

Innocence & Belief

A Christmas Sampler



English language teaching materials
exploring

Greg Lake

I Believe in Father Christmas



Chris Walklett

A word from the author

This sample is a mini version of a full lesson. It is free of charge to give you a taste of *Teaching Tracks* materials. Enjoy this gift and please give feedback – see page 23. I hope Christmas 2019 is a good one for you and remember with all the busyness and stresses of the season to keep innocence, belief, goodness and love at the root of everything you do.

Chris

Samplers available in the series:

The Final Frontier? – English language teaching materials exploring
David Bowie's *Space Oddity*

Fight for your Rights – English language teaching materials exploring
Katy Perry's *Roar*

Filthy Lucre? – English language teaching materials exploring
Pink Floyd's *Money*

Coming soon

Teaching Tracks – Top Ten (full coursebook)
English language teaching materials exploring ten top songs.



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***Please feel free to print out pages 15-21 to give to your students.**

A fresh approach...and the inspiration behind it

Here's an account of how it all began. Around 2010, an idea started to brew about how to revolutionise the use of songs and song lyrics in the English language classroom. I felt what was currently on offer in coursebooks and even on the internet lacked innovation, and so I sought out ways to inject novelty and variety into its use; to break free from, what I and many others view as, a 'same-old, same-old' approach to the use of this resource.

Inspired by over 20 years of using songs and song lyrics in the classroom, I felt it was time to share these ideas so that all EFL teachers could further exploit this resource's potential, making its use (and their lessons) much more engaging. The intention of this approach is to challenge the existing *status quo* with regards to the way this resource is employed, and by doing so guide and inspire teachers towards new and innovative ways of maximising the benefits that using songs and song lyrics offer.

A key feature of all books in the *Teaching Tracks* series is the absence of gap-fill activities. The tendency is that producers of materials are prone to fall into what I have dubbed the 'gap-fill trap'. As well as the somewhat questionable pedagogy behind gap fills, its inclusion limits, even dictates, what *can* be done and, more crucially, what *can't* be done - severely restricting the scope of the exploitation of the material.

Creating teaching and study materials without including the full lyrics within the actual materials has, in fact, been a revelation. This freedom (from the proverbial box) has made exploring the possibilities of the song, its theme, the multifarious elements of the language within the lyrics, its video and associated activities, much more satisfying with extremely innovative outcomes.

Despite the ease of access of lyrics, practitioners often seem to limit the use of songs in the classroom to that of little more than a tool to change the pace of the lesson or to create a lively, fun mood. But I think songs and their lyrics have far more to offer than this. Songs are a multi-purpose, multi-skilled text type, tailor-made for the language classroom. They are invariably concise, contain interesting everyday vocabulary, thus they are excellent for analysis of informal language like slang/colloquialisms, idioms, common usage and the like, and are a really effective way of analysing grammar *in situ*. They are of course, great for listening, pronunciation, and phonetic work too. That is not even to mention their thematic use which, if the right song is chosen, can be extensive. They are content and culture rich, and crucially, authentic too.

Please feel free to visit our website www.teachingtracks.co.uk for more information about why *Teaching Tracks* is the way forward in using songs and song lyrics in the English language classroom. Feel free to leave your comments and feedback, and to pre-order the full coursebook, **Top Ten** which contains ten top songs.

Seven steps to success with Teaching Tracks materials

At *Teaching Tracks*, we believe that these materials are suitable to both experienced and novice teachers. However, to get the most from using this book, we advise reading the step-by-step guide below. By doing so both novice and experienced teachers will be able to employ songs and song lyrics in a non-formulaic way - making for a very satisfying classroom experience for teacher and student alike.

Step 1.

Breathe, relax, clear your mind of your preconceptions – you are about to embark on a journey into the possibilities offered by using songs and song lyrics.

Step 2.

Familiarise yourself with the songs. Listen to them, sing along and maybe watch their videos too. Immerse yourself in everything they have to offer.

Step 3.

