

## Human Rights issues linked to War, Conflict and Peace Reflected in Picturebooks Through Art, Music and Song Lyrics

**Janet Evans.** Independent Scholar. janetevans@btinternet.com

### Abstract

This article will look at the relationship of the arts: fine arts, music, song and other kinds of artistic expression in picturebooks, prior to considering how the arts have been used to communicate human rights issues linked to war, conflict and peace in picturebooks. It will briefly consider what is meant by “the arts”, prior to considering how some award winning picturebook creators have been influenced by fine art in their book illustrations, and how others have taken lyrics from songs dealing with conflict, peace and human rights and illustrated them to create picturebooks as art objects which are both emotive and emotional. A particular focus will be on books affiliated to Amnesty International with special reference to *Imagine* by John Lennon.

**Keywords:** Human Rights, Peace, Music, Picture Books, Art

### Resum

Aquest article fa una mirada a la relació entre les arts: belles arts, música, cançó i altres tipus d'expressió artística en àlbums il·lustrats, abans de considerar com han sigut utilitzades les arts per a comunicar els problemes respecte dels drets humans lligats a la guerra, el conflicte i la pau en aquests àlbums. Es considerarà breument què s'entén per “les arts” abans de considerar com alguns autors premiats d'àlbums com a objectes artístics són tant emotius com emocionals. Es farà una incidència particular en els llibres publicats per Amnistia Internacional amb especial referència a *Imagine* de John Lennon.

**Paraules clau:** Drets humans, Pau, Música, Àlbums il·lustrats, Art.

### Resumen

Este artículo contempla la relación entre las artes: bellas artes, música, canción y otros tipos de expresión artística en álbumes ilustrados antes de considerar cómo han sido utilizadas las artes para comunicar la problemática respecto de los derechos humanos ligados a la guerra, el conflicto y la paz en estos álbumes. Se considerará brevemente qué se entiende por “las artes” antes de considerar como algunos autores premiados de álbumes en tanto que objetos artísticos son tanto emotivos como emocionales. Se incidirá particularmente en los libros publicados por Amnistía Internacional con especial referencia a *Imagine* de John Lennon.

**Palabras clave:** Derechos humanos, Paz, Música, Álbumes ilustrados, Arte.

## 1. Introduction

My dad likes John Lennon and Imagine is his favourite song. He cries when he hears it because he was a soldier and now he is a war veteran from the Iraq war. He doesn't talk about the war a lot but he says we should stop fighting and have peace.

Callum aged 9 years

We currently live in a world of unbelievable change. Many people live their lives surrounded by war and conflict, poverty, famine and homelessness frequently leading to a lack of any kind of security. For people not involved, it can be almost impossible to empathise with this way of living, however, it is important to at least be aware of how some human beings are being forced to live their lives.

## 2. "Imagine": Peace song, Picturebook and Art

Amnesty International conducted a poll in 2016, which revealed that many parents felt that

**Imagine is one such picturebook. It shows how picturebook creators can make links to the arts and in so doing create new, different and often, very evocative art forms**

reading a book is the best way to develop empathy in children. Picturebooks in particular, offer a way to help readers understand humanitarian problems in the world. They have the power to develop empathy and give children the confidence to stand up on behalf of others. There are increasing numbers of picturebooks which take the lyrics from popular songs and use them alongside illustrations to create multimodal visual texts which can

be both emotive and emotional simultaneously ... as well as being beautiful art objects.

Imagine is one such picturebook. It shows how picturebook creators can make links to the arts and in so doing create new, different and often, very evocative art forms. Picture yourself hearing the music and listening to the first few lines of the song lyrics of Imagine, the iconic song by John Lennon,

Imagine There's No Heaven.

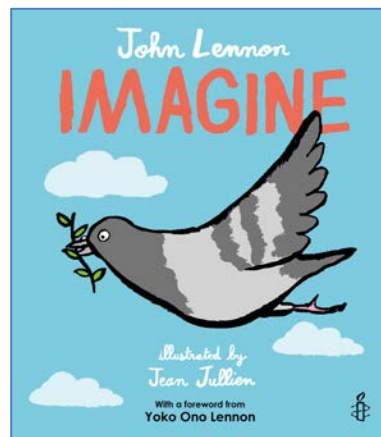
It's Easy If You Try.

