analysis of these stylistic elements illuminates the literary techniques underpinning the song, while the song itself serves as the primary source of investigation. The study further draws on Norman Fairclough's (1992) theoretical framework, situating the analysis within a critical discourse perspective that emphasizes the interplay between language, meaning, and social context.

Keywords: *Stylistics, Historical Events, Generation Accountability, 119 occasions, Billy Joel, Storm Front*

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1. Introduction

Humans are crafted by the creators in such a way that they possess a very unique way of finding meaningful references behind everything they hear or see. Consequently, they conclude. Similarly, William Martin Joel also known as Billy Joel's song titled 'We Didn't Start the Fire', categorically discusses a long list of historical events in the lyrics. It represents the impression that history has been an ever-moving concept. This song emphasizes the fact that the existent state of the world is not the responsibility of those currently living in it. He followed a list-like style, chronologically underlining occasion after an event, happening after a happening. Hence, simulating the velocity at which the tumultuous world events and legislations moved, taking it into the rhythm and style of the song.

He got his inspiration from a 21-year-old boy who said to the vocalist that it was a terrible time to be 21. He remarked that when they were 21, they had the Vietnam War, The Civil Rights movement, and the violence associated with it. Hence linking references from real-life literature and analyzing them linguistically is the aim of the present study.

1.1. Stylistics

Stylistics states the analysis of literary styles inside texts. It's an attempt to join domains of linguistics, literary theory, and even psychology to identify how authors take intention, tone, temper, and environment among their selection of words, sentence organizations, and rhetorical methods. A stylistic analysis in literature investigates how a writer's writing options initiate outcomes, values, and causes of the general work. This means glancing intently at several sections, involving tone, metaphors, and figurative language, to recognize how they outline the reader's understanding.

The connection relating to stylistics and figures of speech is effective, as figures of speech are vital devices inside stylistics, aiding to model and transfer proposing in language artistically and vividly. Stylistics is to examine how linguistic domains like word diversity, sentence structure, and rhythm generate meaning and visual outcomes in text. Figures of speech are detailed linguistic devices applied to accomplish these effects.

Joel's song written in 1989 is distinguished in its stylistic method, combining pop rock with a hasty, nearly spoken-word vocal design. The song's lyrics list historic events and cultural mentions from 1949 (the year Joel was born) to 1989, generating an intense, stream-of-consciousness feel. This brisk pace, with every line referencing a new incident, mirrors the steady, fast-paced shift in history and civilization. The part "We didn't start the fire; it was always burning since the world's been turning" aids as a recurrent catchphrase that underlines Joel's theme: that these worldwide, societal, and radical issues have continued through time, he and his generation are not exclusively accountable for them. Moreover, Billy names five American presidents in the song including Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon (twice), Kennedy, and Reagan leaving an impression on the listener to peep into the history.

Even though it is a song, it has a great socio-political connotation, and one can consider it as a historical narrative, and that is the reason an analysis of this song will be conducted. The researcher wishes to investigate how Joel constructs his narration with stylistic devices stitching together complex changes in history and society. What is interesting about this song though is the fact that it has a great lyrical head that is fast and rhymes with a tune that is simple, such great complexities are met in history which this piece addresses.

After analysis of the stylistic elements, it would be clear how music can be a source of fun and still a tool to teach history. Then, the researcher will be able to argue how lyrics and poetical devices can make a song more attractive emotionally and intellectually to a listener. This study proposes to fill this gap through stylistic analysis of the song, as well as in its performance into the wider text of American culture, and its reception among listeners with historical context. This analysis is relevant not only for linguists and music enthusiasts but also for educators and historians seeking innovative ways to connect with modern audiences.

1.2. Research Objectives

This research paper has the following objectives:

- To evaluate the stylistic devices that are evident in the lyrics of “We Didn't Start the Fire” and their contribution towards making the narrative fascinating.
- To investigate the historical references and their significance or contribution to the meaning of the lyrics in the song.

1.3. Research Questions

This research paper seeks to address the following questions:

- What stylistic devices does Billy Joel use in “We Didn't Start the Fire” to make the narrative fascinating?
- How do the historical references and their significance contribute to the meaning of the lyrics in the song?

