

# Analysis of song lyrics

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Song lyrics: looking through the window of cultural texts... If you took the time to listen to the lyrics of a song instead of mumbling uselessly to the catchy melody, you'd notice that some bands and musical artists are informing their audience of present-time themes and issues.

In today's society, song lyrics can be used effectively to find fault with many dominant values and attitudes, somewhat protesting against social issues and the preconceived ideas that stand tall on the stage of democracy.

This is why song lyrics should be considered one of the most important cultural texts of the modern age. The songs Sunday Bloody Sunday by the band U2 and Hurricane by artist Bob Dylan substantiate ideas of equality and "justice for all", encouraging the listener to take a look at their own values and attitudes surrounding the issues presented... would the listener react differently if it were their life or integrity at stake? The song Sunday Bloody Sunday is one of U2's most political songs.

It describes the terror experienced by an observer of the conflicts in Northern Ireland, particularly the Bloody Sunday incident in Derry where British soldiers shot and killed unarmed civil rights protestors in 1972, presenting themes of unity, ignorance and indifference. Meanwhile, Bob Dylan's protest song Hurricane tells the story of the imprisonment of celebrated boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, who was falsely accused of a triple murder in New Jersey, America during the mid 1960s.

The song lyric explores themes of injustice, racism and discrimination, enlightening listeners about the corruption that swarmed the democratic American legal system at the time.

You know, without realising it, the song you downloaded from iTunes the other day could quite possibly be criticising certain values and attitudes in society. The song Sunday Bloody Sunday by U2 supports the argument that song lyrics should be considered one of the most important cultural texts of the modern age.

Throughout the song lyric, the theme of unity blossoms and grows, travelling deeper into the abyss of society's struggle to stand together. This is seen at the beginning of the song in the first verse “‘ cause tonight... we can be as one” accompanied by a military style drumbeat. Here, the chance to join together as “ one” and make a difference is being offered to the listener, while the choice of instruments is symbolic to a “ call to arms”.

We're asked to open our eyes and witness the struggle and pain that the people of Northern Ireland experienced during the early seventies, when their lives were torn apart by the bullets of British soldiers, “ Broken bottles under children's feet” and “ Bodies strewn across the dead end street”.

The repetition of “ cause tonight... we can be as one” is successful in evoking a defiant and hopeful response from the listener. I also feel that the imagery created by “ Broken bottles...bodies strewn...dead end...” plants a seed of lifelessness and futility in the listener's mind.

The listener is therefore encouraged to rise up and fight against the hopeless situation described in the song. Meanwhile, the song lyric Hurricane by Bob Dylan investigates the injustice that surrounded Rubin Carter and 1960s America. Being trapped in a nightmare of injustice is a very dark place to be.

Loneliness and helplessness are your only friends when everyone remains blind to the truth. Bob Dylan's Hurricane is a song lyric that explores this theme of injustice in 1960s New Jersey, where a common scenario was put to the ultimate test: the word of a white man against the word of a black man.

The song is informing us of Rubin Carter's false murder conviction, told in a somewhat story-like fashion. Bob Dylan presents the entire American legal system as corrupt and unethical, displayed in the ninth verse "All of Rubin's cards were marked in advance" and "The trial was a pig-circus he never had a chance". As well as creating emphasis through rhyme, these two lines are highly emotive, and encourage the listener to feel pity and empathy for Rubin Carter and others that may have been a victim of corruption.

As a listener who lives in the twenty-first century, where cases of legal dishonesty and fraud are quite rare, I find myself sympathising with Rubin Carter and resenting the heartless and ignorant attitude possessed by 1960s America and society. In retrospect, I am extremely grateful that a fair and just trial is now available to everyone, regardless of skin colour. When the song comes to an end, the image painted in the listener's mind is that of injustice and tyranny, encouraging social change in the area of legality. Nonetheless, U2's Sunday Bloody Sunday presents the ignorance and indifference of society in times of great need.

It seems that a sad face served with "what a tragedy" and seasoned with taste of genuine sincerity is our best response when the TV screen shows an image of dead bodies strewn across a dead end street... U2's Sunday Bloody Sunday is a protest song that provides a dominant reading, investigating the ignorant and indifferent attitude exhibited by society towards the Bloody <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-song-lyrics/>

Sunday incident in Northern Ireland. A quote from the text highlights the 1970s unawareness of this event, and other acts of conflict across the world, “ And today the millions cry, We eat and drink while tomorrow they die”.

As well as making use of a hyperbole, these two lines are very effective in criticising the lack of care that society has for anyone but themselves, and as a result, depicts us as arrogant and self-righteous. Because we can't empathise with the people of Derry who experienced a freakish nightmare unknown to us, all we can do is store it at the back of our minds and wait in anticipation for the next episode of Home and Away... From my point of view, there is little we can do when events such as this arise and take us by surprise.

But, if society joins together in unity instead of finding refuge in the popular TV station of ignorance, then hearing those cries and feeding those mouths will become a reality. However, if we're going to join together as one, then racism and discrimination need to be a thing of the past, as explored in Bob Dylan's Hurricane. Racism and discrimination are two themes that refuse to leave the realms of today's society. Their defiant and unfaltering attitude must be commended, but not encouraged, as displayed in Bob Dylan's Hurricane.

The song lyric is successful in condemning the negative, judicious and cultured beliefs possessed by society that all black men are criminals and murderers. These motifs must be stopped in their tracks, and banished from society... The song lyric enlightens the listener of the racism and discrimination that occurred in New Jersey at the time, and reminds us that we have only taken a few steps along the path of equality since then.

Within Hurricane, the extreme inequity displayed by the American police during the sixties is being crudely criticised, displayed in the seventh verse “ We want to put his arse in stir, We want to pin this triple murder on him”. Here, the listener receives the impression that the police (“ we”) are hiding something, and regardless of who committed the crime, are determined to see Carter behind bars. Based on my morals, I believe that every person, male or female, black or white, should be treated fairly and qually.

Unfortunately, I wasn’t the judge at Rubin Carter’s trial. The atmosphere created in the text is that of corrupt defiance and mere narrow-mindedness, and the effect is overwhelming: I have the urge to stand up and say “ Hey! What you’re doing is wrong...! ” If only I had the power to change the path of history... For all those out there who believe that song lyrics are just another form of entertainment, think again. Should song lyrics be considered one of the most important cultural texts of all time?

The way in which they approach certain themes and issues as well as investigate society’s values, beliefs and attitudes is incredible – therefore the answer is yes. When you look at U2’s protest song Sunday Bloody Sunday, a range of themes including unity, ignorance and indifference are presented. Throughout the song, the image of helplessness is promoted, encouraging the listener to fight for unity.

Also, the song criticises society for being ignorant to the death and heartache that was rife in 1970s Ireland at the time of the Bloody Sunday incident.

It highlights our failure to empathise, and are portrayed as uncaring and therefore urged to put a stop to world conflict. Meanwhile, themes of injustice, racism and discrimination are explored in Bob Dylan's song Hurricane. The corruption of the American legal system is the motif in this song, presenting the police, judges and jury as dishonest and unethical. The listener is positioned to respond in a sympathetic way towards Rubin Carter, and feel resentment in regard to the so-called democratic legal system.

Overall, we are encouraged to accept our differences and stand together as one, moving in the direction of social change in the courts. Finally, songs are extremely successful in exploring themes and issues that are relevant to today's society, as they provide the chance to criticise and/or encourage social change regarding our values, beliefs and attitudes. " Democracy doesn't rule the world. You'd better get that in your head; this world is ruled by violence, but I guess that's better left unsaid. " Bob Dylan