No hell below us.

Above us only sky.

The words and music of *Imagine* are known for being one of the most recognisable peace songs in the world. As soon as the first strands of music are heard and the first few words are sung, *Imagine* is recognised by huge numbers of people and pacifists worldwide.

Now picture yourself looking at the same song in picturebook format. *Imagine* is a contemporary picturebook which integrates visual art with song lyrics and draws on a reader's existing knowledge of the song's music to convey emotion and to reinforce an anti-war, pro-peace sentiment in a powerfully synergetic way.



**Figure 1. *Imagine* (Lennon & Jullien 2017)**

Published in 2017 by Francis Lincoln Children's Books, in collaboration with Amnesty International and with permission of Yoko Ono who has written the foreword, the book takes the lyrics from John Lennon's song, written in 1971, and pairs them with Jean Jullien's illustrations which depict a carrier pigeon on a mission to spread the message of peace and friendship to all birds.

In adapting Lennon's song to a picturebook, two different art forms: music and song were added to the quintessential picturebook as art format. The fact that Yoko Ono gave her blessing to adapt *Imagine* seems to indicate that John would have been more than happy to have the words and music of his song made into a picturebook with Jean Jullien as its illustrator and in collaboration with Amnesty International. Yoko Ono reflects Lennon's sentiments in her foreword to the picturebook:

Everybody wants to feel happy and to feel safe. And we can all help make the world a better place in our own way. We should always keep love in our hearts, and look after one another. We should always share what we have, and we should stand up for people who are not being treated fairly. (Lennon 2017)

Lennon was a passionate advocate for peace and his song, *Imagine*, an homage for the need for peace and not war, sets out his dream of a peaceful world, free of war or suffering. Created round Lennon’s poetic words, this picturebook is a perfect example of how music, song lyrics and illustrations can be combined to form a visual text that is not just a blend of disjoint parts, but a synthesis of these parts which can form a new cohesive whole in its own right.

Jean Jullien was exactly the right person to illustrate *Imagine*. As a pacifist he had previously designed and illustrated anti-war posters and was the creator of the world wide recognized logo, the Eiffel Tower peace symbol accompanied by the hash tag, *Peace for Paris* which went viral just hours after the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack in Paris in 2015. In creating the *Peace for Paris* logo, Jullien combined linear design aspects of the Eiffel Tower structure with the *Ban the Bomb* peace sign



**Figure 2a. Hashtag Peace for Paris logo Jean Jullien (2015)**



**Figure 2b. Ban the bomb logo**

Arguably the world’s best known and most widely used protest symbol, the *Ban the Bomb* peace sign, now over 60 years old, started out as the emblem of the British anti-nuclear movement prior to becoming an international sign for peace. It has inspired many anti-war works of art and art installations, and in a clear connection with Lennon’s urge for world freedom and to “make love not war”, a whole “Lennon” wall, merging the *Ban the Bomb* peace sign with John Lennon’s portrait, was created in Prague, the Czech Republic, after his assassination in 1980

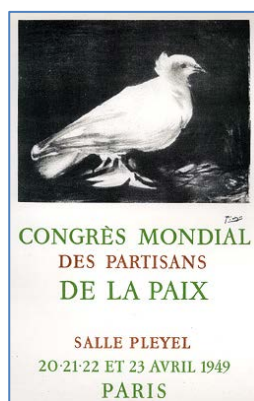


**Figure 3. John Lennon Imagine wall in Prague**

The wall, a true symbol of peace and freedom, which has been added to, painted over and repainted since its original conception, reflects the link between conflict, peace and human rights and does so through the medium of art.

### 2.1 Influences on Jullien's picturebook art: Picasso's Dove of Peace

The simplicity of Jean Jullien's carrier pigeon on the front cover of *Imagine* bears a striking similarity to Picasso's *Dove of Peace* sketch from 1949. There seems to be no doubt that Jullien was influenced by Picasso's dove sketch which he created as an anti-war image. After *Guernica* was hailed as one of the world's most moving anti-war paintings, Picasso was invited to design an image to represent peace. He chose a dove and his first dove of peace, *La Colombe*, chosen as the emblem for the Congress Mondial poster, to accompany the first International Peace Conference in Paris in 1949, was a traditional, realistic picture of a pigeon which had been given to him by his artist friend Henri Matisse whose personal, pet doves were the actual models for Picasso's famous *peace dove*.



