

# **The Lennon/McCartney Collaboration**

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the collaboration between John Lennon and Paul McCartney during their years writing for the Beatles. Lennon and McCartney worked together by combining their techniques and musical artistry to conceive works that were loved by many of their fans. The artistic differences between John and Paul emanated from their childhood experiences and personal beliefs. The difference between John's childhood of disappointments sparked his more avant-garde style of writing, as Paul's well-rounded early education and family life seemed to allow him to be more of a songbird. The paper first discusses these contrasting pasts and how the lives and styles of the two artists were constructed around them. Two songs, "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane," were collected and analyzed to help illustrate the effects of each artist's past and how it has affected their writing styles. The paper next presents places of collaboration between Lennon and McCartney. Two other songs, "We Can Work it Out" and "A Day in the Life," are also displayed in order to show how John and Paul worked together to produce songs despite their differences. The paper also reviews the popularity and societal effects of their songs during the 1960s.

# THE LENNON/MCCARTNEY COLLABORATION

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In the words of John Lennon, "Let me take you down." Though not to a childhood fantasy world, but to a place where two minds open up to you and allow you to see ideas, words, and emotions shuffled around like mental playing cards. These two magnificent minds were those of songwriters, John Lennon and Paul McCartney. John Lennon and Paul McCartney of the Beatles formed a brilliant collaboration of their techniques and musical artistry to conceive some of the best musical works of all time. The impact that they had on society was unprecedented. Aside from the differences they had, driven by two completely different childhoods, Lennon and McCartney were able to create songs that have a definite message and feel.

The artistic differences between John Lennon and Paul McCartney emanated from their childhood experiences and personal beliefs. Although, they both drew their main inspiration from such American rock 'n' roll singers as Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins, and Little Richard. They liked the "classics," this was the initial solid base of their relationship.

John Lennon's style was sparked by childhood disappointments. John's father, Alfred Lennon, deserted his family when John was a mere three years old. Lennon owed his interest in music to his mother, Julia Lennon. She played piano and taught him banjo chords when he got his first guitar. Tragically, she died in a car accident before he turned fourteen. When she died, John lived with his aunt, Mimi, who hardly supported his poetry or contributed to his musical future. In the beginning, she never thought that John would ever be famous for his musical poetry. A poor student in school, John was told, "The boy must do art or nothing" (Moritz 255). John attempted to be an art student. He was frustrated with the petty details that school offered him. He felt that school was meaningless and that he had better things to do with his time. Lennon once stated, "College life was so free I went to potty," and, "It was just a joke as far as I was concerned" (Moritz 255).

Even though John's life was troubled, he was determined to make something of himself. He was willing to forgive his past to bring good things to his future. John commented once, "Well, like everyone else I don't want to end up a festering heap, but I don't stay up nights worrying. I'm preoccupied with life, not death" (Moritz 257). He was determined to live his life, one so generously given to him, to the fullest. In a song written by Paul, "She's Leaving Home," John finishes a verse by adding a statement of forgiveness to the child's parents in the song. John adds the lyric in the voice of the girl's parents by writing, "We never thought of ourselves," "Never a thought for ourselves," and "We struggled hard all our lives to get by" (Lennon/McCartney, Sgt. Pepper). This compassionate position shows the listener that John realizes that his own parents were not responsible for what happened in his childhood because he was sure that they did everything they could for him.

Other evidence of his childhood impacting on his music occurred during an early recording of "We Can Work it Out." During this tape, an organ that John used was very predominant. It was later found out that a picture of John's father had been placed next to him as the song was being constructed (Richter). His feelings came out in his lyrics and his playing. Although that specific recording was not used on the finished album, the lyrics of the middle-eight supplied a pessimistic point of view that seemed to sprout from his younger days when he was denied a "normal" childhood. He was persistent on making the point that life was too short for "fussing and fighting." He understood that he could not dwell on something he could not ever get back.

John's special style of writing came from his lifetime experiences and what he encountered along the way. For example, John's initial meeting with Bob Dylan sparked a whole new means of songwriting, "See, I remember in the early meetings with Dylan: Dylan was always saying to me, 'Listen to the words, man!' and I said, 'I can't be bothered. I listen to the sound of the overall thing.' Then I reversed that and started being a words man. I made a conscious effort to be wordy a`-la-Dylan" (Miles 75). It was then that John made a transition from the style of the early sixties to a deep, more intriguing style. John started putting out

songs like: "I'm a Loser," "Help!" "In My Life," and " Norwegian Wood." John now wanted his music to express the important things in his life: his childhood memories, his observations on life, his love of words and sharp observation of the unexpected phrase, and his interest in humanitarianism. John was fascinated by the power of slogans to unite people and was determined to write something that would be remembered forever and ever. An example of this mission, in his later Beatle years is "All You Need is Love." Here, John achieves what he always wanted, a powerful slogan portrayed through a beautiful song.