2. Literature Review

Stylistics offers a systematic way to examine how linguistic choices (lexical, grammatical, phonological) produce textual effects and meaning; Leech and Short's framework remain central for such analyses because it supplies clear categories for describing foregrounding, rhetorical devices, and textual patterning (Leech & Short, 2007). Complementing stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights how texts participate in the production and reproduction of social meanings and ideologies; Fairclough's three-dimensional model (textual analysis, discursive practices, social practice) is particularly suited to studies that connect language form with socio-political context and power relations (Fairclough, 1992). Together, these approaches allow a dual, fine-grained linguistic reading of song lyrics, enabling scholars to trace how devices such as repetition, listing, metaphor and anaphora both create musical effects and naturalize particular historical readings.

Existing scholarship more generally has tended to emphasize the song's historical breadth and cultural resonance while often stopping short of an integrated linguistic-ideological analysis. Popular and pedagogical accounts record the song's encyclopedic references and classroom value (Allsop, 2009; Matthias, 2023), and musicological and biographical studies outline Joel's stylistic choices and place in popular music (Bielen, 2011; Bellman, 2020; Jones, 2011). Meanwhile, comparative linguistic and music studies (Everett, 2000) have examined Joel's negotiation of learned and vernacular registers, but few works consistently apply Leech & Short's stylistic categories together with Fairclough's CDA to Joel's rapid-fire enumeration of historical events. This gap means that although the song's

historical content is well documented, the specific linguistic mechanisms that construct its ideological stance on generational obligation remain under-explored.

By combining Leech & Short's descriptive toolkit with Fairclough's discourse-analytic perspective, the present study responds directly to that gap: it links micro-level stylistic features to macro-level discursive effects (memory construction, generational refraction, ideological framing). Such an integrated approach extends prior contributions (e.g., Bielen's and Bellman's musical/contextual readings; Allsop's pedagogical focus; Matthias's reference mapping) by showing how Joel's linguistic choices not only list events but also rhetorically position the speaker and listeners within a particular narrative of historical continuity and shared inheritance (Bielen, 2011; Bellman, 2020; Allsop, 2009; Matthias, 2023; Everett, 2000). In doing so, the study contributes both to stylistics (by applying Leech & Short's categories to a high-density lyrical text) and to CDA (by demonstrating how popular music participates in shaping historical consciousness), providing a model for future multimodal analyses of politically charged songs.

3. Research Methodology

Theoretical Framework: Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (1992)

Each song has a tale to tell, and a handful cover unseen stories or teachings, however, others are utterly transparent. In Billy's song, he does not think twice to be very discernible with what he tries to establish, which is how all the occurrences in his song influence one greater fire.

Moreover, Fairclough's CDA is a method of analyzing texts (spoken, written, or sung) to reveal how language is used to maintain, challenge, or reproduce social power, ideologies, and historical meanings. It treats texts as both products of society and tools that shape society.

3.1. Significant Assumptions

Language is never impersonal it always reflects social, historical, and ideological positions. Texts (like songs) participate in broader discourses about culture, identity, and power. Meaning is shaped by both the text itself (words, structures, styles) and its social context (when, why, and by whom it was produced).

3.1.1.Three-Dimensional Model

- a) **Textual Analysis (description):** Examining stylistic features — vocabulary, grammar, structures, and figurative devices.
- b) **Discourse Practice (interpretation):** How the text is produced, circulated, and interpreted by audiences.
- c) **Social Practice:** How the text relates to larger social and historical contexts, ideologies, and power structures.

The song is not just a list of historical events but it carries cultural and ideological messages about generational responsibility, history's continuity, and socio-political anxieties.

3.1.2. CDA countenances us to

Analyze the song's stylistic choices (list structure, repetition, fast tempo) as reflections of the chaotic, relentless pace of history.

Interpret the recurring refrain as a discursive act of deflecting generational blame and positioning history as an unstoppable force.

Explain how the song reflects American socio-political ideologies, such as Cold War fears, cultural change, and shifting generational values.

