# Song Lyrics as Poetry

After reading the lines, answer the questions after each song. Then listen to the song & reflect on the meaning of the song.

# Unpretty

# by Dallas Austin & Tionne Watkins (performed by TLC)

I wish could tie you up in my shoes
Make you feel unpretty too
I was told I was beautiful
But what does that mean to you
Look into the mirror who's inside there
The one with the long hair
Same old me again today (yeah)

My outside looks cool
My insides are blue
Everytime I think I'm through
It's because of you
I've tried different ways
But it's all the same
At the end of the day
I have myself to blame
I'm just trippin

You can buy your hair if it won't grow You can fix your nose if he says so You can buy all the make up That man can make But if you can't look inside you Find out who am I too Be in the position to make me feel So damn unpretty I'll make you unpretty too

Never insecure until I met you Now I'm bein stupid I used to be so cute to me Just a little bit skinny Why do I look to all these things To keep you happy Maybe get rid of you And then I'll get back to me (hey)

My outside looks cool
My insides are blue
Everytime I think I'm through
It's because of you
I've tried different ways
But it's all the same
At the end of the day
I have myself to blame
Could be I'm trippin

# Questions (Use separate sheet of paper, please)

**1.** What does the speaker mean when she says, "Wish I could tie you up in my shoes/Make you feel unpretty too"?

# Read the following poem "No More Clichés" by Octavio

**Paz.** [Note: a "cliché" is something that is overused & therefore unoriginal.] Compare with "Unpretty."

#### No More Clichés

Beautiful face

That like a daisy opens its petals to the sun So do you

Open your face to me as I turn the page.

Enchanting smile Any man would be under your spell, Oh, beauty of a magazine.

How many poems have been written to you? How many Dantes have written to you, Beatrice? To your obsessive illusion To you manufacture fantasy.

But today I won't make one more Cliché And write this poem to you. No, no more clichés.

This poem is dedicated to those women Whose beauty is in their charm, In their intelligence, In their character, Not on their fabricated looks.

This poem is to you women,
That like a Shahrazade wake up
Everyday with a new story to tell,
A story that sings for change
That hopes for battles:
Battles for the love of the united flesh
Battles for passions aroused by a new day
Battle for the neglected rights
Or just battles to survive one more night.

Yes, to you women in a world of pain To you, bright star in this ever-spending universe To you, fighter of a thousand-and-one fights To you, friend of my heart.

From now on, my head won't look down to a magazine Rather, it will contemplate the night And its bright stars,
And so, no more clichés.

- 2.. What is the "cliché" in the poem? Hint: in the first three stanzas, the speaker describes a woman. In the fourth stanza, he tells the reader what the cliché is.
- **3.** The song "Unpretty" and the poem "No More Clichés" have a similar theme. What is this message both are telling the reader?

Crossroads by Tracy Chapman (performed by Tracy Chapman)

All you folks think you own my life
But you never made any sacrifice
Demons they are on my trail
I'm standing at the crossroads of the hell
I look to the left I look to the right
There're hands that grab me on every side

All you folks think I got my price At which I'll sell all that is mine You think money rules when all else fails Go sell your soul and keep your shell I'm trying to protect what I keep inside All the reasons why I live my life

Some say the devil be a mystical thing I say the devil he a walking man He a fool he a liar **conjurer** and a thief He try to tell you what you want Try to tell you what you need

Standing at the point
The road it cross you down
What is at your back
Which way do you turn
Who will come to find you first
Your devils or your gods

All you folks think you run my life Say I should be willing to compromise I say all you demons go back to hell I'll save my soul save myself

**conjurer:** someone who conjures magic **conjure:** someone who orders or commands something or someone

# Questions

**4.** Can you find the metaphor in the third verse of the song "Crossroads"? What are the two things being compared?

Compare "Crossroads" with the Robert Frost poem, "The Road Not Taken."

#### The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that, the passing there Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.

