

1. Read and answer

John Lennon - much more than just a Beatle

The circumstances of the murder of John Lennon are well enough known for it to be unnecessary to repeat them now. It was ironic that John Lennon, advocate of non-violence, should have died the way he did: though perhaps it was ironic too that John should have chosen to live in New York, one of the more violent cities in the USA. US president Ronald Reagan described it as "a great tragedy", and music radio-stations across the world played Lennon's songs, some of them in a non-stop tribute to the former Beatle who had such a tremendous effect on the world of the nineteen-sixties and early seventies.

AN ACCIDENTAL HERO

John Lennon never set out to become a hero, nor the leader of a whole generation. It came on him more by accident. He didn't want to be thought of as the *leader* of the Beatles — people forced it on him. "We're a co-operative" he used to say: but in the early nineteen sixties that was something people couldn't accept. "You must have a leader," they answered, and so John became the chief Beatle. He deserved the position, indeed, since he was the founder of the group, he wrote the words of most of their songs, and he was the dynamic force behind the others. "I'm just a 'uman bein' " he used to say.

What was it therefore which made the Beatles what they were? In short it was a combination of various things; their music, the words of their songs, their attitude, and their appearance.

Right from the start they were different; their music was good, and original; the words of their songs (Lennon's words) were often different. At the start Lennon wrote about love and romance, but it wasn't Hollywood love, it was 1960's everyday romance: something with which millions of young people in the cities of Britain and America, later Europe too, could identify. And in the nineteen sixties, there were millions and millions of teenagers and twenties just searching for something new to identify with. The expression "*generation gap*" was just becoming popular. The Beatles, led by Lennon, became the leaders of a new generation.

Forced into the role of leader, John Lennon accepted it, modestly. Even in 1970, he was still saying "I'm just a 'uman bein' ": but by then he knew he was a human being with influence; he knew that what he said or sung would be repeated all over the world. His songs had usually *said* something, right from the start; but in the period 1969-70, he began to say things more consciously. He had always been a symbol of an alternative life-style; but in the late 60s, his message became more overt. He wrote "Revolution", a song which classed him as peaceful, not violent, revolutionary, then there was his famous "Give Peace a Chance", and the more socially-conscious "Working-class Hero".

In fact, Lennon left the Beatles and the Beatles split up because they had "nothing more to say", whereas he had a lot. The Lennon of the early seventies was the most influential. He was "John Lennon", not just "a Beatle".

Shortly after the end of the Vietnam war, Lennon retired from public life. In a sense, the Beatles' generation had managed, by then, to change the face of western society. Attitudes had become much more liberal, and pop music part of our culture.

Shortly before his death, John Lennon recorded another album; and the day he died, he had been in the recording studio. After five years of family life, he was returning to public life. Was it a need for more money? Certainly not. Lennon was returning to life, perhaps, because he could see the world returning to its old ways. Re-armament, a return to conservatism, international tension, talk of war. The ex-leader of a generation which had tried to *give peace a chance*, could not sit back and watch things change for the worse. Tragically, in the end, peace would not give him a chance.

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1. Why is it ironic that Lennon should have died the way he did?

2. Lennon became the leader of The Beatles because the group chose him. True False

3. What were young people looking for in the 1960's?

4. What kind of lyrics did Lennon start writing in the 70's?

5. Lennon went back to public life just before his death to complain about the world situation. True False

2. Read about The Beatles and fill in each blank with ONE word.

The Beatles are still one of the most popular rock groups in the world _____ they broke up almost 50 years ago! _____ the six years of their existence, they led a revolution in music. Not _____ have they sold millions of records every year, _____ they have also managed to stay alive over half a century after their split up.

All over the world, teenagers know the tunes of the Beatles' most famous songs, and often some of the words as _____. *Yesterday*, *Penny Lane*, *Hey Jude* and *When I am Sixty Four* are among the best known even _____ not everybody likes them best.

No _____ what they say, many more recent pop groups, many big names - _____ as Oasis, Blur or Foo Fighters - owe a lot to the Beatles. And this is true _____ they admit it or not. In their album *the Masterplan*, Oasis did a new version of the Beatles' song *I am the Walrus*.

There are also dozens of bands all over the world which do nothing _____ copy the Beatles. There is a band in England called the *Bootleg Beatles*, a band in America called the *Fab Four*, a Norwegian band called *Det Betales*, and even a band called *Museum* in Kazakhstan; and there are many more too!

3. Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense. Whenever you see + add a modal verb.

Very few people who lived during the 1960's and 1970's _____ (+ say) that they never heard any music by the Beatles. This band was sensational. Not everyone liked their music, but you _____ (+ not miss) hearing it no matter where you _____ (go) in the world.

George Harrison, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney began _____ (sing) together when they were still teenagers in the 1950's. They _____ (+ sing) in clubs around Liverpool, England. Richard Starkey, who _____ (+ become) better known as Ringo Starr, _____ (join) the group in the early 1960's. The Beatles started _____ (hit) it big in the record business in 1964 and since then, their fame never _____ (stop)

The Beatles _____ (make) their first American television appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and by 1966 they _____ (appear) in TV shows all over the world. This _____ (be) the beginning of great times for the four boys from Liverpool. Money, girls, parties -- anything they wanted -- was right at their fingertips. They toured the world _____ (put) on concerts for thousands and hundreds of thousands of fans.

Paul and John were the driving forces in the Beatles group. Probably, if they hadn't been part of the band, the group _____ (not be) so famous. They _____ (write) the songs, sometimes together, sometimes alone. "Yesterday" was a McCartney song. Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance" and "Imagine" _____ (remain) favorites with music fans for decades now. Paul _____ (known) as the "cute" Beatle. John was more serious. Ringo was a bit elfish. George quietly played his music and tried _____ (find) peace within himself.

It _____ (+ not deny) that they were one of the most influential bands in the

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world. However, to everyone’s disappointment, by 1970 they decided _____
(break up) and never sang together again.

4. Complete this interview to Paul McCartney.

Interviewer: Hi, Paul. There are quite a few things we’d like to know about you. For example _____
_____?

Paul: Well, I used to be terrified of making a mistake in public. But I’ve learnt it’s OK. They actually like it.

Interviewer: _____?

Paul: I don’t remember the last one, but I did make quite a few mistakes in the course of time. I had a show in Paris where I started off with the second verse of “Penny Lane” instead of the first. It should have been “a barber showing photographs.” So I thought, “I’ll swap the verses – do verse two, then verse one and we’ll go into the middle bit.” But the band correctly thought, “He skipped verse one – we’ll go into the middle.”

Interviewer: _____ embarrassing!!!

Paul: You bet! And they were all quite angry at me and they started yelling at me. Anyway, that’s history now.

Interviewer: Do you have any regrets?

Paul: Well, sometimes I think “If only _____.”
Maybe we would still be a famous pop group like the Stones.

Interviewer: And Paul, _____, do you think?

Paul: In ten years’ time? Hopefully, I’ll still be singing and composing songs. I can’t imagine life without it!

5. Writing.

Write between 180 and 200 words on **one** of the following:

Ⓔ Money is the key to a successful life. Discuss

Ⓔ The most frustrating episode in my life.