Locate the lyrics and read through them. Remember that due to issues like connected speech, the lyrics may be different from what you thought (creating what are known as mondegreens). So be prepared for a surprise or two.

Step 4.

Think about the song's theme/s and what language emerges.

Step 5.

Look through the Activity Breakdown synopsis - it'll give you a good overview of the approach to the song and an idea of the linguistic possibilities emanating from it. It offers suggestions about when to first use the song, the lyrics, and the video - crucial for the logical staging of activities.

Step 6.

Read through the detailed teacher's notes and think about whether you are going to use all or just some of the activities. Take time to brainstorm ideas as to how you are going to implement these activities to suit your students. What will they like? What will challenge them? Make the materials your own by thinking about how you would adapt them to your regular style of teaching. In other words – mix it up!

Step 7.

Use with confidence. Remember you are doing something that your students will love. Don't ever forget - songs are a great text type with real pedagogic purpose.

Innocence & Belief



Recommended level – B2 and above (but flexible with adaptation)

Teacher's notes

exploring

Greg Lake - *I Believe in Father Christmas*

Songwriters: Greg Lake / Peter John Sinfield / Serge Prokofieff.
I Believe In Father Christmas © BMG Rights Management

Overview of themes and learning objectives

The theme of this unit is Christmas - the spirit of Christmas, as well as its commercialism. It also focuses on the loss of innocence and the concept of belief. Reading, speaking, listening and vocabulary are some of the skills that are featured in this mini lesson. There is a warmer activity on Christmas, a text with glossary about Santa Claus and the concept of belief. Next, students listen to a song and then carry out a dictation activity listening out for particular words in the song. Then the vocabulary in the song is analysed with a match-up activity and a discussion about what the message in the song is. The final activity is one in which countries are matched up with their Christmas traditions. There are also suggested additional activities to compliment the theme.



All lyrics, songs and videos are accessible from the QR Codes below.
 You will need to download a QR reader onto your smartphone.
Teaching Tracks uses qrcode-monkey.com



song / video



lyrics

All QR codes and internet links used in these materials were accurate at time of publication but might have changed making them inoperative. Please check prior to use.

This product is not endorsed by the songwriter/s or the artist/artists

Activity breakdown

Activity	Language focus	Specific focus
1	Speaking (i)	Christmas – associations & beliefs
2	Reading (i)	Belief in Santa
 Song		
3	Listening (i) & Vocabulary (i)	Dictation
 Lyrics		
4	Listening (ii) & Vocabulary (ii)	Song analysis
5	Reading (ii) & Speaking (ii)	Christmas Around the World



Activity 1 ~ Speaking (i)

Christmas – associations & belief

- (1) What words or things do you associate with Christmas? Brainstorm using the mind map below. Encourage students to brainstorm words or things associated with Christmas and write down their ideas on the notepad.
- (2) Do you know any other words for Father Christmas? Other words for Father Christmas include Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas and, in the US, Kris Kringle.
- (3) Did you believe in Father Christmas when you were young?
- (4) Did you believe in any other myths when you were young? Tell the class about them. What were their names and what are they associated with? Class discussion/sharing. Examples may include the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy or others from their culture.



Activity 2 ~ Reading (i)

Belief in Santa

It is often said that parents should never lie to children. However in many countries a big exception to this rule is in regards to Santa Claus - or Father Christmas as he is also known. Indeed, many parents go to great lengths to get their children to believe in the jolly, slightly **obese** man with a white beard, dressed in a red suit, often **sidestepping** children's questions on the **logistical** improbabilities involved. For example, how he manages to deliver presents to the estimated 1.9 billion children in the world within one night!

All this begs the question, why do parents continue to deceive their children in this manner? Some might say that it is to **instil** (or preserve) a sense of belief and magic. After all, isn't there something cosy and rather wonderful about Santa, Christmas and all that goes with it? But what happens when children discover that Santa doesn't exist, won't they feel as if they have been **conned**?

Kids are nothing if not curious though. They can often sense when they are being **duped** and work out for themselves that Santa isn't real. Maybe this happens at around the same time as they lose faith in the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy for example. Santa's existence might also be called into question by their **peers** or older **siblings**.