**Figure 4. Picasso's Congress Mondial poster with *Dove of Peace* sketch (1949)**

Picasso later developed his peace dove image into the simple, graphic line drawing that is now one of the world's most recognisable symbols of peace (Figure 5). In addition, and almost to reinforce his pacifist beliefs, he named his fourth child, 'Paloma', the Spanish word for 'dove' and therefore by association, "peace".



**Figure 5. Picasso's Dove of Peace line drawing (1949)**

The influence of Picasso's dove of peace artwork along with Lennon's music and pacifist song lyrics, and Jullien's spare but powerful illustrations for the picturebook, *Imagine*, all reflect the desire and need to eliminate conflict and promote peace through art and creativity.

### 3. What is Art?: Questioning Art and its Worthiness

Art makes us stop in our tracks – makes us slow down a bit.

Simon Schama (2018)

The arts, taken here to encompass literature, poetry and verse, visual art, music, drama and dance, are essential communication vehicles to enable humans to express and understand thoughts, feelings, and frequently, the very deepest of human emotions. They are often seen as being the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, usually in a visual form such as painting, drawing and sculpture but also in music, literature and dance.

Appreciated primarily for their beauty and/or emotional power, the arts are not just passive conduits of communication but can also engender strong, active feelings of antipathy to the subject matter being considered. How one views and appreciates art relates to one's personal experiences, standards and values. Not everyone has the same point of view or perception of what art is and the question, "What is Art?" is frequently asked. The contemporary, frequently shocking (and intended to shock) artwork of the Young British Artists (YBA's) such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin are a case in point. Indeed, Hirst's *Pickled Animals* art installations and Tracy Emin's unmade bed, *My Bed*, caused much consternation and huge furore when they were first exhibited

It is not just the work of living artists that have shocked the art world: Picasso's paintings from his final years were much maligned and suffered utter contempt when they were initially exhibited; Modigliani's elongated faces and reclining nudes showing pubic hair for the first time shocked viewers; and the strange and frequently impossible to understand work of surrealist artists such as Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte all had their work subjected to ridicule and censorship.

The question of what is art can also be applied to music. Even today, where many people like to think of themselves as broad minded, music is not always accepted as "art". For example, the music of composer Richard Strauss, who had his opera *Salome*, based on the erotic and murderous biblical play by Oscar Wilde (1891), censored and initially banned for its sexually explicit *Dance of the Seven Veils*, still has the capacity to shock.

The art and music of Arnold Schoenberg was considered degenerative by the Nazis and his avant-garde, often atonal, discordant music was not appreciated even by many ardent classical music

fans. Even today, his music provokes strong, antithetical responses from music lovers for its lack of harmony and abstruseness.

Art in all its different guises can be wide ranging, provocative and thought provoking and is certainly a dynamic creative force for philosophical reflection.

#### 4. Picturebooks and Visual Art

As a different and unique art form, picturebooks too can be controversial and frequently challenge the reader in relation to their content and illustrative style (Evans, 2015; Beckett, 2015). Much research has focussed on the picturebook as an art form that combines visual and verbal narratives in a book format, (Bader, 1976; Beckett, 2012; Evans, 2009, 2012; Marantz, 1977; Nodelman, 1988; Schwarcz, 1982; Sipe 2006, Stanton, 1998; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007).

Ken Marantz noted that the picturebook is a unique art form and as such is, "...a form of visual art. The picturebook must be experienced as a visual/ verbal entity if its potential values are to be realized." (1977, p.151). Whilst Perry Nodelman, in his seminal text looking at the narrative art of picturebooks, stated, "Good picture books ... offer us what all good art offers us: greater consciousness – the opportunity, in other words, to be more human. That means to be less innocent, more wise" (1988, p. 285).

