

Wanda Jackson: Rock's First Queen – Grade 10

For too long, the history of rock 'n' roll has been written as though the entire genre were just a boy's club. According to the traditional story, rock started with "Rocket 88" by Ike Turner and Jackie Brentson, became immensely popular with Elvis Presley, and became art with the Beatles. In other words, the history of rock 'n' roll is one of men influencing other men.

Recent scholarship has tried to reverse this a little bit. Writers have argued that female singers at least influenced people such as Elvis and Chuck Berry. They have cited gospel singers such as Mahalia Jackson and blues singers such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. Other writers have reminded us of the work of pioneering girl groups in the 1960s, groups such as the Shirelles and Motown's the Supremes. But very few have written about the women who bridge the gap between influences and outcomes, the women who were there while rock 'n' roll was being born and who helped make rock 'n' roll the cultural force it became. By far, the most influential of these women was Wanda Jackson.

Wanda Jackson's musical odyssey began in Oklahoma City in 1954, months before Elvis would release the seminal "That's All Right," the first rock 'n' roll song to find a white audience and the song that would make him a star. There, Jackson was discovered by the country singer Hank Snow. In Nashville, she recorded a few songs with Snow's band, one of which became a top country hit. However, Capitol Records, for which Jackson recorded the songs, did not sign her, telling her that girls did not sell records.

Jackson did not crumble under misogyny, though, and she signed with Decca Records instead. There, her career took off. She toured with Elvis, who helped teach her how to play rock 'n' roll. Jackson took her country roots with her and combined it with the rhythm & blues and rock 'n' roll Elvis taught her, as well as the western swing she had seen at dancehalls across her native Oklahoma. She melded these diverse influences to play a distinct-sounding rockabilly, the same type of music popularized by "wild men" such as Jerry Lee Lewis, the young Johnny Cash, Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, and, yes, the King of Rock 'n' Roll himself, Elvis Presley. Jackson was the first female star of the new music genre, and she became so prominent and popular in the rockabilly scene that she was called the Queen of Rockabilly.

Rockabilly is a music genre that does not get a lot of play in the present, but its influence cannot be overlooked. The term is a portmanteau of the terms "rock 'n' roll" and "hillbilly," as the music was played mostly by poor southern whites and seemed to blend varying degrees of rock 'n' roll and country or "hillbilly" music. Though rockabilly is not popular today, there would be no other rock genres if there had been no rockabilly music. It was rockabilly that first united the Beatles. The Rolling Stones' first big hit was a cover of a rockabilly song by Buddy Holly, "Not Fade Away." Later punk rockers would look back on rockabilly when they formed their raucous and raw sound. Even rap music shares some commonalities with rockabilly, as rockabilly songs usually used a repeating rhythm and beat and even had lyrics that were spoken or shouted at times, rather than sung. Rockabilly was also the first type of rock 'n' roll to get

any airplay nationally, not just in the South. Essentially, it is rockabilly that people really think of when they remember early rock 'n' roll and the men who made it. And, if the men are considered influential today, Wanda Jackson's personal influence may be even greater.

In addition to merely being present at rock's early stages, Jackson helped make the rock concert what it is today; indeed her stage presence helped glamorize rock 'n' roll and country. She wore long earrings, high heels, fringe dresses, and stage makeup. Jackson was the first woman to make the music an experience to see as well as hear and feel. More, she proved early on that rock 'n' roll had a place for women in it. Women could play supposed men's music and play it as well as them. Jackson also showed that women could find success in the industry. She had several hits, including "Let's Have a Party," "Tongue Tied," and "Riot in the Cell Block No. 9." But the songs were more than just hits; they were anthems of a new kind of woman; they possessed a rawness that was unique for a woman in any capacity.

Unlike other early female rock artists such as Leslie Gore or Connie Francis, Jackson was assertive in her songs. Her songs weren't about begging a man to come and save her or about the "typical female desire" to settle down into domesticity. Instead, Jackson's songs covered the same subjects as male rock 'n' roll songs. In "Who Shot Sam," she recounts the story of a woman who shoots a man out of jealousy. In "Hot Dog That Made Him Mad," Jackson sings of a girl teaching her boyfriend a lesson about taking her for granted and being too domineering. For the late 1950s and early 1960s, these were hugely progressive songs. The style, attitude, and mere existence of Wanda Jackson had a remarkable influence on every other woman rocker. Jackson showed and continues to show women that there was a place for women in rock 'n' roll and that their place did not have to be one of subservience. Wanda Jackson was rock's first queen and for good reason.