Like some other **myths**, Father Christmas is based on a real person - Nicholas of Myra (now situated in modern day Turkey), a Christian bishop who lived approximately 1800 years ago. Nicholas was by accounts a good-hearted and generous man who used his wealth to help the poor and needy, especially children. His distribution of gifts to

children included dropping presents down the **chimneys** of their houses. His fame was such that he later became known as Saint Nicholas - the patron saint for children.

St Nicholas' Day (December 6th) however, has nothing to do with either Christ's birth, or even Christmas itself. Many people believe that its modern **incarnation** results from beliefs brought by Europeans migrating to the USA. This may explain the **etymology** of the name *Santa Claus* which could possibly originate from the Dutch name for St Nicholas – *Sinterklass*.

It is clear that Christmas as we now know it has evolved by incorporating **elements** from various different practices and beliefs. **Sleighs** pulled by reindeers for example were a practical way of travelling in certain countries with a cold winter climate. In addition the idea of flying reindeer could have come from **Norse** legend which relays that **Odin** flew across the sky on his eight-legged horse. After all, as children know, prior to the addition of Rudolph, Santa originally had eight reindeer – Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.

Most would agree that **perpetuating** children's belief in Santa Claus is done to create a sense of goodwill towards others and kindness through giving. Some **psychologists** however, think that by encouraging children to believe in Santa Claus, parents do more harm than good. After all, one day their child will realise that he does not exist and thus it could be argued a sense of innocence will be lost and children's sense of belief in general might suffer **irreparable** damage - something that is surely not intended by parents.

Glossary

<i>obese (adj)</i>	overweight
<i>sidestepping (ger/v)</i>	to carefully avoid mentioning something delicate
<i>logistical (adj)</i>	involving organisation and planning
<i>instil (v)</i>	to establish (an idea or attitude) in a person's mind
<i>conned (v)</i>	to be tricked or fooled
<i>duped (adj)</i>	as above - to be tricked or fooled
<i>peers (n)</i>	friends or people of the same age
<i>siblings (n)</i>	a word for either brother or sister
<i>myths (n)</i>	stories or tales that are not believed to be real
<i>chimneys (n)</i>	structure from which smoke from fires exits the building
<i>incarnation (n)</i>	a person who embodies in the flesh a deity, spirit, or quality
<i>etymology (n)</i>	the history of a word
<i>elements (n)</i>	small but significant parts of an idea or abstract

<i>sleighs (n)</i>	devices pulled to ride through snow
<i>Norse (n)</i>	Norwegians or Scandinavians in ancient or medieval times
<i>Odin (n)</i>	legendary figure from Norse mythology
<i>perpetuating (ger/v)</i>	to make something, usually negative, continue indefinitely
<i>psychologists (n)</i>	someone who is trained in the study of the human mind
<i>irreparable (adj)</i>	cannot be repaired

Text questions

- 1) Do you think that what parents are doing is really lying or do they do it for another reason? [The concept of white lies could emerge here.](#)
- 2) Do you celebrate anything to do with St Nicholas in your culture?
- 3) Can you re-call when you first stopped believing in Father Christmas? Tell the class about it. What made you stop believing? Did this affect your belief in anything else?
- 4) Some people say that when children find out that Father Christmas is not real they are less likely to believe in the existence of God. Do you think there is any connection between a loss of belief in Father Christmas and a loss of belief in the existence of God or any other deity?

[All text questions are open to interpretation.](#)



Activity 3 - Listening (i) & Vocabulary (i)

Dictation

You are going to hear a famous song written about the subject of Christmas. There are three verses, each has 8 lines. Listen to the song and write down the word at the end of every line. The first line of each verse ends with the word *Christmas*. [Allow some time for them to compare notes.](#)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Verse 1	<i>Christmas, earth, raining, birth, morning, choir, smell, fire.</i>							
Verse 2	<i>Christmas, night, story, Israelite, Christmas, eyes, dawn, disguise.</i>							
Verse 3	<i>Christmas, new year, sadness, clear, Christmas, earth, hell, deserve.</i>							



Activity 4 ~ Listening (ii) & Vocabulary (ii)

Christmas song analysis

Listen to the song again. Does the singer believe in Father Christmas? **No lyrics yet.** Encourage discussion about the song's meaning.

