**JOHN LENNON: PEACEFUL DREAMER**  
 American writer and mythologist Joseph Campbell once said, “A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” Heroes come from all walks of life including the performing arts. Many musicians have left us with their special gifts—musical prowess, lyrical poetry and some famous musical artists’ talents transcended the musical spectrum into other aspects of their lives. One of these great talents who left us with an incredible legacy was former Beatle John Lennon.

John Lennon is one of the most influential people in history. His message of peace, love, and happiness will forever be remembered. In the 1960s and 70s, Lennon was revolutionary in changing negative social values. His lyrical tone was unmatched and musical gifts sensational.  John Lennon was a musical pioneer and peaceful man. He helped introduce the world to rock & roll and free thought. For this, we will forever be grateful.

John Lennon had a rough childhood. He was born during the start of World War II and never really knew his father, Alfred Lennon. John wrote and sang of the sadness of not having his parents around in a song called “Mother.” In it, he sang, “Mother don’t go…daddy come home.” John was forced to move in with his maternal aunt Mimi Smith, who was often dismissive of his musical ambitions. His Aunt Mimi told him, “A guitar is all right, Johnny but you’ll never earn your living by it.” On July 15, 1958, when Lennon was 17-years-old, his mother was struck by a car and killed after visiting John’s home. He turned this sadness into a beautiful song later in his life called, “Julia.” John Lennon’s first son Julian was born in 1963, during a decade when his father was one of the most popular musicians in the world. John was extremely busy writing music, performing live shows, and he was at the center of important world issues, including war and religion. Lennon tried to make time for his son, but it was difficult. John even dedicated a collection of Beatles songs to Julian, including Good Night, which was originally written by Lennon as a lullaby.

In the 1960s, the spread of rock music had a powerful impact on society. Unlike anything government officials had seen before, music began to influence life activities, goals, fashion, attitudes, and even language. The Beatles became social giants and whatever they said or did was acceptable, especially for young people. The band taught people how to celebrate freedom and most of all—love! After all, they recorded songs like “All You Need is Love.” John’s music also reflected his dreams and artistic visions. For example, his song, “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” was based on a drawing of his son, Julian. In many of The Beatles songs, John Lennon writes about friendship, love, happiness, peace, and freedom. Some of his most famous lyrical masterpieces are “Imagine, “ “Come Together, “ “All You Need is Love,” “Across the Universe, “ “In My Life, “ “Nowhere Man” and “Strawberry Field Forever. “ John Lennon was a master of arrangement and understood how to develop of hit single. Later in his career, he wrote protest songs that examined world issues—especially in songs like “Give Peace a Chance.” As author Doreen Rappaport noted in *John’s Secret Dreams,* he dreamed of writing a song a powerful as “We Shall Overcome,” the anthem of the civil rights movement and the lyrics came to him, “All we are saying is give peace a chance.”

After the Beatles broke up in April of 1970, John Lennon did not focus his attention on material goods and moved toward spiritualism. He wrote songs like “Mind Games” that included lyrics like “Love is the Answer.” His most famous song is “Imagine” which he sings of “people living together in peace.” He was married to artist, Yoko Ono and spent a good amount of time taking care of their son, Sean. He even wrote a beautiful song about his son called “Beautiful Boy.” In the tune he noted, “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.”

Sadly, John Lennon’s life ended too soon. He was killed on December 8, 1980—shot to death by a deranged fan, outside of his apartment building, The Dakota. How ironic it was that a man who sang for peace died so violently. Furthermore, John Lennon demanded attention when he spoke. People wanted to know what he was feeling and his stance on certain issues. He once said, “If everyone demanded peace instead of another television set, then there'd be peace.” This is one of the reasons it was so sad when John Lennon was murdered. People will never again get the opportunity hear what this man was thinking. In a time of national struggle, mourning, and suffering we always turn to the music and message of John Lennon. For instance, on October 2, 2001, three weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a television fundraiser titled *Come Together: A Night for John Lennon’s Words and Music* was broadcast in the U.S. The event was held at Radio City Music Hall in New York City and dedicated to the people of New York. A large number of popular musicians came out to attend the concert and perform Lennon’s most famous songs and included Sean Lennon, Alanis Morissette, Stone Temple Pilots, Marc Anthony, Moby, Natalie Merchant, Dave Mathews, and Kevin Spacey. Spacey performed Lennon’s song “Mind Games” and said, “John Lennon was many things to many people, a poet, a rocker, a leader, a troublemaker, a father, a husband, a man. Growing up, to me, he was a hero. I’m outraged because this passionate prophet of peace and so many others are not with us here — because we live in an all-too-violent world. And so in the spirit of this occasion it is up to all of us, to do what we can, not only to keep John’s songs alive.” But we also remember the person who left us with messages like believing in ourselves . As John once said, “You don't need anybody to tell you who you are or what you are. **You** are what you are!” And, is there really anything more important than that?