Sources:

Dregni, Michael. *Rockabilly: The Twang Heard 'Round the World*. New York: Voyageur Press, 2011. Book.

1) In the first two paragraphs, the author does each of the following EXCEPT

- A. suggests that some historical correction has occurred
- B. makes a distinction between influences and participants
- C. refutes a standard interpretation of events
- D. argues against the import of male performers in music
- E. introduces his or her main argument

Question Type: Reasoning

2) According to the author, the main difference between Mahalia Jackson and Wanda Jackson is

- A. they both were influenced by blues singers, but only the latter sang the blues
- B. the former influenced early male rock 'n' roll artists, while the latter was a contemporary of them
- C. the former influenced later girl groups, while the latter was influenced by them
- D. they both were influences on later female rock 'n' roll artists, but only Wanda Jackson also influenced men
- E. the former came before Elvis Presley did, while the latter started her career after Presley made it big

Question Type: Reasoning

3) Which of the following puts the events in Wanda Jackson's life in proper order?

- I. She is named the Queen of Rockabilly.
- II. She records with Capitol Records.
- III. She tours with Elvis Presley.
- IV. She signs with Decca Records.
- V. She meets Hank Snow.

- A. I, II, III, IV, V
- B. V, II, III, I, IV
- C. V, IV, III, II, I
- D. III, V, II, III, I
- E. V, II, IV, III, I

Question Type: Research

4) Paragraph 4 primarily describes Wanda Jackson's music as

- A. an eclectic blend
- B. an aggressive assault
- C. a thunderous sound
- D. a spirited effort
- E. an inevitable concoction

Question Type: Reasoning

5) Based on the use of the word portmanteau in paragraph 5, which of the following provides an example of a portmanteau?

- A. BRB
- B. redder
- C. guesstimate
- D. neat-o
- E. lexicon

Question Type: Vocabulary

6) According to the passage, rockabilly music was

- A. made by combining country music with rock 'n' roll
- B. played by Gene Vincent and Elvis Presley
- C. influential on the Beatles and Rolling Stones
- D. more popular a half century ago than it is today
- E. All of the above are true

Question Type: Research

7) The author most likely puts quotation marks around "typical female desire" in paragraph 7 to

- A. show how Wanda Jackson's songs fit in with the time period that created them
- B. emphasize that the author does not agree with the phrase
- C. cite an authority by using a direct quotation
- D. underscore the influence Wanda Jackson had on other female singers
- E. highlight the types of songs that other rockabilly artists played in the late 1950s

Question Type: Reasoning

- 8) The author's primary purpose in writing this passage was most likely to
- A. prove that Wanda Jackson paved the way for rockabilly to become mainstream
 - B. refute the argument that there was no glamour on the early rock 'n' roll scene
 - C. correct a misconception about the history of rock 'n' roll music
 - D. demonstrate how common women artists were to rock 'n' roll music
 - E. argue that Wanda Jackson was more influential on music than Elvis Presley was

Question Type: Reasoning

From a Window – Grade 11

He could see them from his bedroom window, his mother with that man. They were walking back from their date on Grand Avenue, arm in arm, Mr. Collins in a tweed suit, his mother in a violet and daffodil silk dress that seemed to sparkle in the sun, radiating opalescence around the staid though stately landscape below. It was spring, but it was still early enough in spring that nothing was quite in bloom, meaning the ground below was still festering the deathly browns of winter, browns that Jameson now noted were not dissimilar from the tans of Mr. Collins' suit. Jameson watched as Mr. Collins guided Jameson's mother around a puddle and came to a stop in front of the adjacent property, the mansion home of Jameson's aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Longfellow Stanton. Mr. Collins looked up at the property then turned his date to the vacant lot across Summit Avenue. He gestured generally toward it, and Jameson's mother bobbed her head.