One of the main reasons for Paul's lightheartedness in his music was his childhood. Paul McCartney's early life, unlike John's, was full of positive attitudes and promising futures. This advantage, in time, allowed him to be confident enough with himself to be able to create his music and lyrics mainly for the benefit of others. From the beginning, Paul had a caring family that supported him. He was born James Paul McCartney on June 18, 1942, in Allerton, a suburb of Liverpool. He was the older of the two sons of father, James McCartney. His father had his own band called Jim Mac's Jazz Band. He taught Paul how to play many instruments such as piano, guitar, and drums and taught him musical theory when he was younger. As a student, Paul excelled. In his studies, he took a special interest in English literature. He had top-level grades. He enjoyed his English studies. Paul remembers, "At school, we had a great hip English master and instead of keeping us to the drag with stuff like Return of the Native, he would let us read Tennessee Williams and Lady Chatterly's Lover and The Miller's Tale" (Moritz 251). This literary freedom opened up a different world for Paul. It allowed him to think more freely and develop a specific way of viewing literature; instead of viewing literature as trite and boring, he was able to enjoy written art and focus his interests on it. Graduating, McCartney obtained a general certificate of education and then passed an advanced-level exam in English literature. For a time, he considered entering teacher training, but his musical interests got in the way of a professional career.

Even though there were many differences between them, there was too much potential within their relationship to have it go unnoticed. They met at a music festival when they were both in their mid-teens.

That day was the first day where they heard each other play and show off their musical talents. Needless to say, both were impressed by each other and started a band within the next week (Anthology).

The artistic differences between John Lennon and Paul McCartney were essential to their collaboration and the overall effectiveness of their songs. They differed in that John would write about himself and McCartney would write about other people. Paul's gift lay in composing love songs, so he found it hard to write about himself. Paul was immersed in his nostalgia-oriented "sweet" pop music. He was a songbird with a special gift for a melody, foot-tapping tempos, and uplifting segments. As an example, Paul wrote songs like "Yesterday," "Michelle," and "Yellow Submarine," and John wrote more philosophical – yet quite equal in popularity – songs such as "All You Need is Love," "Revolution," and "Nowhere Man." John's music had developed in a totally different direction than Paul's, toward the avant-garde and experimental. His songs were often dreamier and portrayed deeper messages through his lyrics. Obviously, Paul was able to come to terms with himself to be able to feel comfortable writing songs that did not include him. John felt that he needed a place to express his thoughts and concerns that he had not alleviated from his mind. During his childhood, John never really had any one to share his feelings with, which eventually led him to write more about himself in his lyrics. It was a way he could express his feelings without rejection. Lennon, therefore, was more of a poet, whose songs tended toward odd rhythms, melody lines of one or two notes, and a more angled, absurdist perspective on life. Overall, John's work was distinct and highly personalized. Even so, John admired McCartney's songs and the way that Paul could write songs like a craftsman, a talent that Lennon knew he lacked. Paul once commented on a certain trait that he liked about John's songwriting style: "The good thing about working with John is he didn't like to hang about too much. Didn't like to be bored, which is always a good instinct" (Hertsgaard 118). Having to sweat over a song, according to McCartney, is "Nearly a sign that it's not that good." His style proved to be very laid-back and allowed Paul to write songs worthy of the popular attention they received. Paul includes

a sample of his style as he explains, "Something like 'Yesterday,' I did the tune first and wrote words to that later. I called that 'Scrambled Egg' for a long time. I didn't have any words to it" (Miles 71).

Paul's style of writing was quite different, especially in comparison to John's. In fact, it was so obvious enough that many people seemed to notice. A writer from The New York Times included a statement about Paul's band, Wings, in the early 1970s. "I don't think we can expect anything deep or significant from him because he's just not that kind of artist. But good pop, yes, I'm sure we can expect that" (Jasper 8). Paul also commented on his own style, backing up what critics and others have been saying for years, "Mine are normally a bit soppier than John's. That's because I am a bit soppier than John" (Moritz 252). John added, "He [Paul] provided a lightness, an optimism, while I would always go for the sadness, the discords, the bluesy notes" (Hertsgaard 114). John Lennon and Paul McCartney were just different enough in their temperaments and musical instincts that they bring out the best in each other.

The idea for John and Paul to write songs to go on an album about their childhood memories of the Beatles back in Liverpool brought about a wonderful surprise. It was obvious that they showed radically different conceptions of the common theme of childhood. Together, they communicated a full range of human emotions, all conveyed through rich melodies and rhythms. The pairing of "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" resulted in two of the greatest Lennon/McCartney triumphs. These two songs perfectly displayed the stylistic differences between John Lennon and Paul McCartney. The comparison of these songs show one of the clearest examples of differing style that made Lennon and McCartney such an effective songwriting team. Lennon's contribution, "Strawberry Fields Forever," reflects a dismal, dreamy, haunting early life where he questions the sanity of the world, and himself. McCartney, however, offered "Penny Lane," which displays his past with a poppy beat and playful description of an overall happy childhood.

