

"We Didn't Start the Fire" (Lyrics) History Summary from 1949-1989
by Ron Kurtus

In 1989, singer Billy Joel released a popular song entitled We Didn't Start the Fire. The song simply lists historical personalities and events from 1949 until 1989. The lyrics of the song proved to be a good summary of the history of that era.

1949

Harry Truman, Doris Day,
Red China, Johnny Ray

South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio

1950

Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon,
Studebaker, Television

North Korea, South Korea, Marilyn Monroe

1951

Rosenbergs, H-bomb,
Sugar Ray, Panmunjom

Brando, The King and I,
And The Catcher In The Rye

1952

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

1953

Joseph Stalin, Malenkov,
Nasser and Prokofiev,

Rockefeller, Campanella, Communist Bloc

1954

Roy Cohn,
Juan Peron,
Toscanini, Dacron

Dien Bien Phu Falls, Rock Around the Clock

1955

Einstein, James Dean,
Brooklyn's got a winning team

Davy Crockett, Peter Pan,
Elvis Presley, Disneyland

1956

Bardot, Budapest
Alabama, Khrushchev

Princess Grace,
Peyton Place

Trouble in the Suez

(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.

1957

Little Rock, Pasternak,
Mickey Mantle, Kerouac

Sputnik, Chou En-Lai,
Bridge On The River Kwai

1958

Lebanon, Charles de Gaulle,
California baseball

Starkweather homicides,
Children of Thalidomide

1959

Buddy Holly, Ben Hur,
Space Monkey, Mafia

Hula Hoops, Castro,
Edsel is a no-go

1960

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

1961

Hemingway, Eichmann,
Stranger in a Strange Land

Dylan,
Berlin,
Bay of Pigs invasion

1962

Lawrence of Arabia,
British Beatle-mania

Ole Miss, John Glenn,
Liston beats Patterson

1963

Pope Paul, Malcolm X,
British Politician sex

J.F.K. blown away,
What else do I have to say?

(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.

1964-1989

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

(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.