Hence, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is an ideal framework for stylistic analysis because it helps uncover how the song's language and style actively shape and reflect historical narratives, cultural anxieties, and ideological positions.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Textual Analysis

4.1.1. Phonological Analysis

For Billy Joel's track, we would look at the song's sound structure, concentrating on origins like tempo, and rhyme phonetic patterns. It has a speedy rhythm, with each line closely packed with words. The song has a virtually machine-gun-like rhythm, exhibiting the rush of recording historic occurrences. The rhythm is chiefly syllable-timed, suggesting that each syllable has virtually the same length, initiating a constant pace that represents a ticking clock, matching the theme, and reflecting the historical timeline of circumstances stated. The song chiefly tracks a trochaic tempo. The stress on the initial syllable of every single name or event generates an intense, evident beat. Due to this arrangement, each line of the song has an extreme, propelling feel, highlighting each new occurrence. This continuous stress pattern keeps the audience members connected and reflects the persistent pace of historic events.

Joel utilizes alliteration (repetition of consonant sounds) to generate movement and accord among lines. The recurring initial sounds create a melodic consistency. Assonance (repetition of vowel sounds) is also exhibited, though less notably. It adds sly consistency and aids to importance in the rapid-fire provision of names and events. Much of the names and terminology Joel uses have complicated consonant clusters (e.g., "Khrushchev," "Rockefeller"), which increase the song's intensity. This influences the perception of significance in each line. He frequently places more sonorous (vowel-heavy or resonant) names in less strained positions, assessing the deep harmonic sounds and improving the musicality. Granting the song needs a strict rhyme policy, there is an open-end rhyme that links lines. As a substitute for depending on rhyme, the song uses the cyclical chorus to specify formation.

Several names and terms have comparable phonetic ends, establishing internal rhyme-like sounds that impact the organization of the stanza. The chorus, repeating "We didn't start the fire," is a top instance of how phonology establishes memorability. The recurring /f/ and /r/ sounds in "fire" and "started" highlight the continuing, endless nature of the events. The chorus line acts as a vocal attachment, drawing listeners back to the set of sounds and establishing a pause from the events that took place, requiring a temporary rest.

Billy Joel's track uses several figurative devices to express a perception of historical chaos and continuousness.

Table 01. Phonological analysis of "We Didn't Start the Fire"

Element	Examples	Explanation
Rhyme	"Red China, Johnnie Ray / South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio."	Rhyming words like "Ray" and "DiMaggio" create harmony and help maintain rhythm.
	"Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British politician sex."	Rhyming "X" and "sex" reinforces the beat while addressing historical themes.
Rhythm	"Rock and roller, cola wars, I can't take it anymore!"	The rapid rhythm of the delivery mirrors the fast succession of events, reflecting the chaotic times.
Alliteration	"Brooklyn's got a winning team."	Repetition of the "B" sound (<i>Brooklyn, winning</i>) creates a lyrical and auditory connection.
	"Rosenbergs, H-bomb, Sugar Ray, Panmunjom."	Repeated "R" sounds (<i>Rosenbergs</i>) enhance lyrical cohesion.
Consonance	"Children of thalidomide."	Repeated "d" sounds in "children" and "thalidomide" enhance the musicality.
Assonance	"Belgians in the Congo."	Repeated "o" vowel sound creates a melodic flow.
Repetition	"We didn't start the fire / It was always burning since the world's been turning."	The repeated chorus emphasizes the central theme of the song.
Stress and Intonation	"Fire," "wars," "blame," "turning."	Keywords are stressed, aligning with the themes of conflict and legacy.

4.1.2. Morphological Analysis

The term morphology is Greek and is a makeup of morph- meaning 'shape, form', and -ology which means 'the study of something'. Morphology as a sub-discipline of linguistics was named for the first time in 1859 by the German linguist August Schleicher who used the term for the study of the form of words.

Table 02 Morphological Analysis of "We Didn't Start the Fire"

Element	Examples	Explanation
Proper Nouns	"Harry Truman," "Joe DiMaggio," "Marilyn Monroe," "Eisenhower."	Specific historical figures give authenticity and evoke familiarity with the events referenced.
	"Nasser," "Prokofiev," "Liberace," "Khrushchev."	Historical and cultural icons from various fields show diversity in references.
Inflectional	"was" (past tense), "didn't"	Simple tenses make the song

Element	Examples	Explanation
Morphology	(<i>negation</i>).	accessible and clear in its historical narrative.
Derivational Morphology	<i>"Industrialization"</i> (industry + -al + -ization).	Occasionally, complex derived words highlight abstract themes like industrial and societal change.
Word Formation	<i>"Moonshot," "Watergate," "Woodstock."</i>	Compound words encapsulate significant events concisely.
	<i>"Starkweather homicide."</i>	Combined terms emphasize notable events or figures (e.g., crimes or assassinations).
Abbreviations	<i>"JFK," "TV," "U2."</i>	Common abbreviations reflect historical terminology used during the referenced periods.