The main theme of "Strawberry Fields Forever" was taken from John's childhood experiences and his outlooks on life. "Strawberry Fields Forever" was written by John in Spain while acting in a movie, How I

Won the War, by Richard Lester. Writing the song, John remembered back to his childhood when he used to spend his time at the Salvation Army home near his house. The song includes a nostalgic view of the Salvation Army home in Woolton, where he and his lads used to play amongst the trees and ponder the many trials and tribulations of life. John recognized Strawberry Fields as a place where he could let his imagination run free. He soon found a short cut from his garden to the fields and it became one of his favorite places to which to escape. On the topic of "Strawberry Fields," Paul said, "Where we used to go and play in the garden kind of thing, so it was a kind of magical childhood place for him. We transformed in into the sort of psychedelic dream, so it was everybody's magic childhood place, instead of just ours" (Hertsgaard 204). The song ended up, like so many of his other songs, as a rumination on states of consciousness. Later in life, John never really had too much time to escape physically due to the Beatles' tight schedule, so it seemed as if he found a way to escape emotionally through his lyrics. Here, he brought back his childhood image of Strawberry Fields, and it is in this song where he, once again, lets his imagination run free.

The initial few lines of the first verse of the Lennon/McCartney song titled "Strawberry Fields Forever," became the chorus, which is repeated several times throughout the song. In "Strawberry Fields Forever," John first opens the listener up to himself, opens him up to a place where he is able to get away:

Let me take you down  
 'Cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
 Nothing is real  
 And nothing to get hungabout.  
 Strawberry Fields forever.  
 (Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

In the beginning, Lennon invites to "Take you down" to his level of thinking where one can understand his view of, and position in life. He wants to take the listener with him as he goes "to Strawberry Fields," a

place where, to him, "nothing is real." John believes that nothing is important enough that one should get worked up about. He wants his listeners to let themselves go and be consumed in his laid-back life of a childhood innocence.

Lennon comes back after the chorus to start his song off with a verse stating on of his own important life messages. In this verse, Lennon adds a statement about his internal conflict between living life as an ordinary civilian and being one of the most famous men in the world:

Living is easy with eyes closed  
 Misunderstanding all you see  
 It's getting hard to be someone but it all works out  
 It doesn't matter much to me.

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

Lennon's "Living is easy with eyes closed" statement explains that going through life without a care in the world allows one to be content in one's own world; but he will never be able to experience the good things in life, and nothing will make sense to him. He tries to explain that it was never easy to be famous, saying, "It's getting hard to be someone." He knows that he's gone through so much and has given his sanity to the world, but he never really regretted doing so, because "It all works out." He soon realizes that he's just let fame off the hook, making it sound easy. So, in a line, he sums up the idea that if he never ever was famous, he would not be enormously affected, because fame "never really mattered much" to him.

John opens up this next verse with a statement to his audience with a realization that displays his outlook of his position in his life:

No one I think is in my tree,  
 I mean it must be high or low.  
 That is you can't you know tune in.  
 But it's all right.

That is I think it's not too bad

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

He reveals that he knows nobody who is on his same wavelength. At the same time, he explains that he doesn't even know if his wavelength is good or bad, stating, "No one I think is in my tree/I mean it must be high or low." John once made a statement that, "Part of me suspects I'm a loser and part of me thinks I'm God almighty" (Hertsgaard 49). So, he knows that, "you can't you know tune in," if, even he, is unsure of his position in the world. He knows he cannot be located, but, "it's all right," because he enjoys being misunderstood. He realizes his generalization and quickly retracts it as soon as he figures out that being misunderstood isn't all it's cracked up to be, "That is I think it's not too bad."

Next, John tries to figure out what he understands about his own life, but fails to make any solid connections:

Always, no sometimes, think it's me,

But you know I know when it's a dream.

I think I know I mean a 'yes.'

But it's all wrong.

That is I think I disagree.

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

He starts off this verse vacillating between the idea that he, "Always, no sometimes, think it's me." What he is trying to say is that he knows when he is in complete control of what he does. John acts uncertain about some of the things he says, contradicting himself often when he catches himself generalizing and overestimating his perceptions. One is supposed to "know I know when it's a dream." Yet, he cannot complete a sentence without getting himself in check. He finds himself making a statement that he, himself, does not even know is true, "I think I know I mean a 'yes.'" He then throws his hands up in despair by

saying, "But it's all wrong." He finishes the verse by coming to terms with himself and realizing that everything he has just said is inaccurate, and he has to "disagree."

He finishes the song, with the title repeated twice, "Strawberry Fields Forever." In this title, he is trying to say that he will always remember his childhood. Even though he does not know where he stands, he knows that he would like to escape to a perfect life of innocence and fun in the sun, or maybe to some psychedelic fantasy world represented by stunning images of green fields full of red strawberries stretching out to infinity.

Paul's contribution, in respect to John's "Strawberry Fields Forever," is "Penny Lane," a compilation of his perception of childhood innocence and his experiences as a young lad of Liverpool. Although Paul's outlook is not as deep as John's, his lyrics are still exceptional. There is not much in them that makes the listener sit up in surprise, because, unlike "Strawberry Fields Forever" there are fewer figures of speech and the message is more straightforward. John once commented on Paul's confidence during the time of writing "Penny Lane," stating that the music was full of McCartney's usual optimism and exuberance (Hertsgaard 209). The lyrics show Paul's view of people's behavior during his childhood in Liverpool. He is trying to sum up, in words, how he felt about the people he grew up with. His character sketches are specific enough that the individuals spring to life instantly to our imagination, yet archetypal enough to sum up social reality. He created a scene that could have been taken from a child's picture book. The song displayed the characters very stereotypically. It was a symbol of innocence when everyone seemed friendly and the sun shone forever in the clear blue sky.