Are there any other words you don't understand?

Here are some words from the song you might not know. Using the lyrics (QR code above) and the context, match up the following words 1-7 with explanations A-G.

In this match up exercise, encourage students to work out the meanings from the lyrics' content and match up the following words with explanations. If there are others they don't know tell them or get them to work out from context.

(1) <i>veil of tears</i> (n)*	(F) a series of sorrows on earth
(2) <i>peal</i> (n)	(G) refers to a ringing sound
(3) <i>tinsel</i> (n)	(A) the coloured material that decorates a Christmas tree
(4) <i>yawn</i> (n/v)	(E) what you do when you are tired
(5) <i>disguise</i> (n/v)	(D) a different appearance in order to conceal one's identity
(6) <i>anguish</i> (n)	(C) severe mental or physical pain/suffering
(7) <i>Noel</i> (n)	(B) another word for Christmas

* *Veil* spelt this way in the lyrics, refers to a veil worn by a bride and also by a widow (at a funeral). However, in some forms of Christianity, when the phrase is spelt *vale of tears* it means the trials of life that are left behind when one dies and enters heaven. This may be beyond the level of students or even not interesting to them, however if interested can they workout the significance.

Additionally there is religious language that could be focused on. Go through any unknown meanings. New vocabulary might include *peace on earth*, *virgin birth*, *silent night* (it's also the title of a famous Christmas carol) *hallelujah*, *Noel*, *heaven*, *hell & Israelite*, this word means someone from Israel. *The Israelite* refers to *Jesus*.

The message in this song has divided people over the years as. Which of the following do you most agree with? Try to justify your choice from the lyrics.

- One school of thought says the writer is writing about loss of belief and thus that Christmas (and maybe by definition religion too) are both a con.
- Others say that the singer is advising people to think of the true spirit of Christmas that he is railing against the commercialisation of Christmas.
- Another argument is that when a child stops believing in Father Christmas they have lost their innocence.

- D) In groups discuss your feelings about the meaning of the song. What do you think is the true spirit of Christmas?

There is no right or wrong answers here, this is done to encourage discussion in groups/pairs and whole class feedback.



Activity 5 ~ Reading (ii) & Speaking (ii)

Christmas Around the World

Why is Christmas celebrated at this time of year - December 25th or thereabouts? The origins of festivities around this time pre date the current traditions. The pagan celebration *Deus Sol Invictus* was observed on Dec 25. Saturnalia – a pagan winter festival is from 17-23 December. It is unknown exactly when Jesus was born but a notional date of December 25th was set to mark his birthday by the Christian Church.

Match up the following countries with the traditions below:

This country is believed to have had the first Christmas tree.	Latvia
A 'Barbie' on the beach is a typical way to celebrate Christmas.	Australia
The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day – a day when food and gifts were traditionally boxed up to give to the poor.	Great Britain
In this country they believe that Santa Claus comes from Spain.	Netherlands
In this country children leave shoes outside of their front door for Father Christmas.	Germany
A witch called "La Befana" who leaves children coal for children instead of presents if they have been bad.	Italy
They do a special dance called "Jota" which is hundreds of years old.	Spain
In this country they paint their houses, hang new curtains and makes repairs in time for the festive season.	Trinidad & Tobago

The website <https://www.whychristmas.com/> has various activities to try with the students regarding current Christmas beliefs and traditions.

Innocence & Belief



Student's materials

exploring

Greg Lake - *I Believe in Father Christmas*

Songwriters: Lake, Peter John Sinfield & Serge Prokofieff ©



Activity 1 ~ Speaking (i)

Christmas – associations & belief

- (1) What words or things do you associate with Christmas? Brainstorm using the mind map below.
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- (3) Did you believe in Father Christmas when you were young?
- (4) Did you believe in any other myths when you were young? Tell the class about them. What were their names and what are they associated with?