- **5.** Find one similarity between the speakers.
- 6. Find one difference in the speakers' situations.
- **7.** What is the message the speakers are trying to tell the readers?
- **8.** In the poem "The Road Not Taken," find the pattern in the rhyme scheme (which lines rhyme with one another?).

She by Billie Jo Armstrong (performed by Green Day)

She

She screams in silence
A sullen riot penetrating through her mind
Waiting for a sign

To smash the silence with the brick of self-control

Are you locked up in a world That's been planned out for you Are you feeling like a social tool without a use Scream at me until my ears bleed I'm taking heed just for you

She

She's figured out
All her doubts were someone else's point of view
Waking up this time
To smash the silence with the brick of self-control

Are you locked up in a world That's been planned out for you Are you feeling like a social tool without a use Scream at me until my ears bleed I'm taking heed just for you

Are you locked up in a world That's been planned out for you Are you feeling like a social tool without a use Scream at me until my ears bleed I'm taking heed just for you

**heed:** paying close attention **sullen:** somber; gloomy or showing irritation

### Questions

**9.** Find examples of alliteration in the song "She."

10. Find the example of personification in the first verse.

# Read the poem "Dreams" by Langston Hughes.

### Dreams

Hold fast to dreams For if dreams die Life is a broken-winged bird That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams For when dreams go Life is a barren field Frozen with snow.

- 11. Find an example of personification in the first stanza.
- 12. There are two metaphors about "Life." What are they?

#### One

by James Hetfield & Lars Ulrich (performed by Metallica)

I can't remember anything Can't tell if this is true or dream Deep down inside I feel to scream This terrible silence stops me

Now that the war is through with me I'm waking up I can not see That there is not much left of me Nothing is real but pain now

Hold my breath as I wish for death Oh please god,wake me

Back in the womb it's much too real In pumps life that I must feel But can't look forward to reveal Look to the time when I'll live

Fed through the tube that sticks in me Just like a wartime novelty Tied to machines that make me be Cut this life off from me

Hold my breath as I wish for death Oh please god,wake me Now the world is gone I'm just one Oh god,help me hold my breath as I wish for death Oh please God help me

Darkness imprisoning me All that I see Absolute horror I cannot live I cannot die Trapped in myself Body my holding cell

Landmine has taken my sight Taken my speech Taken my hearing Taken my arms Taken my legs Taken my soul Left me with life in hell

# Questions

13. What happened to the speaker in this poem?

14. Based on his experience, what is his attitude toward war?

Read the following poems on the next couple of pages that deal with the subject of war & answer the questions following them.

### The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner

by Randall Jarrell

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State, And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze. Six miles from earth, loosed from the dream of life, I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters. When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

"A ball turret was a plexiglass sphere set into the belly of a B-17 or B-24 bomber and inhabited by two .50 caliber machine-guns and one man, a short, small man. When this gunner tracked with his machine-guns a fighter attacking his bomber from below, he revolved the turret; hunched upside-down in his little sphere, he looked like the foetus in the womb. The fighters which attacked him were armed with canon firing explosive shells. The hose was a steam hose." (Jarrell's notes)

**15.** The speaker uses graphic imagery to show what happens when the ball-turret gunner is killed. In his own notes, Jarrell says the soldier "looked like a fetus in the womb." Which lines of the poem give you this image?

# HERE DEAD WE LIE by A E Housman

Here dead we lie Because we did not choose To live and shame the land From which we sprung.

Life, to be sure, Is nothing much to lose, But young men think it is, And we were young.

**16.** This poem has less imagery, but it makes you think about the speaker's attitude toward the war. Did he want to fight in it? How do you know?

17. How does the speaker view the fact that he is now dead?

# DULCE ET DECORUM EST1

by Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares² we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest³ began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots⁴
Of tired, outstripped⁵ Five-Nines⁶ that dropped behind.