That picturebooks frequently draw on the arts is to be expected. Many are created by highly acclaimed, well established, picturebook artists, for example, Anthony Browne, Wolf Erlbruch, Thiery Dedieu, David Weisner, George Roderigue, Shaun Tan, Oscar & Dorte Karrebaek to name just a few. Some of these artists create picturebooks using their own paintings and artwork, as with *Why is Blue Dog Blue?* by George Rodrigue, and *The Singing Bones* by Shaun Tan. Others draw their inspiration from outside artistic sources with *Willie's Pictures* by Anthony Browne (2000) being a fine example of this. In knowing that every picture tells a story, Browne takes some of the works of art by the Great Masters but slightly changes them to depict a series of individual paintings each telling a different story from the original. The result is interesting and humorously irreverent in places.

That many international awards for illustration are given to picturebook artists is testimony to the importance of their art. The Hans Christian Andersen Award, Caldecott Medal Award, Kate

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Greenaway Award and the recently founded Klaus Flugge Prize are all world famous with the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) being one of the most famous children's book illustration awards in the world.

## 5. Picturebooks and Music

Visual art such as a painting can communicate on its own; when words are added the meaning can change and a different way of responding to the text can develop, but when music is added, a totally new dimension is created. Music can ebb and flow and pull on the senses; song lyrics work in conjunction with the music's tempo, rhythm, speed, pitch and melody to create the intensity of meaning. In linking music with words and images – a multimodal fusion of differing art forms takes place. This fusion allows the reader/viewer/listener to become deeply immersed in a picturebook whilst at the same time drawing on their personal thoughts and experiences, thus rendering the meaning of the book even more powerful.

Certain picturebook creators have appropriated different forms of art to communicate what they want to show and tell to their readers. Although many author/illustrators use just visual art, there are increasing numbers who are turning to music to convey what they want to express and to communicate. In studying the power of music to affect a listener emotionally, Davis & Pickard (2008:63) state, "The arts are the soul of our existence. Music gives birth to emotion and emotion gives birth to music. Emotion and music are one and the same. We as human beings seek the pleasant beauty of music".

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Music is often defined as vocal or instrumental sounds combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion. It is a sound perceived as pleasingly harmonious and in many instances it is linked to nature and the environment. Due to its properties music is often used as a coping device to make life better; in days gone by, slaves used music and song to help them to cope with the ongoing physical and emotional pain and suffering of their day to day lives. Soldiers too used music and song to ease the burden of the physical and psychological distressing situations they found themselves in. Music has long had a role to play in the emotional well-being of many human beings regardless of whether they are suffering or not. As early as (427 BC - 347 BC), Plato, the Greek author and philosopher stated, "Music is a moral law. It gives soul



to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order and leads to all that is good, true and beautiful”.

## 6. Picturebooks, Music and Emotion

Music is the shorthand of emotion.

Tolstoy

Music gives more poignancy to an already beautiful, emotive art form: that of the picturebook as art. It has the ability to change the way we perceive and respond to a piece of prose or poetry and when teamed with images it can arouse huge, surging feelings of emotion to already sensitive texts. Music, rhythm and song have long been used to tear at the heart strings and pull on our emotions; as already noted, some picturebook creators are using the lyrics from songs as the text of the books they go on to illustrate. There is thus, a strong, emotional link between these differing methods of communication.

The picturebook, *Imagine*, combines illustrations with music and song lyrics. Other picturebooks, some of which are referred to in this article, also make use of song lyrics; music from opera, classical, traditional, folk, jazz, rap and popular music to augment the multimodal wholeness of the book. When read and viewed alongside the accompanying music, these books can be simultaneously emotive and emotional ... as well as being beautiful art objects.

### 6.1 Music speaks to us emotionally

The term emotive is usually taken to mean ‘arousing intense feeling’, while emotional tends to mean ‘characterized by intense feeling’; thus, an emotive issue is one which is likely to arouse people's passions, while an emotional response is one which is itself full of passion. Certain picturebooks are more emotive and emotional than others and seem to be able to speak to us emotionally, it is worth asking what has to be in place to arouse strong emotions and to communicate in an extremely emotional manner? Is it merely the subject matter or content of the emotive song lyrics; the sensitive art of the illustrations; the emotional, often deeply memorable rhythm, tempo, pace and tone of the music itself; or a combination of all of these?

