

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

WAR IS OVER - IF YOU WANT IT

Coach John remembers the John Lennon & Yoko Ono Christmas song; 'Happy Xmas (War is over)



"So this is Christmas..." is perhaps one of the most famous opening lines of any Christmas song to date, but just what was the message behind John Lennon and Yoko Ono's iconic track?

The 1971 track is one of the world's most popular Christmas songs, and one that also contained a political message that is still **resonant** to this day.

*"So this is Christmas and what have you done?
Another year over, a new one just begun... A very merry Christmas and a happy new year, let's hope it's a good one without any fear."*

These **lyrics** feel especially **apt** as we **head into** 2024 with two major and bloody wars being waged in Gaza and Ukraine.

The song came about after more than two years of peace activism by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, that began with the '**bed-ins**' for peace they created in March and May 1969.

The song was part of an international multimedia campaign launched by the couple in

December 1969, at the height of the counterculture movement and protests against America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

They had rented **billboard** spaces in 12 major cities around the world, for the display of black-and-white posters that declared "WAR IS OVER! If You Want It – Happy Christmas from John & Yoko".

The slogan had previously appeared in the 1968 anti-war songs 'The War Is Over' by Phil Ochs, and 'The Unknown Soldier' by the Doors. However, it is not known if this was deliberate or merely coincidental.

In the opening, whispered lines of the song Yoko wishes her daughter (from a previous marriage) Kyoko a happy Christmas followed by John doing the same to his son (from his previous marriage) Julian. The couple's son Sean had not been born yet.

The song was written and recorded in New York City and the children's voices **featured** on the song are from the Harlem Community Choir.

Lennon **came up with** the song as a way of continuing the themes of social unity and peaceful change via personal accountability.

*"War is over, if you want it
War is over, now!"*

by **ECP coach**



John Hird

Word list

resonant: (adj) having the ability to evoke enduring images, memories, or emotions

lyrics: (n) the words sang in a song

apt: (adj) suited to the purpose or occasion; suitable, appropriate

head into: (v) approach

bed-ins: (n) staying in bed for a long period, as a protest

billboard: (n) a flat surface (as of a panel, wall, or fence) on which bills are posted specifically : a large panel designed to carry outdoor advertising

featured: (adj) (of a newspaper or magazine article, broadcast programme, or show) made a special attraction.

come up with: (v) produce something, especially when pressured or challenged, to have an idea

Let's chat about that!

1. Give a summary of the text to your coach and/or classmates.
2. What inspired John and Yoko to write the song?
3. What is a 'bed-in'? (Follow the link)
4. Do you think it is an effective form of protest?
5. Click on the link to the song on page 2. Listen and follow the lyrics. How does the song make you feel?
6. The song says: 'War is over (If you want it) What did John and Yoko mean by that?
7. What are your Christmas wishes this year? What do you want for Christmas?

HAPPY XMAS (WAR IS OVER)

(Ultimate Mix, 2020) John & Yoko Plastic Ono Band + Harlem Community Choir

(Happy Christmas, Kyoko Happy Christmas, Julian)	(War is over!) The road is so long (Now!) And so happy Christmas (War is over!)	And so happy Christmas (War is over!) We hope you have fun (If you want it)
So this is Christmas And what have you done? Another year over	For black and for white (If you want it)	The near and the dear ones (War is over!)
And a new one just begun And so this is Christmas	For yellow and red ones (War is over!)	The old and the young (Now!)
I hope you have fun The near and the dear ones	Let's stop all the fight (Now!) A very Merry Christmas	A very Merry Christmas And a happy New Year
The old and the young A very Merry Christmas	And a happy New Year Let's hope it's a good one	Let's hope it's a good one Without any fear
And a happy New Year Let's hope it's a good one	Without any fear And so this is Christmas (War is over!)	War is over, if you want it War is over, now!
Without any fear And so this is Christmas (War is over!)	And what have we done? (If you want it)	Happy Christmas Happy Christmas, Christmas Happy Christmas, Christmas
For weak and for strong (If you want it)	Another year over (War is over!)	
For rich and the poor ones	And a new one just begun (Now!)	<i>By John Lennon & Yoko Ono</i>