The first verse of Paul's "Penny Lane" creates a starting point where he will paint his retrospective pictures of his childhood along a lane named Penny:

In Penny Lane there is a barber showing photographs

Of ev'ry head he's had the pleasure to know.

And all the people that come and go

Stop and say "Hello."

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

In "Penny Lane," Paul remembers back to a barbershop, where the barber put up pictures of different hairstyles from which his customers could choose. These styles, being the only ones he offered, were the only heads "he's had the pleasure to know." With, "All the people that come and go/Stop and say 'Hello,'" Paul tries to describe the friendliness of Penny Lane by giving a stereotypical image of an innocent small town, where everybody is walking around, smiling, and greeting each other.

In the next verse, Paul continues his description of his characters with a small town banker who is the only one who thinks he is more than just "small town:"

On the corner is a banker with a motorcar.

The little children laugh at him behind his back.

And the banker never wears a mac

In the pouring rain – very strange.

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

He starts off describing a banker, who prizes and displays his possessions, one being his motorcar. Yet, he cannot even get respect from the immature society as "The little children laugh at him behind his back." The children laugh because he chooses, as an appearance-guided aristocrat, not to wear his "mac," which is a British rain hat, even in the greatest of downpours. Paul is quick to point out that this is, indeed, "very strange."

This instance is the first insertion of the chorus of the song. Different from many of his other choruses, throughout the song Paul changes a few of his lines to eliminate repetition. It is here where he describes the wonderful street, alluding to his childhood:

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes,

There beneath the blue suburban skies

I sit, and meanwhile back

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

In this chorus, Paul talks about his fondness of his childhood, and that his memories will eternally be “in my ears and in my eyes” as he remembers sweet, innocent, “blue suburban skies.” He catches himself drifting off as “I sit.” But, “meanwhile back,” there is something else he would like to say.

Paul’s next character description is about a local fireman. In four lines, he sums up the fireman’s entire personality by telling of his patriotism and perfectionism:

In Penny Lane there is a fireman with an hourglass

And in his pocket is a portrait of the Queen.

He likes to keep his fire engine clean,

It’s a clean machine.

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

He uses statements like, “In his pocket is a portrait of the Queen,” and tells how “He likes to keep his fire engine clean.” Paul, mockingly, describes it as “a clean machine.”

In the second chorus, Paul returns to his daydream about the wonders of his childhood and states that despite the large accomplishments the Beatles have made since their youth, he will never change:

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes

A four of fish and finger pies

In summer meanwhile back

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

He continues on to make a risqué joke – an immature sexual reference – to show he is still one out of “four of fish and finger pies.” He soon finds himself daydreaming about summer, but catches himself again to get back on track.

In the next verse, he questions a nurse’s behavior as she sells flowers on the sidewalk:

Behind the shelter in the middle of the roundabout

The pretty nurse is selling poppies from a tray.

And though she feels as if she's in a play

She is anyway.

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

Paul explains that "she feels as if she's in a play," by the way she is acting, just as a "pretty" nurse would.

What she doesn't realize is that she is putting on an act for nobody, and that she is only doing it to feel better about herself. He is trying to say that she does not need to act, because, in a play "she is anyway."

Meanwhile, back at the barbershop, Paul returns to create a gathering of some of his characters:

In Penny Lane, the barber shaves another customer,

We see the banker sitting waiting for a trim

And the fireman rushes in

From the pouring rain – very strange.

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

He returns to where "the banker is sitting waiting for a trim." Surprisingly, the fireman reveals a weak spot in his personality, where he is brave enough to walk through fires and would do anything for his country, "the fireman rushes in from the pouring rain." Paul also denotes this as being "very strange."

Paul ends the song with, yet, another upbeat statement of Penny Lane being forever with him:

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes

There beneath the blue suburban skies

Penny Lane!

(Lennon/McCartney, Magical).

This time, he catches himself before he goes off into tangents, dreaming about summertime or other fond memories. Instead, he realizes that those days are ones that he will never be able to get back and screams, "Penny Lane!" in despair.

John Lennon and Paul McCartney complemented each other by working together. From the beginning, John and Paul worked together. Paul first heard John at Woolton Parish Church Youth Club, when he was fifteen. They agreed on a favorite tune of the time, "Twenty Flight Rock" by Eddie Cochran, and Paul remembers showing John a couple of chords and lyrics that he had missed. The two boys collaborated in developing guitar techniques and musical arrangements in the popular rock 'n' roll idiom. They, together, performed at clubs for a short time before adding new members: Stewart Sutcliff, Pete Best, and George Harrison. Hertzgaard notes, "John and Paul were rivals as well as friends, competitors as well as partners, critics as well as soulmates...their songwriting partnership was like a love affair." Lennon once said, "But the affair always had an edge to it" (Hertzgaard 111). The rivalry between the two not only helped their writing abilities, but it helped propel the fast musical progression that was so important to the Beatles' career. Lennon and McCartney were very competitive. It was this, initially, that made them exceptional songwriters. They learned very quickly and got ideas from each other. Meeting John made Paul try for deeper lyrics; and if he had never met John, it may not have been possible for Paul to have ever written a meaningful song in his career. John's influence held in check more facile and sentimental aspects of Paul's songwriting. On the other hand, Paul's presence kept John from drifting too far into obscurity and self-indulgence.