Gas! 7 Gas! Quick, boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling, Fitting the clumsy helmets<sup>8</sup> just in time; But someone still was yelling out and stumbling, And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime<sup>9</sup>... Dim, through the misty panes1<sup>0</sup> and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him drowning. In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, He plunges at me, guttering, <sup>11</sup> choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace Behind the wagon that we flung him in, And watch the white eyes writhing in his face, His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin; If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud<sup>12</sup> Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, My friend, you would not tell with such high zest<sup>13</sup> To children ardent<sup>14</sup> for some desperate glory, The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est Pro patria mori.<sup>15</sup>

- 18 What sort of images does this poem convey?
- **19.** Owen was a soldier & this is known as one of the greatest poems of World War I. Does it support war? Why or why not?
- **20.** He titles his poem "Dulce et..." meaning "Sweet and Fitting (Right)" or the entire phrase: "It is sweet and fitting (right) to die for one's country." Does the speaker believe in this statement? What clues are you given?

8 October 1917 - March, 1918

1 DULCE ET DECORUM EST - the first words of a Latin saying (taken from an ode by Horace). The words were widely understood and often quoted at the start of the First World War. They mean "It is sweet and right." The full saying ends the poem: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori - it is sweet and right to die for your country. In other words, it is a wonderful and great honour to fight and die for your country

2 rockets which were sent up to burn with a brilliant glare to light up men and other targets in the area between the front lines (See illustration, page 118 of Out in the Dark.)

3 a camp away from the front line where exhausted soldiers might rest for a few days, or longer

4 the noise made by the shells rushing through the air

5 outpaced, the soldiers have struggled beyond the reach of these shells which are now falling behind them as they struggle away from the scene of battle

6 Five-Nines - 5.9 calibre explosive shells

7 poison gas. From the symptoms it would appear to be chlorine or phosgene gas. The filling of the lungs with fluid had the same effects as when a person drowned

8 the early name for gas masks

9 a white chalky substance which can burn live tissue

10 the glass in the eyepieces of the gas masks

11 Owen probably meant flickering out like a candle or gurgling like water draining down a gutter, referring to the sounds in the throat of the choking man, or it might be a sound partly like stuttering and partly like gurgling 12 normally the regurgitated grass that cows chew; here a similar looking material was issuing from the soldier's mouth

13 high zest - idealistic enthusiasm, keenly believing in the rightness of the idea

14 keen

15 see note 1

# **JUST LIKE HEAVEN**

by Robert Smith

(performed by The Cure)

"Show me, show me how you do that trick The one that makes me scream," she said

"The one that makes me laugh," she said

And threw her arms around my neck

"Show me how you do it

And I promise you I promise that

I'll run away with you

I'll run away with you"

Spinning on that dizzy edge

I kissed her face and kissed her head

And dreamed of all the different ways I had

To make her glow

"Why are you so far away?" she said

"Why won't you ever know that I'm in love with you

That I'm in love with you"

You

Soft and only

You

Lost and lonely

You

Strange as angels

Dancing in the deepest oceans

Twisting in the water

You're just like a dream

Daylight licked me into shape

I must have been asleep for days

And moving lips to breathe her name

I opened up my eyes

And found myself alone alone

Alone above a raging sea

That stole the only girl I loved

And drowned her deep inside of me

You

Soft and only

You

Lost and lonely

You

Just like heaven

#### Question

21. Identify the example of an anaphora in this song.

# Read the following two poems & compare to this song:

### I Love You (Sara Teasdale)

When April bends above me And finds me fast asleep, Dust need not keep the secret A live heart died to keep.

When April tells the thrushes, The meadow-larks will know, And pipe the three words lightly To all the winds that blow.

Above his roof the swallows, In notes like far-blown rain, Will tell the little sparrow Beside his window-pane.

O sparrow, little sparrow, When I am fast asleep, Then tell my love the secret That I have died to keep.

### Question

22. What is the "secret" that spreads throughout the night?

### When You Are Old (W.B. Yeats)

When you are old and grey and full of sleep, And nodding by the fire, take down this book, And slowly read, and dream of the soft look Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true, But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you, And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars, Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled And paced upon the mountains overhead And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

# Question

**23.** In "When You Are Old" what do you think the speaker is trying to say to the reader? (What is the speaker's message?)