Mr. Collins was not of Summit Avenue originally. He was not even from St. Paul, Jameson knew. Instead, he was from somewhere out in the country, some Podunk village out near Sauk Rapids. He had known Jameson's father, however, as both had attended college in New Haven at the same time. Despite having little wealth, Mr. Collins had some connection with a high-ranking collegiate recruiter, and Mr. Collins and the late Jameson Exley, Sr. had both played on the football team, where Mr. Collins had apparently starred. Since college, Mr. Collins' fortunes had risen, while Jameson's own family's had fallen. Railroads were gradually losing customers to automobiles, and Mr. Collins had done quite well for himself in oil, the fuel for the Exley family's demise. So it was with special horror that Jameson regarded Mr. Collins' courtship of his widowed mother. Not only was the man responsible for his family's ruin, but the connection to his father made the courtship seem a perverse sort of betrayal. Jameson would have none of it, and he had frequently voiced his complaints to his mother.

"Who does he think he is to put stakes in St. Paul? Does he think anyone can just move onto the finest street in the upper Midwest with impunity?"

"What would Papa say if he could see that rube making improper ogles at his bride?"

"I don't care how much money he has earned. The man has no class. You can't just buy class."

"Mother, I am not jealous of your affections. I am a grown man after all. I just think it's disrespectful to me to show yourself in front of the world with that man."

But the complaints fell on a deaf ear. Mr. Collins had intrigued Jameson's mother since she had first met him at her own wedding to Jameson, Sr. twenty years prior. And when he had arrived in St. Paul in the autumn, intrigue had turned to love, then to something beyond. And now, one dozen springs after Jameson, Sr.'s death to Tuberculosis, she was besotted with Mr. Collins. While Mr. Collins worried about the obvious distaste Jameson had for him, she promised him that it too would give way to affection for Mr. Collins in time. "He's a stubborn boy," she assured him, "but he's not cruel."

Mr. Collins was not sure, of course, but he could only trust that she was right. His own daughter adored Jameson's mother and wished nothing but the best for her widower father. She saw nothing improper about their courtship and had accompanied the lovers on their automobile rides in the winter. Mr. Collins had invited Jameson on several of those jaunts, but Jameson had always declined the invitations in his curt albeit formal, polite manner. He wondered if Jameson would be as icy when Mr. Collins' new house across the street were built, at which time he was hoping Jameson's mother would take his hand in marriage and live there with him.

Jameson could only look on in disgust as Mr. Collins finished gesturing at the vacant lot and his mother put her hand in Mr. Collins' hand. Hand in hand, they continued their stroll toward her own home. She stopped in front of her own gate and turned as Mr. Collins kissed the back of her hand. Jameson cringed at the sight, even while he continued to stare. His mother stared at the upstairs of the house and said something to Mr. Collins that Jameson could not possibly make out but that seemed to indicate that she did not wish him to do that again. Jameson smirked, wondering if perhaps she had grown tired of Mr. Collins after all.

But Jameson's smirk quickly dissipated. His mother pointed up at Jameson's window and took Mr. Collins's hand in hers. They both waved at Jameson, who remained ever aloof. He pretended neither to see them nor to understand what their wave might represent. Instead, Jameson simply continued to stare out over their heads, past the factories in the distance and into the low dusk of spring. He was convincing himself that the present were not what it was and that the future would not be as he knew it would be. Instead, he was looking over the heads of his mother and her date into the imagined future of the past, the time that existed in the fevered fancies of his youth but that he now understood could not possibly exist anymore.

1) In the first paragraph, the narrator's language implies that Jameson associates

- A. Mr. Collins with dullness and his mother with excitement
- B. spring with rebirth and winter with colors
- C. his mother with colors and Mr. Collins with fright
- D. his mother with life and Mr. Collins with death
- E. Mr. Collins with pain and his mother with love

Question Type: Reasoning

2) Jameson's house is located on

- A. Summit Avenue in St. Paul
- B. Summit Avenue in New Haven
- C. Summit Avenue in Sauk Rapids
- D. Grand Avenue in St. Paul
- E. Grand Avenue in Sauk Rapids

Question Type: Research

3) One of Jameson's central objections to Mr. Collins's courtship of Jameson's mother is that Jameson believes Mr. Collins

- A. has purchased the vacant lot across the street from Jameson's house
- B. is too poor to adequately provide for his mother
- C. is responsible for the death of Jameson's father
- D. has betrayed the vow he made to his late wife
- E. has profited from an industry that has harmed Jameson's own family

Question Type: Research

4) The quotations in paragraphs 3 – 6 are most likely

- A. questions to which Jameson has not yet received answers
- B. samples of the types of complaints Jameson has made to his mother
(CORRECT)
- C. examples of the thoughts Jameson has had about his mother's relationship
- D. rhetorical questions posed by the narrator about Jameson's mother
- E. snippets of the conversations others have had with Jameson's mother

Question Type: Reasoning

5) As used in paragraph 7, the word besotted most nearly belongs in which of the following word groups?