They wrote many songs together. John and Paul wrote many songs "eyeball to eyeball," as they did for many songs in the early days of the Beatles. John adds, "There were more joint compositions in the early years, partly because the demand on us was tremendous. They'd want a record, a single, every three months, and we'd do it in twelve hours in a hotel or a van" (Hertzgaard 118). In contrast to the words of some of his critics' comments, Paul adds,

John and I don't work on the Rodgers and Hart pattern, doing music and one doing lyrics. He writes a whole song on his own, or I write a whole song on my own, or if we do a song together.

Either he might do the words and I do the music, or the other way around. (Moritz 252)

On another occasion, Paul also states, "We'd kind of write 80% together and the other 20% for me were things like 'Yesterday' and for John, things like 'Strawberry Fields Forever' that he'd mainly write on his own. And I did certain stuff on my own" (Miles 71). Indications of their collaborative efforts are evident in their songs. Some say that a key to find out who wrote each part of the song is found by noting who sang it. This observation is not always true. Take "Michelle" for instance. McCartney sings lead for the whole song, but Lennon was the one who wrote the middle eight. This happened on a number of occasions. Two examples are "We Can Work it Out" and "A Day in the Life." Paul wrote the verses to "We Can Work it Out" and John wrote the middle eight. It was the exact opposite with "A Day in the Life." John makes a statement about the differences of view: "In 'We Can Work it Out,' Paul did the first half, I did the middle-eight. But you've got Paul writing...real optimistic, y'know, and me, impatient: 'Life is very short...'" (Lennon 150).

In "We Can Work it Out," Paul's message makes an urgent call for reconciliation to an unnamed partner and provides a pathway to show how he deals with his problems. His portion of the song seems quite more substantial than John's impatient warning of the shortness of life during the song's middle-eight.

The first verse begins just as any discussion would, with a suggestion that Paul gives as he starts to deal with his disagreements:

Try to see it my way

Do I have to keep on talking 'till I can't go on?

While you see it your way,

Run the risk of knowing that our love may soon be gone.

We can work it out. We can work it out.

(Lennon/McCartney, Past Masters)

Paul knows that he is an optimistic thinker, which is why he wants his partner in the song to “Try to see it my way.” He does not want to “keep on talking ‘till I can’t go on.” He is afraid that if he lets his partner do the talking, he will “Run the risk” of losing his love. He then pleads for a compromise by twice repeating, “We can work it out.”

The second verse begins the same as the first, with another piece of advice from Paul:

Think of what I’m saying,  
 You can get it wrong and still you think that it’s alright.  
 Think of what I’m saying,  
 We can work it out and get it straight or say goodnight.  
 We can work it out. We can work it out.

(Lennon/McCartney, Past Masters)

Without the slightest bit of rest, Paul continues to urge his partner to “Think of what I’m saying,” for he does not understand why his partner does not care if he is wrong or not, because, “You can get it wrong and still you think that it’s alright.” Once again, he tries to get his partner to listen to “what I’m saying,” because the situation is down to the last straw. The outcome is either black or white; they can either resolve their petty problems, or they can give up, “We can work it out and get it straight or say goodnight.” Again, Paul twice states, “We can work it out.”

The middle-eight is Lennon’s portion of the song:

Life is very short, and there’s no time,  
 For fussing and fighting my friend,  
 I have always thought that it’s a crime,  
 So I will ask you once again.

(Lennon/McCartney, Past Masters)

His pessimism shines with a deathly glow when he comes right out to state that "Life is very short," and he backs up Paul's point, in other words, that "there's no time/For fussing and fighting, my friend." Lennon's next line brings an opinion in which he explains that he has always thought that "it's a crime" to waste your life arguing. John then adds a line to serve as a path for Paul's next verse with, "So I will ask you once again."

Paul comes back from John's sullen middle-eight with his third verse, once again beginning with another suggestion:

Try to see it my way  
 Only time will tell if I am right or I am wrong,  
 While you see it your way,  
 There's a chance that we may fall apart before too long.

(Lennon/McCartney, Past Masters)

He starts off this verse by persuading his upset partner to again, "Try to see it my way." Paul is trying to explain that there really is nothing to lose, because, "Only time will tell if I am right or I am wrong." He then goes back and attempts to make his partner lose faith in their own predictions by stating that if they both see it his partner's way, they will be wasting their time and then there will be "a chance that we may fall apart before too long."

Lennon comes back with his middle-eight and repeats his observations of the shortness of life. After which, Paul repeats his last verse as if the time that he and his partner have to reconcile is even shorter than before. He finishes up the song with a final plea, repeated twice, "We can work it out."

It was typical of Paul that, when faced with what could be the end of a relationship, he did not retreat crying to his room, but came back with a positive slogan, "We Can Work it Out." The slightly downbeat middle-eight, with intimations of mortality, added by John, complemented Paul's lyrics by adding an abrupt realization of mortality. Paul's plea for compromise and John's rejection of needless feuding, applies

equally well to human relationships in general, from kids feuding endlessly about nothing, to couples, and to adults dealing with the social strife between classes and races. Although the focal person(s) of “We Can Work It Out” were never clearly pointed out, it is general enough to be able to be understood by a general population.