In his book, *The Mozart Effect*, Campbell (2009), looked at the power of music to heal the body and soul and to stimulate the creative spirit. He noted that music speaks to us on a very deep level and additionally found that music is medicine for the body, the mind and the soul. In similar vein, Brooks et al. (2004), in considering the benefits of the arts, to include music, argued that they have intrinsic value. Not only are the arts satisfying in their own right but they can also create individual

meaning, pleasure and emotional stimulation. The arts are the soul of our existence and draw on all of our senses.

### 6.2. All the senses, all the emotions.

By evoking the senses: sight, hearing, touch and smell (even taste by inference), certain books “talk” to their reader-viewers. However, how is it that some of these picturebooks have more impact than others? One could argue that they are fundamentally enhanced by the addition of music. It is almost certain to be a viewer’s personal responses to the newly created artistic whole that make a difference.

Certain picturebooks can arouse strong emotions and communicate in an extremely emotional manner. By using strong, creative images and by drawing on personal memories and feelings through the use of powerful lyrics and accompanying expressive music with strong rhythm, pace and tone, picturebooks can be one of the most expressive forms of art drawing on emotions and enabling the viewer to contemplate the issues being alluded to.

## 7. The Emotional Power Of Picturebooks And Songs

A song is a short poem or words set to music with the intention of being sung. Song takes many forms – pop, folk, rap etc. and has been used since time immemorial by human beings. When faced with problems, song or vocal music can promote in people a more mindful disposition and can help put suffering in perspective. With song, especially when sung communally, things don’t seem so bad.

### 7.1. Human rights and the songs of the slaves

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere  
Martin Luther King

Over hundreds of years, singing has been used as a coping device to make life better for downtrodden and disadvantaged groups of people. Slaves in particular used music and communal singing to help them endure and control unbelievable suffering, to ease the burden of work, and to bring some kind of meaning to their miserably bleak and wretched lives.

One famous example of communal singing by slaves to offset their suffering is *Nabucco*, the Italian-language opera composed in 1841 by Giuseppe Verdi. This opera follows the plight of Jews as they are assaulted, conquered and subsequently exiled from their homeland by the Babylonian King Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar II). In this opera, where singers and musicians perform dramatic works combining text and music, one of the most famous examples of choral song is the *Chorus of the*

*Hebrew Slaves*. The music and words work on the senses simultaneously and when coupled with the emotional content of the lyrics, the effect is tumultuous in places.

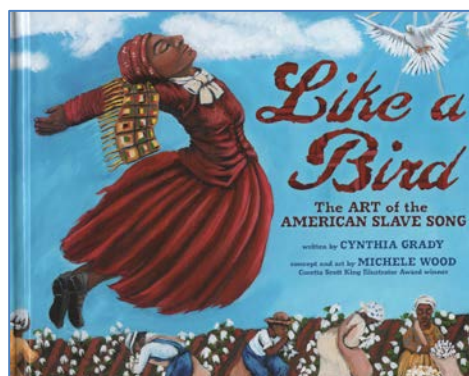
Although *Nabucco* has not been realised in picturebook format, many other operas have. *The Magic Flute* by Mozart, *Carmen* by Bizet and *The Flying Dutchman* by Wagner have all been turned into picturebooks. Some of the books have abridged DVDs of the original music attached whilst others include snippets of musical notation. In 2014 Richard Mantle, general director of Opera North, England, was interviewed for *The Guardian*.

On reflecting why opera is important, indeed, why is any art important? Mantle stated that opera,

[...] offers us a reflection of who we are, how we relate to others, and what it means, collectively and individually, to be human". Mantle went on to say, "Opera performed live is a uniquely thrilling experience – at its best, it is hugely powerful and the most emotionally direct of all art forms (2014, unpaginated).

### 7.1.1. Like a Bird: The Art of American Slave Song

Picturebooks, like opera, can be emotionally direct and one that allows us to see the clear relationship between music, song and the plight of slaves is, *Like a Bird: The Art of American Slave Song* by Grady and Wood (2016) (Figure 6). Set in the deep south of America it shows how enslaved African Americans longed for freedom, and how music helped them cope with that longing.