- A. wary, leery, chary
- B. exhilarated, intoxicated, feverish
- C. interested, intrigued, riveted
- D. tarnished, sullied, blackened
- E. infatuated, enamored, smitten

Question Type: Vocabulary

6) At the time Jameson watches them from his window, Jameson's mother and Mr. Collins

- A. have agreed to get married but known each for decades
- B. have agreed to get married but known each other for less than six months
- C. have been dating for less than six months but known each other since college
- D. have been dating less than six months but known each other for decades
- E. have been dating for twelve years but known each other for decades

Question Type: Research

7) Based on the final paragraph, Jameson

- A. is trying to deny the truth to himself
- B. does not plan to move into Mr. Collins' new house
- C. is beginning to accept Mr. Collins
- D. does not recognize the changes in his world
- E. is no longer going to be polite to his mother

Question Type: Reasoning

8) Each of the following is true of the passage EXCEPT

- I. It uses the third-person omniscient voice.
- II. It makes allusions to Greek mythology.
- III. It uses the third-person limited voice.
- IV. It uses foreshadowing.

- A. I and II
- B. I and IV
- C. II and III
- D. III and IV
- E. II, III, and IV

Question Type: Reasoning

- 9) How is Jameson described in the passage? Write a paragraph about the kind of person you believe Jameson to be. What has his life been like?
- 10) What role does social class play in this story? What role does it play in relationships in your community?
- 11) This passage makes use of vivid imagery. How does that strengthen your understanding of the story?

Venus: Earth's Evil Twin – Grade 6

You look up in the night sky and see something different. While most of the objects look like little yellow balls, one is a robin's egg blue. It appears brighter and larger than other objects in the sky. You wonder what this large blue object is. Is it some sort of alien ship? No, of course not. Is it a blue star? That doesn't make sense. Stars are yellow. But what could it be?

It's actually the closest planet to Earth, Venus. In addition to being closer to Earth than any other planet, Venus is also very similar to Earth. It is almost the same size as Earth, for instance. And, like Earth, it also has an atmosphere. But, even stranger, Venus is made up of almost the exact same materials as Earth. Because of this, it contains mountains, volcanoes, sand, and it at one time likely contained water too. In this sense, Venus is almost like a twin to Earth.

But Venus is unlike Earth in one major way. It is incredibly dangerous for life. Venus's surface temperature is at least 462° Celsius. To put that in perspective, water boils on Earth at 100° Celsius. If you could stand on Venus's surface, you would probably burn up in just a few seconds! So, if we consider Venus Earth's twin, it must be the evil one. But Venus was not always like this.

Runaway Greenhouse Effect

Scientists have an explanation for why Venus is so warm. Around 4 billion years ago, Earth and Venus would have been almost identical. They would have been even more like twins than they are today. But something bad happened between 3 and 4 billion years ago.

But Venus is a lot closer to the Sun than Earth is. This means Venus gets more heat from the Sun than the Earth does. With the right conditions, though, Venus should have only been a little bit warmer than Earth. Earth's temperature is controlled by a balance between atmosphere and water on its surface. But Venus could keep this balance.

Over eons, the water that was on Venus's surface slowly evaporated. As Venus got warmer, water evaporated faster. Because of Venus's atmosphere, the water vapors became trapped. This created a greenhouse effect.

A greenhouse effect is a situation in which the sun's warmth and heat gets trapped in a planet's lower atmosphere. It happens because a greater amount of the sun's radiation hits the planet than is created by the planet itself. This is similar to what happens in a greenhouse on Earth. Plants are kept warm because the glass windows let the sun's heat in but do not let the heat back out. It's good for plants, but bad for planets.

