

English Worksheet on Piano Man

Cambridge Checkpoint / IGCSE / O Level English

Piano Man – Billy Joel

It's nine o'clock on a Saturday
Regular crowd shuffles in
There's an old man sittin' next to me
Makin' love to his tonic and gin
He says: "Son can you play me a memory?"
I'm not really sure how it goes
But it's sad and it's sweet and I knew it complete
When I wore a younger man's clothes

La-la-la de-de da

La-la de-de da da-da

Sing us a song you're the piano man
Sing us a song tonight
Well we're all in the mood for a melody
And you've got us feelin' alright
Now John at the bar is a friend of mine
He gets me my drinks for free
And he's quick with a joke or to light up your smoke
But there's someplace that he'd rather be
He says Bill I believe this is killing me
As a smile ran away from his face
Well I'm sure that I could be a movie star
If I could get out of this place

Oh, la-la-la de-de da

La-la de-de da da-da

Now Paul is a real estate novelist
Who never had time for a wife
And he's talkin' with Davy who's still in the navy
And probably will be for life
And the waitress is practicing politics
As the businessmen slowly get stoned
Yes they're sharing a drink they call loneliness
But it's better than drinkin' alone
Sing us the song you're the piano man
Sing us a song tonight
Well we're all in the mood for a melody
And you've got us feelin' alright

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It's a pretty good crowd for a Saturday
And the manager gives me a smile
'Cause he knows that it's me they've been comin' to see
To forget about life for a while
And the piano it sounds like a carnival
And the microphone smells like a beer
And they sit at the bar and put bread in my jar
And say man what are you doin' here?

Oh, la-la-la de-de da
La-la de-de da da-da

Sing us the song you're the piano man
Sing us a song tonight
Well we're all in the mood for a melody
And you've got us feelin' alright

Comprehension

1. How many characters are mentioned in the poem?
2. Select two characters and write your thoughts on them: What are the inferences you can draw about them? Explain.
3. Descriptive Writing - Imagine that you are inside this bar listening to the piano man playing. Describe the surrounding and how you feel. Use a mix of imagery (Visual/Auditory/Gustatory/Tactile/Olfactory). Use metaphors, similes or personification if possible.

Write 200-250 words.

The story should end with the character deciding to go out to get some fresh air.

4. Read the following sentences about the poem and use the words in BOLD in sentences of your own. (Use dictionaries if necessary).

- a. The first stanza has a **nostalgic** mood.
- b. There is a sense of **regret** that clouds the entire song.
- c. Most of the characters seem **disappointed** and **disillusioned** about life.
- d. The music **uplifts** the people in **despair**.
- e. The piano man is **charismatic** and **inspirational**.

Language

5. Identify the similes and metaphors used in the song. Select two and explain their effect.
6. List down the types and examples of imagery found in the song.

7. Look at the explanations given below.

‘Son can you play me a memory.’ This line replaces the word melody with ‘memory.’ But it captures the request of the old man who may probably be asking the piano man to play a melody which would bring back memories when he was a younger man. The writer makes the memory into an auditory imagery; for the imaginative reader, the vague, abstract concept of a memory is woven into the tune that he plays.

‘Makin’ love to his tonic and gin’ – This old man has no one to be intimate with. The phrase making love connotes intimacy – someone with whom you can share the joys and struggles of life. But he only has his drinks to vent to. That’s the only thing that keeps him company; the only company he has. In this phrase, the verb ‘making love’ is a metaphor because it compares the action with what he is actually doing – drinking.

‘Bill I believe this is killing me.’ – Exaggeration/Hyperbole. The phrase effectively captures how John feels like his life is wasting away. His dreams have already been killed.

‘Waitress is practicing politics’ – Waitresses at bars filled with men who come to drink and make merry are always in a precarious situation because they may have to face unscrupulous, or drunk customers who have no civility. Therefore, they have to negotiate their dignity – they have to be careful and walk a tightrope of not lashing out at the customers who may crack sexist jokes, while also ensuring their safety and dignity.

Write a comment on the following lines. ‘Yes they're sharing a drink they call loneliness
But it's better than drinkin' alone’