Another song that showed how Lennon and McCartney used their respective talents together was a song called “A Day in the Life.” This song was the final piece on one of The Beatles’ greatest albums, Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. Hertsgaard once commented on “A Day in the Life” by stating that it may be the best song that shows the Lennon/McCartney artistic style collaboration; their contributions perfectly complemented each other. John solidifies this comment by confirming that “Paul and I were definitely working together, especially on ‘A Day in the Life’” (Hertsgaard 2). The main lyrics of the song were composed of ideas from articles on the front page of a daily newspaper. John remembers back to the time during his composition of the song:

I was reading the paper one day and noticed two stories. One was about the Guinness heir who killed himself in a car. That was the main headline story. He died in a London car crash. On the next page was a story about four thousand potholes in the streets of Blackburn, Lancashire that needed to be filled. Paul’s contribution was the beautiful little lick in the song, ‘I’d love to turn you on,’ that he’d had floating around his head and couldn’t use. I thought it was a damn good piece of work. (Hertsgaard 3)

Paul also added the middle-eight, of which the two agreed was a good representation of the hustle and bustle of modern society life based on Paul’s memories of running to school in the morning. It made an ideal counterpoint to John’s dreamlike commentary on society’s absurdity.

John opens up the song with the first verse, and begins as if he is telling a story in conversation with a colleague:

I read the news today oh boy

About a lucky man who made the grade  
 And thought the news was rather sad.  
 Well I just had to laugh  
 I saw the photograph  
 He blew his mind out in a car  
 He didn't notice that the light's had changed  
 A crowd of people stood and stared  
 He'd seen his face before  
 Nobody was really sure  
 If he was from the House of Lords.  
 (Lennon/McCartney, Sgt. Pepper)

He starts off with a realistic statement, "I read the news today," as he names the source of his inspiration. He then follows with "oh boy" to apply a certain sarcastic disbelief to what he is about to tell the listener. The first article he presents him with is about a "lucky man who made the grade," coming from an article about the Guinness heir who was born into a lucky life and had everything that money could buy. John then reveals that he had a chuckle with the article, because of the photograph. He finds it ironic that the heir probably never once thought that he would be one to die early in his life. "He blew his mind out in a car," John informs you. A momentary, all too human lapse—"He didn't notice that the lights had changed."—and he was gone. In the moment of death, all delusion is shattered; everyone is equal. Lennon clinches the point with the wistful, mocking epitaph "Nobody was really sure/If he was from the House of Lords." The crowd gathered as if "They'd seen his face before" but they can't place it; in the broad scheme of things, he is hardly as important as he thought he was. It seems as if the wealth and social position, that was so important to the heir and larger society, is revealed as being trivial and fleeting.

John begins his next verse, explaining to the listener a situation where he was separated from society by thoughts or previous actions:

I saw a film today oh boy  
 The English army had just won the war  
 A crowd of people turned away  
 But I just had to look  
 Having read the book.  
 I'd love to turn you on

(Lennon/McCartney, Sgt. Pepper)

In this next verse, John mentions a film that he recently had the pleasure of viewing and, "oh boy," shows once again that he is almost stunned by the stupidity he sees in such a piece of work. The movie he has just seen is where "The English army had just won the war." Ironically, this time the "crowd of people turned away" because they would rather stare at one's misfortune that is actually none of their business. Yet, they are so offended by a movie, that they must look away. John returns with the statement, "I just had to look," to explain that he has an excuse to view what society has turned down for the simple reason that he has "read the book." Paul ends the verse with a line that John admired, "I'd love to turn you on." He would love to just wake up society to a life that they would have no petty problems from which they would have to turn away.

Next, is Paul's upbeat portrait of the alienating hustle and bustle of modern day urban life. This verse makes the ideal counterpoint to John's gently ominous, dreamlike commentary on the hollow absurdity of everything that makes this world go 'round:

Woke up, fell out of bed,  
 Dragged a comb across my head  
 Found my way upstairs and drank a cup,

And looking up I noticed I was late.  
 Found my coat and grabbed my hat  
 Made the bus in seconds flat  
 Found my way upstairs and had a smoke,  
 And somebody spoke and I went into a dream  
 (Lennon/McCartney, Sgt. Pepper)

These middle eight lines blatantly describe Paul's memories of running to school in the morning, going through all of his daily routines, but eventually disregarding school altogether as just another place where your mind would fall asleep.

John's final verse mocks the absurdity of modern society and explains, in these lines, his disapproval of society's choice of actions:

I heard the news today oh boy  
 Four thousand holes in Blackburn Lancashire  
 And thought the holes were rather small  
 They had to count them all  
 Now they know how many holes it takes  
 To fill the Albert Hall.  
 I'd love to turn you on.  
 (Lennon/McCartney, Sgt. Pepper)

Equally blinded by the basic problems of a nearby street as they are the death of a fellow human being, the papers insist on tabulating the precise number of holes in the roads of Blackburn, Lancashire, even "though the holes were rather small." No wonder the singer would "love to turn you on." To see his fellow human beings sleepwalking so numbly through the glorious richness that life offers is too much to bear. Thus subtle outrage concludes this masterpiece, known as "A Day in the Life."