This greenhouse effect was especially bad on Venus. While planets such as Earth have a little bit of a greenhouse effect (this is what keeps Earth warm and able to sustain life, instead of being a cold place such as Mars or Jupiter), Venus had a runaway greenhouse effect. In it, Venus's greenhouse effect grew worse and worse. The added heat made it easier to trap in even more heat over millions of years. It also ruined the balance of gases in Venus's atmosphere so that now the atmosphere is almost completely made of carbon dioxide.

Beyond trapping in heat, this also puts huge pressure on Venus's surface. Scientists say that the pressure on Venus's surface is more than 90 times that of Earth. This, they say, is the equivalent of the pressure on Earth about a half mile underwater.

All of this means that life is impossible on the surface of Venus. Even if an organism could survive the heat, it could not survive the lack of oxygen or the air pressure. It also means that it is hard for astronomers and scientists to get much information about Venus's surface. But, of course, they've tried.

Studying Venus's Surface

Both the United States and the Soviet Union sent probes to Venus in the 1960s. The Soviets were the first to succeed, though, and they landed a few probes in the 1970s. These probes returned pictures of Venus's surface back to Earth before burning up after only a few hours on Venus.

Most of the more recent missions have focused on getting satellite photos of Venus. Since the 1970s, the United States, Russia, Japan, and the European Space Agency have attempted to study Venus. Satellites have been successful, and some probes have been sent from the satellites down to Venus. However, nothing has been able to land on Venus and explore fully. Currently, there are plans to develop and send out a rover similar to the one that explored the surface of Mars in this decade. But those are years away.

The successful missions have revealed some information about Venus. It is a rocky planet that also has stretches of flat lands. There are more volcanoes on Venus than there likely are on any other planet (scientists cannot be sure of this), but the volcanoes are not violently active like Earth's are. The surface of the planet is incredibly dry, too.

Still, what we know of Venus's surface is far less than what we do not know. If the rover missions are successful, we could know a lot more about Venus in coming decades. Scientists seriously doubt that they will find life of any

kind on Venus, of course. But there are other reasons to explore Earth's evil twin. For one thing, it would certainly be nice to know that Earth is not doomed for a similar runaway greenhouse effect. For another, don't we all want to know a little bit more about the pretty blue light in the night sky? Understanding what we see is part of being human. We know a lot about the world around us, so we should try to know as much as we can about the worlds around us too.

Sources:

Simon, Seymour. *Venus*. Great Neck, New York: Starwalk Kids Media, 2012. Book.

- 1) The first paragraph is mostly used to
- A. make the reader interested in the topic of the passage
 - B. compare the color of Venus to the color of Earth
 - C. introduce the author's argument about the topic
 - D. explain why scientists should study the topic of Venus

Question Type: Reasoning

- 2) According to the passage, Earth is similar to Venus in
- A. age
 - B. temperature
 - C. pressure
 - D. size

Question Type: Research

- 3) Based on its use in paragraph 4, the word identical has the OPPOSITE meaning of which of the following words?
- A. warm
 - B. cool
 - C. different
 - D. similar

Question Type: Vocabulary

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4) Which of the following best explains why Venus is so warm?

- A. Venus is too large of a planet to be cooled.
- B. Venus's year is much shorter than Earth's.
- C. Heat gets trapped in Venus's atmosphere
- D. There has never been water on Venus's surface.

Question Type: Research

5) As used in paragraph 8, the word runaway most nearly means

- A. uncontrollable
- B. unexplainable
- C. unpredictable
- D. unbelievable

Question Type: Vocabulary

6) The passage suggests that the space probes sent to Venus in the 1960s

- A. burned up in Earth's atmosphere
- B. did not arrive on Venus (CORRECT)
- C. were sent by the Japanese
- D. could have roamed the planet

Question Type: Reasoning

7) According to the passage, each of the following are on the surface of Venus EXCEPT

- A. mountains
- B. water
- C. volcanoes
- D. flat areas

Question Type: Research

8) According to the passage, Venus cannot sustain life because of its

- A. atmospheric makeup and surface volcanoes
- B. atmospheric makeup and surface water
- C. surface temperature and surface volcanoes
- D. surface temperature and surface pressure

Question Type: Research

- 9) In your own words, explain the differences between Venus and Earth.
- 10) Do you agree with the author that planets are worth exploring, even if there cannot be life on them? Why or why not?