



IF I HAD A HAMMER (The Hammer Song) by Lee Hays and Pete Seeger

A lesson on conditionals that are untrue in the present or future (Chapter 20)

Notes for the Teacher

1. The Song

Do a search on the Internet to find the song “If I Had a Hammer” by Lee Hays and Pete Seeger. When you search, be sure to include the title and the name of the artist.

2. Song background

You are going to hear a protest song written in 1949, “If I Had a Hammer,” by Lee Hays and Pete Seeger. It became an anthem for the civil rights movement, the fight for equal rights for African Americans in the United States in the 1960s. This song was also sung in support of equal rights for women in the 1960s.

3. Grammar background

This song uses a lot of conditional forms that describe situations that are untrue in the present or future. Review the form with your students.

SITUATION	IF-CLAUSE	RESULT CLAUSE
untrue in the present/future	simple past	would + simple form
	<i>If I had a lot of money,</i>	<i>I would take a long vacation.</i>

In this case, the writer does not have a million dollars, but she does have a good imagination! She is thinking about a world in which she has a lot of money, but she does not have a lot of money right now. Ask volunteers to make up new sentences that begin with “If I had a million dollars,”

Point out that **would** can be contracted like this:

- If I had a lot of money, I'd take a long vacation.*
- If she had a lot of money, she'd take a long vacation.*
- If they had a lot of money, they'd take a long vacation.*
- If we had a lot of money, we'd take a long vacation.*
- If you had a lot of money, you'd take a long vacation.*



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4. Vocabulary

These are just some of the words you may want to discuss during your lesson.

- **hammer:** a tool with a metal head and a wooden handle
- **danger:** something that can hurt you
- **warning:** something that tells you about something bad so you can avoid it
- **bell:** a hollow metal object that makes a musical sound when it is hit
- **justice:** treatment of people which is fair and right
- **freedom:** the state of being free -- able to do whatever you want



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Student Worksheet

While you listen

1. Listen to the song once. How does it make you feel?
2. Now listen again for conditional sentences. Write three conditional sentences that you hear.

After you listen

1. Things to think about and discuss

In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, share your answers to these questions.

- The last verse is different from the others. It doesn't use conditionals. How does that affect the meaning of the song?
- This song has been used to protest many injustices in the world. Why do you think so many people have used it?

2. Grammar

1. In this song, there is a pattern of conditionals, "If I Had"
Write three sentences of your own that follow this pattern. For instance, you might write:

If I had a cat, I'd feed her in the morning ...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



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2. Now use the verb *be*. For instance, you might write:

If I were a fish, I'd swim in the morning ...

If I were a cat, I'd eat fish in the morning ...

Write two sentences that follow this pattern.

1.

2.

3. Speaking & Writing

In pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, share your answers to the question below.

Think of something in the world that is wrong, in your opinion. It could be injustice, war, pollution, or anything else you can think of. How would you solve the problem?

Now, write a short protest poem or paragraph to say how you would change things if you were the leader of a country. See the example.

I think that there is too much poverty in the world. If I were the president of the United States, I would give money to poorer countries to help them