4.1.3. Graphological Analysis

Graphology is a linguistic level of analysis that comprises the study of graphic aspects of language. This term was first brought into use in linguistic studies in the sixties by McIntosh (1961), who considered it an analogous mode to that of phonology. In his paper "Graphology and Meaning", he declared he had used graphology in a sense which is intended to answer, in the realm of written language, to that of 'phonology' in the realm of spoken language" (1961: 107). A few years later, Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1964: 50) broadened this concept when they connected it to spelling, punctuation, and any other matter related to graphic resources in language. Other linguists such as Vachek (1973), Sampson (1985), Coulmas (1991, 1999), and Harris (1995) have also worked on graphology, paying close attention to the properties of alphabets and their evolution throughout history.

Table 03 Graphological Analysis of "We Didn't Start the Fire"

Element	Examples	Explanation
Line Structure	<i>"Harry Truman, Doris Day / Red China, Johnnie Ray."</i>	Short, quick lines mirror the song's rapid pace and timeline format.
	<i>"Rock and roller, cola wars / I can't take it anymore!"</i>	Line breaks enhance rhythm and create a sense of urgency.
Capitalization	<i>"Harry Truman," "South Pacific," "Brooklyn Dodgers."</i>	Proper nouns are capitalized to emphasize their significance.
Punctuation	Minimal punctuation: lines often end without periods.	Reflects the ongoing, flowing nature of events in the song.
Visual Layout	The lyrics are printed as short, list-like lines. Sequence of years (e.g., "1949,	The layout resembles a timeline, aiding comprehension of historical progression. Visually reinforces the chronological order

1950") when events occurred. of the song's content.

4.2. Figures of Speech in the Song

4.2.1. Alliteration

Alliteration is the recurrence of the identical consonant sound at the commencement of one or more words near one another. The song "We Didn't Start the Fire" sources some examples of alliteration to originate rhythm and underline certain lyrics. The duplication of the same consonant sound at the start of one or more words near one another is often used in the song.

"Brooklyn's got a champion team": The "B" sound in "Brooklyn" and "team" builds a smooth flow and highlights the location. From 1941-1947 the Brooklyn Dodgers lost the Globe Series to New York Yankees.

"Marilyn Monroe": The repeated "M" sounds in "Marilyn" and "Monroe" add importance to this iconic name known for her performances.

"Children of thalidomide": The "ch" sound in "children" and "thalidomide" helps tie the words together. In 1950s West Germany, the narcotic known as thalidomide, which served as a drug for nausea, was discovered to cause dire birth defects if consumed during pregnancy.

"Starkweather homicide": The "h" sound in "homicide" and the surrounding phrases make this line memorable. In 1958, at the age of 19, he turned to a killing spree with his 14-year-old girlfriend.

4.2.2. Hyperbole:

Hyperbole is an overestimation that is generated to stress a point or produce an idea of humor. In the song, hyperbole is used to highlight the overcoming nature of historic trials and social issues from the mid-20th century. The hyperbolic description lies in the steep volume of events revealed, communicating the outline that these concerns are constant and extensive. The line repeated in the chorus hands out as a hyperbolic statement that the present generation is not merely blamable for the world's troubles. This argument shortens composite historical narratives and stresses a sense of predictability about societal problems. By referencing many vivid events (e.g., wars, political turmoil, and cultural shifts) within a few verses, the song augments the mess of the era. The collection of references establishes a hyperbolic sense that humanity has permanently been in chaos and that every group faces substantial disputes.

These portions blend to create a convincing argument about the connection between past and human events, using hyperbole to boost the idea that each generation receives the outcomes of the past

4.2.3. Metaphor

A metaphor is a variety of symbolic talk that aids in defending a scheme or getting a similarity. The title itself is a metaphor. The word 'Fire' is used for all the erroneous happenings that have passed or occurred in this world. The "fire" in this track that Billy Joel

addresses are extreme and awful trials on the planet not only being harmful in general to the people but also incidents that altered how the public saw events.

