 Related text on intertextuality

American Pie – Don McLean

Verse 1

A long, long time ago...

I can still remember how that music used to make me smile.

And I knew if I had my chance, that I could make those people dance, and maybe they'd be happy for a while.

But February made me shiver

With every paper I'd deliver

Bad news on the doorstep, I couldn't take one more step

I can't remember if I cried

When I read about his widowed bride

But something touched me deep inside

The day the music died.

Verse 2

Did you write the book of love?

And do you have faith in God above, if the Bible tells you so?

Now do you believe in rock & roll?

Can music save your mortal soul?

And, can you teach me how to dance real slow?

Now I know that you're in love with him, 'cause I saw you dancing in the gym.

You both kicked off your shoes

Man, I dig those rhythm and blues

I was a lonely teenage broncin' buck

With a pink carnation and a pickup truck

But I knew I was out of luck, the day the music died.

Verse 3

Now for ten years we've been on our own And moss grows fat on a rolling stone

but that's not how it used to be.

When the jester sang for the king and queen

In a coat he borrowed from James Dean

And a voice that came from you and me.

Oh, and while the king was looking down

The jester stole his thorny crown

The courtroom was adjourned, no verdict was returned

And while Lennon read a book of Marx

The quartet practiced in the park

And we sang dirges in the dark, the day the music died.

Verse 4

Helter Skelter in a summer swelter

The Byrd flew off with to a fallout shelter

Eight miles high and falling fast.

Then landed in the foul grass

The players tried for a forward pass

With the jester, on the sidelines in a cast.

Now the half time air was sweet perfume

While sergeants played a marching tune

We all got up to dance, but we never got the chance

'Cause the players tried to take the field

The marching band refused to yield

Do you recall what was revealed, the day the music died.

Verse 5

And then we were all in one place Woodstock

A generation lost in space

With no time left to start again

So come on Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack flash sat on a candlestick

'cause fire is the devil's only friend.

Oh, and as I watched him on the stage

My hands were clenched in fists of rage

No angel born in hell could brake that Satan's spell

As the flames climbed high into the night, to light the sacrificial rite

I saw Satan laughing with delight, the day the music died.

Verse 6

I met a girl who sang the blues and I asked her for some happy news, but she just smiled and turned away.

I went down to the sacred store

Where I heard the music years before, but the man said the music wouldn't play

And in the streets the children screamed

The lovers cried and the poets dreamed

But not a word was spoken. The church bells all were broken.

And the three men I admire most, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost

They caught the last train for the coast.

The day the music died. And we were singing....

Refrain

So bye, bye Miss American Pie

Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry

And them good old boys were drinking whiskey and rye singing "This will be the day that I die, this will be the day

that I die." [Song lyrics American Pie](http://www.songlyrics.com/don-mclean/american-pie-lyrics/)

Annotations

Verse 1

American Pie was written in 1971 by Don McLean. The song is a comment on his experience and emotional reaction to the social changes that took place during the 1960s. He sentimentalises about the lost moral and political standards of the 1950s.

During the 1950's, music was for dancing (sock hops). McLean played rock & roll so people could have a good time. There is a sense of societies lost innocence as drugs, and music moved into the protest era of the 60s.

McLean is referring to the death of Buddy Holly who died in a plane crash in 1959.

As a boy McLean worked a paper boy and was upset to read of Holly’s death

The widow he refers to is Holly's wife who was pregnant when the accident occurred and soon after had a miscarriage.

The crash took the lives of three rock legends: Holly, Richie Valens and the Big Bopper, and represents for McLean "The day the music died." The music that died is the standard of the rock & roll songs themselves. The crash was the final blow to this period in music as these three were the only major artists left. Elvis was drafted into the Army, Little Richard had turned to gospel, and Chuck Berry was jailed.

Verse 2

"The Book of Love" was a hit in 1968 by the Monotones.

In 1955, Don Cornell wrote "The Bible Tells Me So" and there is a Sunday School song "Jesus Loves Me," with the line "For the Bible tells me so."

