

# Stevie wonder essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Stevland Hardaway Jenkins is what it may say on his birth certificate, but this world-renowned, transcendent artist is better known as Stevie Wonder. Even at birth, Stevie was ahead of his time. He was born premature and doctors were unsure if he would live. Stevie was placed in an incubator to save his life. As a result of the incubator supplying Stevie with too much oxygen, he was left blind. Throughout life, Stevie never let his disability hold him back. By age 10, he had already taught himself how to play a multitude of instruments including, piano, harmonica, and drums.

Soon after, he was discovered by Motown Records and was dubbed “ Little Stevie Wonder. ” This child prodigy released his first album at age 12. Through his music, Wonder has painted beautiful imagery for us all to enjoy. Stevie Wonder has dedicated his life to music and has become one of the most innovative and talented musicians of a generation.

So what makes Stevie wonder so talented? Scientists suggest that the parts of the brain that are normally used for sight, such as the visual cortex, may be converted to enhancing a blind persons’ ability to process sound (Glass). Stevie admittedly developed a keen sense of hearing. Sound bounces off everything...” Stevie says (Dragonwagon, 13). Hearing, uninfluenced by sight, gave Stevie the perception that has enabled him to become an innovator of melody, mood and lyrics. It was his sharp sense of hearing and perception of sound that is Stevie’s gift. But his talent didn’t stop at his natural gift. Stevie Wonder also has incredible drive and determination. He always strived to sharpen his musicianship and songwriting capabilities (Biography. com). It was this drive that was what led Stevie to stardom. As a

boy, Stevie Wonder was always drawn to music and showed an early gift as part of his church's choir.

Driven, Stevie never let his blindness hold him back. He says, "As many things as I could do, I did" (PBS, Wonder). Many people who knew him as a child said jokingly that he didn't even know he was blind. One day while outside playing with his friends, Stevie heard someone playing a guitar in his neighborhood. Not able to cross the street by himself, Stevie found a way to get to the guitar. Determined, Stevie paid his friend to escort him to where the guitar was being played (PBS, Wonder). Stevie's determination and curiosity landed him on a neighborhood porch, where he would sing and play the bongos for groups of neighbors.

He was soon discovered by Ronnie White, who was a singer in the Motown group, the Miracles. White set up an audition for Stevie, and he was signed by Motown Records almost immediately (Biography. com). The young, blind phenomena were an instant star around the Motown studios. He became known as "Little Stevie" and "Little Boy Wonder" eventually giving birth to the name "Little Stevie Wonder" (Dragonwagon, 15). After his debut album, Little Stevie Wonder the 12 Year Old Genius, Stevie went on to study classical piano (Biography. com), always pushing to master his craft, and master it he did.

The 1970's belonged to this master musician. After negotiating a new contract with Motown Records, Wonder's talent, drive and artistry, led to an unrivaled period of production (Biography. com). Under the terms of his new contract, Wonder had complete control over his craft and his music

flourished producing four hit albums: Talking Book in 1970, Innervisions in 1973, Fulfillingness' First Finale in 1974, and Songs in the Key of Life in 1976. Stevie's hard work paid off in the form of 15 Grammy Awards in the decade (Biography. com). Although Stevie saw great success in the 70's, he had come full circle.

Just like at birth, Stevie again found himself in a fight for his life. In 1973, while Stevie lie asleep in the passenger seat of a car, he fell victim to a horrible car accident. As he and his friend drove on a windy road, they found themselves behind a large truck loaded with logs. The truck suddenly jammed on its brakes causing the car that Stevie was in to collide with it sending a log through the front windshield into Stevie's head leaving him bloody and unconscious. Stevie laid in a coma for the next 10 days (Dragonwagon, 63). But in typical Stevie Wonder fashion, he was determined to gain from his experience.

His accident added more depth to an already deep sphere of perception. A press release stated: While outwardly it appeared that he was unconscious, inwardly the furiousness of his awareness, perception, and determination were accelerating at breakneck speed. It was during this time that the Sublime became the reality of the innermost visions of the man, and that the concepts so eloquently stated through [Innovisions] was truly fulfilled (Dragonwagon, 64). For some artists, a broader, deeper perception may mean a change in style, but for Stevie Wonder, his already broad, eclectic style needed no such change.

His style directly and indirectly has influenced many artists. Stevie was known for layering his synthesizer parts to create ingenious melodic and rhythmic counterpoint. His music has pop, jazz, dance, and funk influences. He seamlessly welds together chord changes, melodic shifts, and different arrangements (New York Times). Stevie's musical blend and sound is so appealing that it has been imitated by artist across different genres. Pop crooner and jazz- guitarist George Benson found music fame by blatantly copying Stevie's style.