Make notes on the pad below.





Activity 2 ~ Reading (i)

Belief in Santa

It is often said that parents should never lie to children. However in many countries a big exception to this rule is in regards to Santa Claus - or Father Christmas as he is also known. Indeed, many parents go to great lengths to get their children to believe in the jolly, slightly **obese** man with a white beard, dressed in a red suit, often **sidestepping** children's questions on the **logistical** improbabilities involved. For example, how he manages to deliver presents to the estimated 1.9 billion children in the world within one night!

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Text questions

- (1) Do you think that what parents are doing is really lying or do they do it for another reason?

- (2) Do you celebrate anything to do with St Nicholas in your culture?

- (3) Can you re-call when you first stopped believing in Father Christmas? Tell the class about it. What made you stop believing? Did this affect your belief in anything else?

- (4) Some people say that when children find out that Father Christmas is not real they are less likely to believe in the existence of God. Do you think there is any connection between a loss of belief in Father Christmas and a loss of belief in the existence of God or any other?



Activity 3 ~ Listening (i) & Vocabulary (i)

Dictation



You are going to hear a famous song written about the subject of Christmas. There are three verses, each has 8 lines.

Listen to the song and write down the word at the end of every line. The first line of each verse ends with the word *Christmas*.

Verse 1	1) ... <i>Christmas</i> 2) 3) 4) 5) 6) 7) 8)
Verse 2	1) ... <i>Christmas</i> 2) 3) 4) 5) 6) 7) 8)
Verse 3	1) ... <i>Christmas</i> 2) 3) 4) 5) 6) 7) 8)



Activity 4 ~ Listening (ii) & Vocabulary (ii)

Song analysis



Listen to the song again (no lyrics yet). Does the singer believe in Father Christmas?

Are there any other words you don't understand?

Here are some words from the song you might not know. Using the lyrics (QR code above) and the context, match up the following words 1-7 with explanations A-G.

(1) <i>veil of tears</i> (n)	A) the coloured material that decorates a Christmas tree
(2) <i>peal</i> (n)	B) another word for Christmas
(3) <i>tinsel</i> (n)	C) severe mental or physical pain/suffering
(4) <i>yawn</i> (n/v)	D) a different appearance in order to conceal one's identity
(5) <i>disguise</i> (n/v)	E) what you do when you are tired
(6) <i>anguish</i> (n)	F) a series of sorrows on earth
(7) <i>Noel</i> (n)	G) refers to a ringing sound

The message in this song has divided people over the years as. Which of the below do you most agree with? Try to justify your choice from the lyrics.

- A) One school of thought says the writer is writing about loss of belief and thus that Christmas (and maybe by definition religion too) are both a con.
- B) Others say that the singer is advising people to think of the true spirit of Christmas, that he is railing against the commercialisation of Christmas.
- C) Another argument is that when a child stops believing in Father Christmas they have lost their innocence.

In groups discuss your feelings about the meaning of the song.

What do you think is the true spirit of Christmas?



Activity 5 ~ Reading (ii) & Speaking (ii)

Christmas around the world



Why is Christmas celebrated at this time of year - December 25th or thereabouts?

Match up the following countries with the traditions below:

Spain **Trinidad and Tobago** **Germany** **Latvia**

Netherlands **Australia** **Great Britain** **Italy**

This country is believed to have had the first Christmas tree.	
A 'barbie' on the beach is a typical way to celebrate Christmas.	
The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day – a day when food and gifts were traditionally boxed up to give to the poor.	
In this country they believe that Santa Claus comes from Spain.	
In this country children leave shoes outside of their front door for Father Christmas.	
A witch called “La Befana” who leaves children coal for children instead of presents if they have been bad.	
They do a special dance called “Jota” which is hundreds of years old.	
In this country they paint their houses, hang new curtains and makes repairs in time for the festive season.	