**Figure 6. *Like a Bird: The Art of American Slave Song* (Grady & Wood 2016)**

In bringing together text, music, and illustrations, this book shows and tells, through thirteen slave songs, how the lives of enslaved Africans were extraordinarily hard and yet they were not without song. They brought their musical and religious traditions to the American colonies and wherever they were, they sang; they sang on ships, in docks, in forests or in fields and the music helped them communicate with each other and lifted their spirits. They also sang when they weren't working -

in their cabins and during private worship. Over centuries the slaves invented songs to work with and as they took on the Christian faith of their masters, their songs of worship became spirituals combining stories from the bible with African rhythms. As Grady (2016) noted, these spirituals have been preserved and are now sung in homes, in churches, at schools, and on concert stages across the world.

The multi award winning illustrator, Michelle Wood, used bright colours and realistic images to represent the words of the slave songs and the words of the picturebook. The effect is uplifting, engaging and beautiful but this should not be taken to mean that slaves were content; they were not! Frederick Douglass, himself a slave, pointed out that singing slaves are not content, indeed quite the reverse was the case, “Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, as an aching heart is relieved by its tears” (Douglass 1845, p.1)

In reflecting the book title, *Like a Bird*, Michelle Wood placed a bird on each illustration. In considering what a bird has to do with American slave songs Grady explains, “Harriet Tubman, born into slavery around 1820, used to dream that she was flying over the landscape “like a bird”” (2016, p. 5). Tubman, known as the Moses of her people, escaped slavery in 1849 and later, as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, helped many others to escape (Figure 7). Grady points out that the dove of peace on each double spread is a reminder of God’s promise made in John 14:18, that no one will be left as orphans.

The depiction of a dove on each page of *Like a Bird* resonates with Picasso’s *Dove of Peace*, and Jullien’s messenger pigeon on the cover of the picturebook, *Imagine*. It is no coincidence that both picturebooks urge their readers to think about peace.

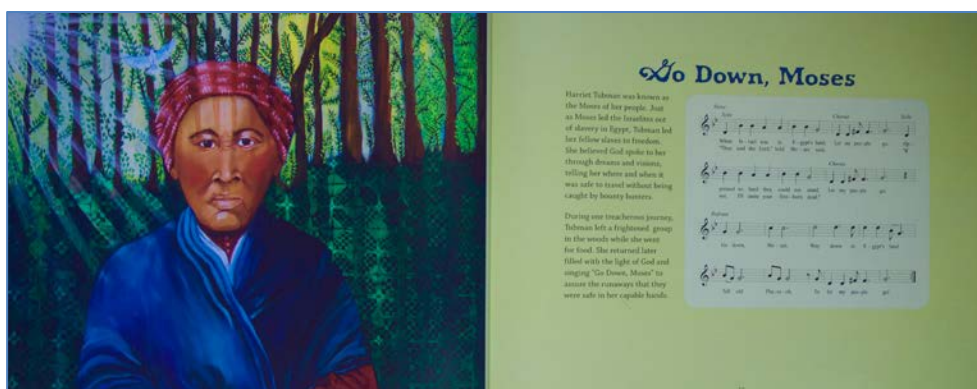
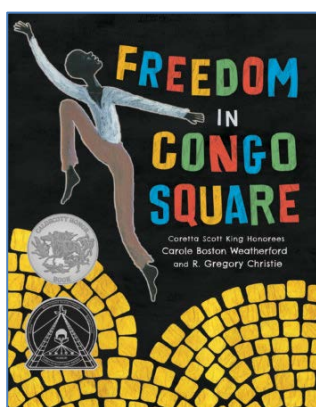


Figure 7. Harriet Tubman *Go Down, Moses*.

### 7.1.2. Freedom in Congo Square

Another picturebook, showing how song and music was used by slaves to help deal with oppression is *Freedom in Congo Square* (Weatherford & Christie 2016) (Figure 8). Chosen as a New York Times Best Illustrated Book of 2016, this poetic, non-fiction story about a little-known piece of African American history captures the capacity of human beings to find hope and joy in almost unbearable circumstances. It shows how the slaves counted the days to Sunday when they set up their market in Congo Square, New Orleans and played music, sang and danced in order to forget their struggles and oppression.