The lyrics express a sense of divided obligation among generations. By asserting "We didn't start the fire," Joel infers that every generation receives crises and clashes from the past, accenting the idea that social issues are continued rather than commenced by any individual group.

4.2.4. Irony

The irony is the use of lyrics to carry a sense that is conflicting with its literal meaning. The irony in the song sits in its observations on the repeated characteristics of history and the perception that the struggles and trials tackled by each age group are not new, but significantly have been received from the past. "We didn't start the fire, it was always burning" hints that societal problems like war, political unrest, and cultural rivalry are ongoing. This irony stresses that each generation confronts disputes that are embedded in history, rendering it feel like they are simply seeing a remainder of disputes rather than designing new issues. Although the juvenile generation repeatedly feels hampered by the problems of their ancestors, the song ironically indicates that the present generation is not utterly guiltless in the foundation of these problems. It suggests indifference from accountability yet focuses that they are still upset by historic events and choices made by primary generations. The song lists an array of significant people, from Harry Truman to Woodstock. The sheer capacity of notes establishes a sense of overcoming chaos, proposing that despite the improvement and change, society stays caught in a cycle of catastrophes and clashes.

4.2.5. Litotes

It is a fine but efficient rhetorical device that benefited to suggests irony or ironic importance by opposing the opposite of what is meant. The line in the main chorus itself contradicts accountability for the instability and challenges referenced throughout the song. Joel proposes that the difficulties in the world existed long beforehand his generation, using litotes to minimize blameworthiness, suggesting: "We're not the ones who started it". Every historical event mentioned ultimately highlights unrest and strength in a simple way. For example, "Belgians in the Congo" or "Children of Thalidomide" cue deep historical bearing and overlook without openly describing the horrors, thus trusting the audience to reckon the grimness of these events.

4.2.6. Allusion

An allusion is a reference to a place, myth, or historical event. This song has more than 115 Allusion including newspaper headlines from January 1949 to 1989. Billy Joel's song "We Didn't Start the Fire" is valuable in allusions, referencing abundant historical events, cultural logos, and political figures.

4.3. Social Practice

4.3.1. Historical Figures

This song has an excessive reflection of history inside it. Additionally, historical references and their significance contribute a lot to the meaning of the lyrics in the song.

- **Harry Truman (1884 – 1972):** The 33rd President of the United States, famous for his post-World War II governance. For the duration of World War two, he was also the head

of America's nuclear arsenal decision concerning the bombing of Japan resulting in around two hundred thousand deaths.

- **Joseph Stalin (1878 – 1953):** The mentor of the Soviet Union, demonstrating the Cold War conflicts. After a century of authoritative dictatorship over the Soviet Union which was followed by the killing of millions of family members.
- **Richard Nixon (1913–1994):** The 37th President, correlated with the Watergate disgrace and his letter of resignation.
- **Marilyn Monroe (1926 – 1962):** Marilyn Monroe was a performer, soloist, and star of the pop world, an iconic actress the known image of America in the 1950s. She died from an overdose in 1962. She was famous for her civic secluded life as well as for Popular Hollywood movies such as Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953) and The Seven Year Itch (1955).
- **Albert Einstein (1879 – 1955):** Discusses Albert Einstein, a prominent physicist recognized for his model of relativity.

4.3.2. Cultural Events

- **Rock and Roller:** Cola Wars: Relates to the rivalry linking rock music and soda brands, especially during the 1980s.
- **Berlin Wall:** Indicates the divide between East and West Berlin and the expansive background of the Cold War.

4.3.3. Notable Incidents

- **H-bomb:** Stand for the hydrogen bomb, echoing the nuclear arms pursuit throughout the Cold War.
- **JFK (1917 –1963):** Indicates to President John F. Kennedy, mainly his assassination in 1963.
- **Moon shot:** In 1955-1972 The Soviet Union and the United States were in rivalry for supremacy in spaceflight so when The Soviets sent the first satellite broadcasting in space, The United States answered by landing the first man on the moon.
- **AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome):** During the 1960s Aids started to spread throughout the world. 64% affected were gays.
- **Palestine:** In the 1970s Arab Israeli conflict over land occupation intensified. In the March of 1977 the president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, made a statement that a nationalist Palestinian state was needed and discussed the role of Palestinians in the Arab Israeli ceasefire as crucial. The cabinet of Israel continued to reject the proposal suggesting the Freedom of Palestine Organization's involvement.

