

Will a song stand the test of time?

What is it about a pop song that makes it **compelling** not only as a **hit single** when it's released, but for future generations as well? Take, for example, *Bohemian Rhapsody* by Queen. Is it the interesting **lyrics**, the **melodies** or the fascinating changes of **rhythm** that make it so popular? Much less **complicated**, on the **surface** at least, but no less successful is: *All You Need is Love* by the Beatles. The **sentiment** in its **catchy chorus** couldn't be simpler, and it is such an easy song to **sing along to**. Or is it the personality and quality of the singer or the band that **determine** whether the song will **engage** the listener or not? David Bowie's music is certainly **memorable** for those reasons; the colourful characters he created, such as Ziggy Stardust, only add to that.

Are great songs ones that you recognize as great the first time you **encounter** them, or are there some that you need to listen to several times before they have an effect? *Eleanor Rigby* by The Beatles is perhaps an example of one which you need to listen to carefully because of its complex lyrics (e.g. 'wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door'), but also because it was such an original and different type of pop song at the time.

But whatever **criteria** you use to measure the greatness of a pop song (or any **genre** of music), one thing seems true for all of them: they have the ability to stand the test of time because people can **relate to** them and still see them as **relevant** decades after they were first written.



GLOSSARY

stand the test of time	If sth stands the test of time , it is remembered positively for a long time, or functions successfully for a long time.	catchy	(of a tune or the words of a song) easy to remember
compelling	that makes you pay attention to it because it is so interesting and exciting	chorus	the part of a song that is repeated
hit	a popular and successful song, often called a hit single	sing along (to sth)	sing a song at the same time as listening to it
lyrics	the words of a song	determine	discover the facts about sth or calculate sth exactly SYN establish; determination n
melody	a tune, especially the main tune in a piece of music written for several instruments or voices SYN tune	engage formal	succeed in attracting and keeping sb's attention and interest
rhythm	a regular repeated pattern of sounds or movements	memorable	worth remembering or easy to remember SYN unforgettable
complicated	difficult to understand SYN complex; complicate v	encounter formal	meet sb unexpectedly encounter n
surface	the outer appearance of a person, thing or situation; the qualities you see or notice that are not hidden	criteria pl (sing criterion)	the standards that you use when you make a decision or form an opinion about sb/sth
sentiment	a feeling or an opinion, especially one based on emotions	genre formal	a particular type or style of literature, art, film or music
		relate to sth	feel able to understand sth
		relevant	important and useful OPP irrelevant; relevance n

- 1 Is the pronunciation of the underlined letters the same or different? Write S or D. Use the  to help you.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 <u>c</u> atchy <u>ch</u> orus | 6 <u>r</u> hythm <u>ly</u> rics |
| 2 relate <u>e</u> ngage | 7 <u>g</u> enre <u>e</u> ngage |
| 3 memor <u>a</u> ble rele <u>v</u> ant | 8 <u>c</u> riter <u>i</u> a <u>s</u> ing <u>l</u> e |
| 4 relate <u>s</u> urf <u>a</u> ce | 9 <u>g</u> enre <u>e</u> ngage |
| 5 <u>c</u> ompelling mel <u>o</u> dy | 10 sentiment memor <u>a</u> ble |

- 2 Circle the words in the box which we usually associate with music.

rhythm	compelling	tune	encounter	catchy	sing along
melody	chorus	criteria	hit single	lyrics	genre

- 3 Answer the questions.

- What's the noun formed from *determine*?
- What's a synonym for *complicated*?
- What's the opposite of *relevant*?
- What's the singular form of *criteria*?
- What is the related noun for the verb *encounter*?
- What's a synonym for *memorable*?

- 4 Replace the underlined words with a word or phrase that keeps the same meaning.

- The song is very easy to remember.
- He played a series of musical notes on the piano.
- One Direction* had a number of very successful songs in the 2010s.
- I really like the bit of the song that gets repeated.
- The words of the song are interesting.
- This type of music is difficult to understand.
- The band thinks it's important that young people are able to feel and understand the music.
- I just love that regular repeated pattern of sound.

- 5 Complete the sentences.

- Websites often choose the 'best' pop songs, but what are the for selection?
- I like the song because of the lyrics and the catchy
- Marie likes pop, but classical is still her favourite music.
- I first Hungarian folk music on a visit to Budapest five years ago.
- Many protest songs were written about the Vietnam war, but they still seem just as today, and many young people can still to them.
- Great performers have a natural ability to their audiences.
- The most concert I've ever been to was in Edinburgh last year. It was amazing!
- Many young people seem to see the of music to their lives more than art or literature.
- Music journalists often try to what makes a great singer. Is it the qualities in their voice or their ability to convey a range of emotions?
- On the, a song may seem quite positive, but when you listen to the lyrics a few more times, it can sometimes reveal a deeper and more pessimistic meaning.

- 6 **ABOUT YOU** Write answers to the questions, or talk to another student.

- Do you agree with the text about the features of a great song?
- Is there anything else you think is important in a great pop song?
- What attracts you the most? Is it: the melody? the rhythm? the lyrics?
- Do you often sing along to pop songs in English?
- Is the sentiment expressed in a song important? Why?
- Can you think of several more pop songs that have stood the test of time?