As with *Like a Bird*, the colours are once again bright and the images are expressive clearly reflecting the music, movement and upbeat human emotion in their weekly ritual. The whole book shows how slaves used music and song to enhance their miserable, frequently intolerable lives.



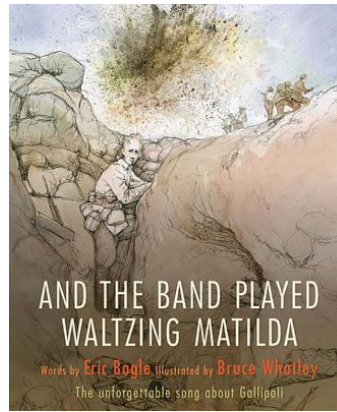
*Figure 8. Freedom in Congo Square (Boston Weatherford & Christie 2016)*

## 8. Human Rights: Soldiers and Song

It wasn't just slaves who used music and song, soldiers too used music and song to ease the burden of the physically and psychologically distressing situations they found themselves in whilst fighting during World War One and World War Two. Some of the situations they endured are represented in picturebooks, which communicate their plight through music, song lyrics and images.

### 8.1. And The Band Played Walzing Matilda: The unforgettable song about Gallipoli

One such picturebook is, *And The Band Played Walzing Matilda: The unforgettable song about Gallipoli* (Bogle and Whatley, 2015) (Figure 9).



**Figure 9. And The Band Played Walzing Matilda: The unforgettable song about Gallipoli (Bogle & Whatley 2015)**

This iconic song about the Battle of Gallipoli, an ill conceived, badly planned and bloody offensive which was meant to push Turkey out of the Great War, was written and composed by Eric Bogle in 1972 at the height of the anti-war movement. The picturebook of the song, which many people simply associate with survival in the Australian outback, was illustrated by Bruce Whatley and short listed for the Children’s Book Council of Australian (CBCA) Picturebook of the Year, 2016. With raw emotion it explores the futility of war from the point of view of one injured and maimed soldier and when the song lyrics are teamed with the sparse but evocative ink and watercolour illustrations, and viewed at the same time as listening to the music of the song, a heart-rending, emotional feel for the reality of how it must have been becomes almost tangible. Bruce Whatley, was influenced by the work of war artists such as, Paul Nash, John Nash, John Singer Sargeant and CRW Nevinson, and their direct experience of existing in the WW1 trenches shows in his work.

It would take a hard person not to be moved by the combination of image, word and familiar song music in this beautifully haunting picturebook. It allows us to empathise with the plight of the soldiers and their feelings through close up images of suffering and the muted, effective use of colour. It is easy to confuse the words empathy and sympathy: empathy being the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person, whilst sympathy is the feeling of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune. However, this book has the ability to arouse both of these emotions, particularly for anyone who knows soldiers who have experienced war and fighting.

In research looking at how we can create meaning through literature and the arts, Cornett stated, Human existence is defined by the ways we cope with obstacles and problems – music often gives solace during wretched moments such as funerals, lost loves, and fears (2006, 338).

### 8.2.1 Was Only Nineteen

One more picturebook that allows the viewer to consider how soldiers in conflict must have felt and which draws on the emotive links between words, images and music, is *I Was Only Nineteen* by John Schumann and Craig Smith (2014) (Figure 10).

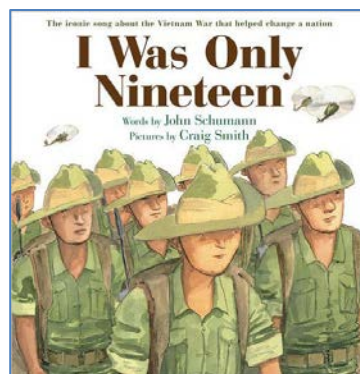


Figure 10. *I Was Only Nineteen* (Schumann & Smith 2014)

Schumann's song tells of the human rights issues associated with war and is an iconic 'national