4.3.4. Sports

- **Sugar Ray (1921–1989):**

He was a famous boxer, demonstrating the cultural importance of sports through the time.

4.3.5. Literature and Media

- **Pope Paul (1897 – 1978):** Concerning Pope Paul VI, highlighting the impact of religion and the Catholic Church through that period.

Joel uses allusions to focus on the endless scenery of historical unrest, expressing that each age group faces its own trials. The repeated chorus indicates that the conflicts and disputes of history are constant and genetic, not certainly produced by one generation only.

Each stanza takes hearers on a voyage, replicating the eras, yielding the song both a musical memoir and an observation of human strength. Hence the figures of speech like litotes, irony, metaphor, hyperbole, alliteration, meter, and rhyme add a significant amount of meaning to the overall narrative of the Billy Joel song.

4.4. Discourse Practice (Interpretation)

Audiences interpret the song as both a chronicle of modern history and a statement of generational deflection positioning the speaker's generation as inheritors, not creators, of global problems. The refrain "We didn't start the fire" functions as a discursive strategy, influencing how listeners perceive historical responsibility and social change. Hence, Fairclough's framework, reveals how its textual structure, discourse practice, and social context interact to construct a narrative of relentless historical continuity and generational deflection. Together, these levels expose how language in popular music can reflect and reproduce cultural ideologies.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the song supplies a powerful analysis (Textual, Social, and Discourse) of the persistent environment of history and the generational sequence of experiments faced by civilization. Via a rapid-fire inventory of over 100 substantial events from 1949 to 1989, Joel sums up a violent era graded by political disruption, cultural alterations, and social disasters. The song's formation, illustrated by its rapid tempo and rhythmic style, successfully mirrors the turmoil and rush of the historical chronicle it exhibits.

By engaging in various stylistic essentials such as alliteration, metaphor, and hyperbole, Joel highlights the idea that contemporary culture is not exclusively answerable for the difficulties it receives; rather, these subjects are an extension of ancient historical wars. "We didn't start the fire" highlights this idea, declaring that while each formation faces its rare challenges, it is the increasing weight of history that models the present.

Finally, Joel's work requests listeners to exhibit the connection between past and present, encouraging an innate understanding of the enduring works that classify human understanding. This approach enables the researchers to understand better the formal features and performance aspects of the song, but it does not allow for an understanding of the detailing in the song construction and production processes that also have effects on the song. The research offers a perspective of looking at song lyrics from different angles and how linguistic and rhetorical devices like repetition, allusion, and rhythm work together to enhance the narrative and flow of the song. It can be argued that the song's events and associated timelines enable the teacher and the pupils in particular, to be active in the action of learning concerning important facts of the 20th century. Also, the results of the research are useful in language teaching as they show how the combination of music and lyrics may contribute to the expansion and understanding of vocabulary and stylistic interpretation of the English language.

"We Didn't Start the Fire" became popular for its thematic richness which originated from Billy Joel using many historical references throughout the song. Joel soundlessly weaves together more than one hundred social, political and cultural events, names and movements from 1949 to 1989 to form a clear history of the modern era. Any reference,

related to worldwide events, politics, pop culture or science, adds to the message that people cannot control or blame the whole course of events called history.

Such references demonstrate that disputes, improvements and changes keep happening and are handed down from one era to the next. So the song implies that many of society's problems come from the past instead of from the present, thus refuting the view that young people make all the mistakes. The point is made again in the chorus, where Joel keeps saying, "We didn't start the fire," meaning the problems in the world have been around for some time.

Also, quickly presenting events in a plain manner helps create a feeling of having too much information which encourages listeners to acknowledge the complexity of earlier times. The sources allow viewers to start thinking about the importance and ways in which events from the past are related. By making use of popular music, Joel combines entertainment with an effort to teach and question, showing that cultural artifacts help us remember, grow curious and better understand what happened before.

In short, this research not only advances the knowledge of Billy Joel's work, but also provides a useful template for analysis of the interaction between music, language, and culture. The implications go far beyond the focus of stylistic analysis and contribute equally well to the concerns of educators, linguists, musicologists, and cultural theorists.

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