Nearing the breakup of the band, the Lennon/McCartney collaboration began to step offbeat. In the late sixties, Paul started to take over production of most of the songs and the overall future of The Beatles. Paul and John started to go their separate ways. Each of the Beatles started to begin careers as solo artists. But even when they were growing apart as writers, there was still that balance to the Lennon/McCartney collaboration. The individual contributions to joint pieces may not have been many, but they mattered, and helped shape the songs. They played off each other, helping each other make the song perfect. John made a statement about the later years of their collaboration by saying:

I didn't write any of that [Magical Mystery Tour] except 'Walrus;' I'd accept it and you'd already have five or six songs, so I'd think, fuck it, I don't really care whether I was on or not, I convinced myself it didn't matter, and so for a period if you didn't invite me to be on an album personally, if you didn't say: 'write some more 'cause we like your work,' I wasn't going to fight! (Fawcett 92)

It was obvious that John was upset about the breakdown of something that was almost too good to be true, but he was too tired to tag on the bottom of McCartney's pants.

Despite the rocky breakup of the Beatles, it was obvious that the lyrics of Lennon and McCartney were well-received. The diversity between the two of them allowed their popularity to reach an entire spectrum of tastes. Their fans reacted in a very positive way to their music. The songs written by Lennon and McCartney had an enormous effect on society and pop culture in the 1960's. Their lyrics gave voice to their hearts of their fans. John and Paul's free-spirited approach to songwriting gave their music a freshness and originality that made both of them such great artists. Hertsgaard commented, that "The foundation of the Beatles' extraordinary popular appeal and artistic stature was always the songwriting of John Lennon and Paul McCartney" (109). An observation was also made by Moritz, "The Beatles were known as a phenomenon transcending social classes, age groups, intellectual levels, and geographic areas" (225). It was true; for wherever they toured, teenagers mobbed the Beatles as if they were on an unrelentless pursuit. Thousands of fans screaming were almost deafening to the ears of other fans and

even the Beatles themselves. Even if they were inclined to do so, the Beatles could never make a good recording of their concerts, because there was altogether too much screaming by the fans. Nothing else could be heard but the crying and yelling of teenagers that packed the event.

Their popularity was unprecedented; they could never escape the cloud of attention. John Lennon's remark about the Beatles' being more popular than Jesus is a perfect example of the degree of attention that was given to these four musicians. Lennon's statement was widely regarded as an attack on religion and led to the banning of Beatle records by radio stations in Spain, South Africa, and the United States. After this comment, many Beatle fans that were offended by Lennon's remark started gathering Beatle memorabilia from other "Beatle haters" and had group burnings of the items. The Ku Klux Klan rallied in the parking lot before one of their concerts to protest the performance of these so-called "antichrists." Well-annoyed by the aftermath of what seems to be a harmless generalization, John states, "You can say things like that in England. People listen a bit more. In America they hold everything you say against you" (Moritz 253). This statement shows the difference between the popularity given by England and America. In their "homeland," more people seemed to understand what he was trying to get across to the public. Also reacting to the allegations placed on Lennon's statement, Paul comments on how the Beatles' image and popularity should not get in the way of what they say, "People should not take all our interviews seriously" (Moritz 253).

The Beatles' lyrics affected their fans greatly. It was once rumored that Paul McCartney had died in a car accident in the mid-sixties. An article from Time Magazine noted that "since the rumor spread of McCartney's death, Beatle fans have diligently parsed the albums of their heroes for clues corroborating what they already wanted to believe; of course, they found them, usually in forced interpretations of the lyrics" (Beatles #5). Paul comments on the popular idea of his fans' lyrical analysis of his songs by stating, "Personally, I think you can put any interpretation you want on anything, but when someone suggests that 'Can't Buy Me Love' is about a prostitute, I draw the line. That's going too far" (Miles 80).

Overall, John and Paul felt satisfied with the music that they had written. Paul, during an interview for the Beatles Anthology revealed, "I'm really glad that most of our songs dealt with love, peace, understanding, y'know, it really did. If you look back, there's hardly any one that says, 'Go on, kids. Tell 'em all to sod off, leave your parents.' It's all very 'All You Need is Love' – John's give peace a chance' – there was a very good spirit behind it all" (Anthology). Thus, it is the spirit of the Beatles that lives on, the spirit of life, of celebrating the goodness and beauty of one's happy childhood or of creating a valuable contribution from a childhood less fortunate, a childhood of pain.

They were two very distinct men, with two distinct styles; together, one in heart, one in mind. Their music is the proof.