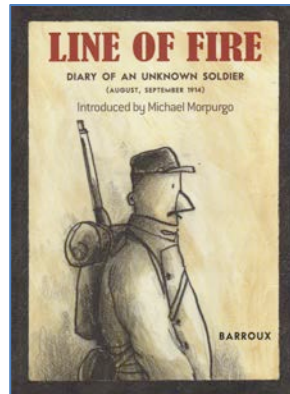
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anthem' to the Australian veterans who fought in Vietnam. It has become one of Australia's best-loved and best-known songs honouring the memory of those who fought and died in that brutal war. Its message has resonance not just for Australians but for any country involved in war. It tells how young Australian soldiers were sent to fight in the Vietnam war in support of US allies and how, on their return, they were snubbed and made to feel unwelcome and unwanted. The strong feeling of having one's young life lost fighting someone else's war comes across very clearly and emotively. Human rights issues permeate this whole book.

Regrettably, war seem to be an unstoppable aspect of life in the contemporary world and unless we are able to convince successive generations of their futility and the pain and suffering it causes, their existence will continue. *I Was Only Nineteen* invites readers to consider the impact of war, and to reflect on the consequences for all concerned: to include the military forces in conflict zones and the affected civilians either living in a war zone, or waiting patiently at home for their loved ones to return. It offers a powerful message with universal meaning and creates emotive and emotional feelings in the minds of many viewers.

### 8.3. Line of Fire: Diary of an Unknown Soldier

A different way of using music, words and images, this time in an illustrated text focussing on war has been taken by French illustrator, Barroux with his graphic novel, *Line of Fire: Diary of an Unknown Soldier - August, September 1914*.



**Figure 11.** *Line of Fire: Diary of an Unknown Soldier (August, September 1914) (Barroux 2014)*

Translated from the French, *On les Aura!: Carnet de Guerre D'un Poilu (Aout, Septembre 1914)*, Barroux (2014) takes the diary of unknown soldier, picked up and rescued from a rubbish bin in Paris and turns it into a graphic novel of elegant understatedness. Using sepia colours, in addition to cartoon type characters outlined in a black/brown charcoal type line, Barroux's illustrations accompany the soldier's words and bring them alive, allowing the reader/viewer to see more clearly how the soldier lived his first two months of WW1 from the moment the French declared war in August 1914 until the beginning of September 1914, when the words in his diary abruptly stop. Although song lyrics don't form the words of this book, the soldier's diary was accompanied by a notebook of songs, which continued until May 1917. The reader will never know why the song entries stopped then, or what became of the soldier.

Barroux created a dramatic presentation of *Line of Fire*. His live drawings from the text are projected onto a large screen whilst he reads words from the soldier's diary set against a backdrop of guitar music. The effect is electric and incredibly moving. Barroux's presentation became a sell out theatre show in France and went on to perform at the Edinburgh Festival in 2015.

## 9. Final thoughts: Amnesty International and Human Rights

Reading and responding to picturebooks frequently allow readers to understand and relate to a variety of different issues, however, when the books draw on art, music and song lyrics, the cohesive whole can be even more powerful and emotional than the parts and can elevate



emotional understanding to a higher level. Amnesty International is increasingly using picturebooks to portray the human and civil rights violations caused by war and conflict, and to disseminate the need to preserve our precious freedom. Every human being in the world has rights, displayed in values such as fairness, equality, truth, love, home and safety.

In the picturebook, *We Are All Born Free*, published in 2008, in associated with Amnesty International, to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, internationally famous artists have illustrated each of the 30 Articles. Article 30, the last article states: “Nobody can take these rights and freedoms from us”.

John Lennon’s words from the song, *Imagine*, convey these exact sentiments. He states that despite being a dreamer, he isn’t the only one and he wants us to “*imagine living life in peace*” (Figure 12) with a hope that eventually, “... *the world will live as one*” (Figure 13). His hopes are for humanity to live together in unity, without war and conflict.



**Figure 12. *Imagine* (Lennon & Jullien 2017)**      **Figure 13. *Imagine* (Lennon & Jullien 2017)**

*Amnesty International* has used John Lennon’s song *Imagine* to promote their Human Rights work over many years. Lennon first sang it over 40 years ago and yet today the message is just as important and reminds us that peace is as crucial as it ever was.

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