

## 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

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

- 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>l</u> yrics .....   |
| 2 relate <u>e</u> ngage .....               | 7 <u>g</u> enre <u>e</u> ngage .....    |
| 3 memor <u>a</u> ble <u>r</u> elevant ..... | 8 <u>c</u> riteria <u>s</u> ingle ..... |
| 4 relate <u>s</u> urface .....              | 9 <u>g</u> enre <u>e</u> ngage .....    |
| 5 <u>c</u> ompelling <u>m</u> elody .....   | 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? .....