## Lyrics

### “Strawberry Fields Forever”

Let me take you down  
'Cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real  
And nothing to get hungabout.  
Strawberry Fields forever.  
Living is easy with eyes closed  
Misunderstanding all you see  
It's getting hard to be someone but it all works out  
It doesn't matter much to me.  
Let me take you down  
'Cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real  
And nothing to get hungabout.  
Strawberry Fields forever.  
No one I think is in my tree,  
I mean it must be high or low.  
That is you can't you know tune in.  
But it's all right.  
That is I think it's not too bad.  
Let me take you down  
'Cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real  
And nothing to get hungabout.  
Strawberry Fields forever.  
Always, no sometimes, think it's me,  
But you know I know when it's a dream.  
I think I know I mean a 'yes.'  
But it's all wrong.  
That is I think I disagree.  
Let me take you down  
'Cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real  
And nothing to get hungabout.  
Strawberry Fields forever.  
Strawberry Fields forever.  
(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

## “Penny Lane”

In Penny Lane there is a barber showing photographs  
Of ev'ry head he's had the pleasure to know.  
And all the people that come and go  
Stop and say "Hello."  
On the corner is a banker with a motorcar.  
The little children laugh at him behind his back.  
And the banker never wears a mac in the pouring rain – very strange.  
Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes,  
There beneath the blue suburban skies  
I sit, and meanwhile back  
In Penny Lane there is a fireman with an hourglass  
And in his pocket is a portrait of the Queen.  
He likes to keep his fire engine clean,  
It's a clean machine.  
Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes  
A four of fish and finger pies  
In summer meanwhile back  
Behind the shelter in the middle of the roundabout  
The pretty nurse is selling poppies from a tray.  
And though she feels as if she's in a play  
She is anyway.  
In Penny Lane, the barber shaves another customer,  
We see the banker sitting waiting for a trim  
And the fireman rushes in  
From the pouring rain – very strange.  
Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes,  
There beneath the blue suburban skies  
I sit, and meanwhile  
Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes,  
There beneath the blue suburban skies  
Penny Lane!  
(Lennon/McCartney, Magical)

## “We Can Work it out”

Try to see it my way  
Do I have to keep on talking 'till I can't go on?  
While you see it your way,  
Run the risk of knowing that our love may soon be gone.  
We can work it out. We can work it out.  
Think of what I'm saying,  
You can get it wrong and still you think that it's alright.  
Think of what I'm saying,  
We can work it out and get it strait or say goodnight.  
We can work it out. We can work it out.  
Life is very short, and there's no time,  
For fussing and fighting my friend,  
I have always thought that it's a crime,  
So I will ask you once again.  
Try to see it my way  
Only time will tell if I am right or I am wrong,  
While you see it your way,  
There's a chance that we may fall apart before too long.  
Life is very short, and there's no time,  
For fussing and fighting my friend,  
I have always thought that it's a crime,  
So I will ask you once again.  
Try to see it my way,  
Only time will tell if I am right or I am wrong,  
While you see it your way,  
There's a chance that we may fall apart before too long.  
We can work it out. We can work it out.  
(Lennon/McCartney, Past Masters)

## “A Day in the Life”

I read the news today oh boy  
About a lucky man who made the grade  
And thought the news was rather sad.  
Well I just had to laugh  
I saw the photograph  
He blew his mind out in a car  
He didn't notice that the light's had changed  
A crowd of people stood and stared  
He'd seen his face before  
Nobody was really sure  
If he was from the House of Lords.  
I saw a film today oh boy  
The English army had just won the war  
A crowd of people turned away  
But I just had to look  
Having read the book.  
I'd love to turn you on  
Woke up, fell out of bed,  
Dragged a comb across my head  
Found my way upstairs and drank a cup,  
And looking up I noticed I was late.  
Found my coat and grabbed my hat  
Made the bus in seconds flat  
Found my way upstairs and had a smoke,  
And somebody spoke and I went into a dream  
I heard the news today oh boy  
Four thousand holes in Blackburn Lancashire  
And thought the holes were rather small  
They had to count them all  
Now they know how many holes it takes  
To fill the Albert hall.  
I'd love to turn you on.  
(Lennon/McCartney, Sgt. Pepper)

## Chronological U.S. Album Releases

Release Date	Album	Label
01/20/1964	MEET THE BEATLES!	Capitol
04/10/1964	THE BEATLES' SECOND ALBUM	Capitol
06/26/1964	A HARD DAY'S NIGHT (Original Soundtrack Album)	Ud. Artists
12/15/1964	BEATLES '65	Capitol
03/22/1965	THE EARLY BEATLES	Capitol
06/14/1965	BEATLES VI	Capitol
08/13/1965	HELP! (Original Soundtrack Album)	Capitol
12/06/1965	RUBBER SOUL	Capitol
06/20/1966	"YESTERDAY" ...AND TODAY	Capitol
08/08/1966	REVOLVER	Capitol
06/02/1967	SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND	Capitol
11/27/1967	MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR	Capitol
11/25/1968	THE BEATLES (White Album)	Apple
01/13/1969	YELLOW SUBMARINE (Original Soundtrack Album)	Apple
10/01/1969	ABBEEY ROAD	Apple
02/26/1970	HEY JUDE (also called: THE BEATLES AGAIN)	Apple
05/18/1970	LET IT BE (Original Soundtrack Album)	Apple
04/02/1973	THE BEATLES / 1962-1966 (Red Album)	Apple
04/02/1973	THE BEATLES / 1967-1970 (Blue Album)	Apple
03/07/1988	PAST MASTERS VOLUME 1	Capitol
03/07/1988	PAST MASTERS VOLUME 2	Capitol
11/30/1994	THE BEATLES LIVE AT THE B.B.C.	Capitol
11/21/1995	ANTHOLOGY 1	Capitol
03/18/1996	ANTHOLOGY 2	Capitol
10/29/1996	ANTHOLOGY 3	Capitol

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