I hope the lessons were a success and we look forward to hearing your thoughts about them. Please take a moment to fill out the form and send it back to chriswalklett@teachingtracks.co.uk

It's a straightforward Yes/No form with the option for you to add more detail as appropriate.

Name: [Your Name]

Email and/or other contact: [Your email address and phone number]

PRESS PLAY ▶

Were the materials easy for **you and your students** to use?

Yes No

Explain: [Explanation]

Did you supplement the material? Did they need supplementing? ?

Yes No

Explain: [Explanation]

Please clarify which materials/activities you used (please say 'all' if applicable) or you didn't use.

[Comments]

Were the teaching instructions easy to use?

Yes No

Explain: [Explanation]

Was it a problem that the units were not level specific? At what level did you use these materials?

Yes No

Level used at: [Suggestions]

Were the reading passages useful?

Yes No

Explain: [Explanation]

Please include any other comments or suggestions that you'd like to share.

[Comments or suggestions]

■ THANK YOU!

About the author

Chris Walklett has been using music, songs and song lyrics in the classroom for many years dating back to his very first lesson in the mid-1990s. Music and its educational use are subjects that are dear to his heart and ones which informed his MA Linguistics dissertation on the use of song lyrics in coursebooks. Chris has also written a number of articles on this subject in a range of publications.

In 2015, Chris gave a TedX Talk on the place of song lyrics in the canon of English literature. He has over the years given a large number of workshops at a variety of ELT and EAP conferences all over the UK and Europe. During these talks he has encouraged other ELT professionals to get creative with songs and song lyrics in their classrooms and offered ideas and advice on how to make the most of what this resource has to offer. As well as being involved with ELT and EAP, Chris lectures History at the University of Essex and hosts an engaging Facebook group for like-minded teachers, which is called *Creating Uses for Songs and Song Lyrics in EFL*.

To contact Chris, or to book him to speak, give a workshop or host a teacher training session please contact walklettchris@hotmail.com. To find out more about *Teaching Tracks* and the *Teaching Tracks* series of books please visit: www.teachingtracks.co.uk.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the teachers and colleagues who trialled these materials and for their invaluable feedback. Thanks also to the students who took the time to share their thoughts. I hope you enjoyed the lessons/materials whether teaching or being taught. I would also like to thank Jean Theuma, Rozz Vargas, Lana Duka Zupanc, Hall Houston, Rob Howard, Dorothy Zemach, Magdalena Dygala, Magdalena Brzezinska and many others, too numerous to mention, for feedback at various stages of the project and to all who have attended my workshops over the last few years. I would also like to thank the following organisations: IATEFL UK, IATEFL Slovenia, ELTAM Macadeonia, ELT Council Malta, Aschehoug Norway and EdYOUfest, for allowing me to present on related subjects over the years.

Special thanks go to my friend and colleague, Carol Samlal, for her feedback on the materials, the illustrations and copyediting the *Teaching Tracks* series.

I would like to thank my lovely daughter, Sophia who did some of the illustrations in *Top Ten* and my Mum, Grace, for her enthusiasm throughout.

What teachers have had to say about *Teaching Tracks*:

“materials were clear and straightforward”

“perfect for an integrated skills lesson”

“very good materials...well planned”

“lots of discussion was generated”

“the material was well staged”

“they learnt a lot of new vocabulary”

“the material can be easily exploited”

“the target language is well scaffolded”

“a good build up to listening to the song”

“the students enjoyed and felt motivated by it”

“teaching instructions were very clear and easy to use”



What students have had to say about *Teaching Tracks*:

“learning English via music was a very interesting experience”

“I don’t normally listen to foreign music but this was inspiring”

“this was a unique type of English lesson – I enjoyed it a lot”

“it was the first time I had learnt this way, it was great!”

“I like English songs, so I enjoyed this very much”

“it was an easy and enjoyable way to learn”

“studying with songs is very nice”

“I loved this way of learning”



*Merry Christmas,
peace and love to you all!*



www.teachingtracks.co.uk