This is appropriated from the song "Do You Believe in Magic?" by the Lovin' Spoonful, written by John Sebastin in 1965. One of the lines is like trying to teach a stranger 'bout rock & roll," and another is "the magic's in the music and the music's in me." The "magic" this Johnny was talking about is the ability of a song to stick in your head. Often times songs bring back memories of the past, this is what the magic is. This magic is considered to be especially in rock & roll, because you experience it without having to analyse the lyrics.

Given all that, can music help you get through life? All of these questions are questioning life and if God exists.

These old crazy things that worked in the fifty's no longer work, 'cause the 60's brought a new social revolution. Peace Out!

Verse 3

The jester is Bob Dylan. The king is Peter Seger and the queen is Joan Baez. These were the two big names in folk music in the early '60's). During the Newport Folk Festival in 1963, Dylan was honoured to play his own set and then combine with these two legends to sing his song "Blowin' in the Wind."

In the James Dean movie "Rebel Without A Cause," he wears a red windbreaker. On the cover of the Dylan's "Freewheelin'," he is seen also in a red windbreaker. This cover also resembles a famous picture of Dean. This ties in with the previous line 'cause this album is were Dylan really took off, with such songs as "Blowin' in the Wind" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall."

This means two things. 1. Dylan was the spokesman for the 60's and 2. He didn't have the best singing voice in the world, but no one could write like him.

This could mean two things; Pete Seger remained a traditional folk singer, while Dylan was constantly reinventing himself and therefore became unbelievably popular. This could also be a reference to Elvis Presley the then King of rock and roll.

While Elvis was in the army, Dylan took his spotlight and changed the whole music business. The thorny crown is the price of fame, and is referenced with Jesus's thorny crown before he was murdered.

This deals with the Kennedy assassination. Lee Harvey Oswald was never convicted because he was murdered.

This is about the Beatles music becoming political. Songs like "Revolution" (1968) (which actually mentions Chairman Mao) were far more political than "Love Me Do" (1963). Many American adults thought the Beatles were bad for the American youth, especially after Lennon's remark in 1966 about Christianity. He said "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue with that; I'm right and I will be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first: rock 'n' roll or Christianity."

The quartet was the Beatles and the park thing is Candlestick Park, the place of their last concert. It was practicing 'cause their music would grow after they stopped touring, their first project after this was "Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band" which is considered the best album of all time.

A dirge is a funeral song. These songs were for the Kennedy's (John and Robert) and Martin Luther King, all who died in the mid 60's. And remember- "Dark" rhythms with "Park"

Verse 4

Charles Manson was a dangerous killer who in the summer of 1968, massacred an entire family because of the Beatles song "Helter Skelter," which appeared on the white album. He thought that the Beatles were warning America about the racial conflict and it was "coming down fast." He thought the Beatles were the four angels mentioned in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. Manson wrote the title of the song on the wall in blood after committing the murders. Also, he thought in "Revolution 9" that Lennon was saying "rise" instead of "right," and also thought the line "They need a damn good wacking" from "Piggies" was telling him to kill people and the "Hollywood Song" in "Honey Pie" was about him 'cause he lived near Hollywood. He was dropping too much acid and thought the Beatles were talking directly to him and told him to kill those people.

The Byrd's were a popular folk-rock group, with the huge cover of Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," in 1965. One of the members was arrested for possession of marijuana and a fallout shelter was another name for a rehab program. A strange note is that Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" appeared on his "Bringing It All Back Home" record, and on the lower left corner of the cover is a fallout shelter sign.

"Eight Miles High" was the first ever psychedelic song (it was written while high on speed, and the sound of the guitar was supposed to sound like a saxophone). The falling fast part is probably about the fact that the Byrd's abandoned folk-rock for country music with the album "Sweetheart of the Rodeo," in 1967

Here the football metaphor starts. The players are the protesters in the 60's. The forward pass was their movement to change the situation they were in, full of government corruption.

Another reference to Dylan. In late 1966, while riding near his house in Woodstock, NY, he briefly glanced into the sun and lost control of his bike. When he went to brake, they locked up on him and sent him flying off the motorcycle. It took him about 9 months to recover in which time he very rarely left the house, hence the cast.

Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Band by the Beatles (1967), had been named the most influential album of all time. It was the first ever concept album. First to have lyrics printed on the back. First to have a design on the protector of the record. Included an elaborate cover design and cut-outs. As far as the music goes, it had drug references in Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, sitars, animal sounds and studio trickery. In the song "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" the engineer was instructed to cut the tape into small pieces, scatter them around, then tape them back together. In "A Day in the Life" after the piano cords die out, there is a minute of silence, followed by a high pitched sound, then a loop of Beatles gibberish to make the owners of the LP think that the needle had stuck!

The Beatles also wrote anti-violence songs that made protesters think twice about the voilence. "All You Need is Love" (1967) says there is a better way than violence, and in "Revolution" (1968) one of the lines is "But when you talk about destruction, don't you know that you can count me out." The beatles were in no way pro-government (as seen in 1968's "Piggies," which is about Congressmen), but they were against violence.

For many the protests failed. McLean and others believed the government was more corrupt now than ever before. McLean was not a big 60's fan and uses American Pie to express his disappointment at the efforts of the failed generation.

Verse 5

The moon landing was of course in 1969, David Bowie's "Space Oddity" was released (which was about 'major Tom' who got lost in space), there was a TV show called "Lost in Space" and this is a drug reference, the 60's are generalized by saying everyone in the entire world was on acid.

It took them a whole decade to get to this point, the generation's time was quickly fading. McLean thinks they wasted most of their time on drugs.

"Jumpin' Jack Flash" was a hit for the Rolling Stones. In this song, Jagger compares himself with Jesus. This line comes from the nursery rhyme that has the line "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jumps over a candlestick."

The Stones sold out to the devil. Their only comeback to the Beatles "Sgt. Pepper" was their album "Their Satanic Majesties Request." Seeing that you've probably never heard of this, you can imagine that it pretty much sucks. Also, their song "Sympathy for the Devil," proves that they were desperate to sell their records (the Beatles were SOOOOO much better!). Was it really worth celebrating the devil?

No, it wasn't. In December of 1969, the Stones attempted another Woodstock, this time at Altamont Speedway. This time it was a free concert, with the Hell's Angel's handling the security. The biggest mistake was paying them in advance, but instead of money, with beer and handfuls of acid. While the stones were singing "Sympathy for the Devil," a black man was beaten and stabbed to death by the Hell's Angels. They soon began beating everyone, include a member of the Jefferson Airplane.

"angels born in hell" a.k.a. the "Hell's Angels!" When you have sympathy for the devil, you're asking for trouble.

The stones were helicoptered out of there it became so crazy, hence the "climbed high." It's like the Stones started the living hell, and left in the middle of it...what's up with that? The sacrifice to the devil was the man's life.

This was the definitive ending of the sixties. The generation that was lost in space was now lost on earth. Before the only violence was between the hippies and the police, now it was amongst themselves. Satan had won, in one final blow.

Verse 6

Janis Joplin is most the girl who sang the blues. Her big hits were "Piece of My Heart" and "Me and Bobby McGee." She died of an accidental heroin overdose on October 4, 1970. McLean is still trying to find happiness like in the beginning of the song "Maybe they'd be happy for a while," "That music used to make me smile." (Note the tone of the song is very similar in these to verses) But this time the smile isn't for happiness but regret.

In Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," he says: "I met one man he was wounded in love, I met another man he was wounded in hatred," showing that love hurts sometimes as much as hate.

Again in "A Hard Rain...," the line is "I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken." Simon and Garfunkel had a hit with "Sound of Silence." The church bells all were broken shows that people have forgotten God. All things are are so sacred are gone, love, faith, happiness, peace. In Dylan's "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," one verse goes: Disillusioned words like bullets bark . As human gods aim for their mark . Made everything from toy guns that spark . To flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark . It's easy to see without looking too far. That not much Is really sacred. McLean isn't the only one that feels this way. He was a religious man, and was very disappointed that God had been adandoned by the generation.

God has left. Time magazine even featured a cover story "Is God Dead?" The generation has failed, and "with no time left to start again." It was now up to the next generation to put things right (and they did a terrible job might I add).

The American traditionalists were depressed with the hedonistic 60s lifestyle. The song comes from Buddy Holly's "That'll be the day," that eventually says "that I die."

Source: [analysis of American Pie lyrics](http://www.whrc-wi.org/americanpie.htm)

Student Activity

How do both Doerr and Mclean use intertextuality to represent human experiences?