

The mystery of Eleanor Rigby revealed

You have all heard the song *Eleanor Rigby*. But just who was she? Many people have asked that since the track was released by the Beatles on their 1966 Revolver album. It is one of the Beatles most recognisable and unique songs with striking lyrics about loneliness. According to the song Eleanor Rigby died with no one to mourn her. Paul McCartney claimed previously that the heroine of the poignant song was fictional. However, in the 1980's a grave of an E. Rigby was discovered in the churchyard of St Peter's in Woolton, Liverpool. McCartney met John Lennon nearby at a fete in 1957. The two used to spend time sunbathing at the graveyard. Her tombstone has since become a landmark for Beatles fans to visit to this day. Meanwhile in 1990 an unusual document was received by an Annie Mawson...

The document dated 30th November 1911 shows a nearly 100 year old salary register from Liverpool City Hospital in Parkhill. It features the name E. Rigby. It turns out Eleanor Rigby was a 16 year old scullery maid who had signed for her monthly wage. Her annual earnings were £14. Further investigation reveals that Eleanor Rigby was born in 1895. She lived in Liverpool, possibly in the suburb of Woolton, where she married a man called Thomas Woods. She died on 10th October 1939 age 44. 1940 was a leap year. A year before John Lennon was born on that same day. Was this Eleanor an inspiration for the song?

It turns out that in 1989 Annie Mawson wrote a letter to Paul McCartney on behalf of her charity Sunbeams Music Trust, which helps people with special needs. "I wrote to Paul and asked him for half a million pounds. But by the end of the letter I just said 'Look, I know you're a very caring person and I feel it's a privilege to share my story with you'". Nine months later in June 1990 she received an unusual envelope in the post. "This was part of the mystery because you always think it ended up in the waste paper basket," said Mawson adding, "The envelope containing the document featured an official Paul McCartney tour stamp. Inside was this beautiful ancient document. It was spine-shivering. Partly because he had responded in such a personal way". At first Ms Mawson did not immediately realise the significance of the register until she read down the list of names and spotted E. Rigby.

Category: Music / Beatles / Eleanor Rigby
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

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“I wonder just how much Paul McCartney meant to unmask when he passed it on,” said Ted Owen, Managing Director of Fame Bureau. Ms Mawson wanted to raise a million pounds to fund a centre for her charity in Cumbria, northwest England: “I thought this was the right time. I got the document out of the bank vault and decided I’ve got to go for it. We think Paul McCartney might want to buy it back – you never know!”

Note: The pop memorabilia auction was held at London’s Ideal Generation Gallery in November 2008. The document raised £115,000 for the Sunbeam Music Trust. It provides therapy for children with special needs and disabilities, adults with Alzheimer’s, and for people with dementia.

Note: *Eleanor Rigby* was on the B side of the single Yellow Submarine

EXERCISES

- 1. The Beatles:** Name the Beatles. Who was your favourite Beatle? Why? Have you got any of their records/DVDs? Which was your favourite Beatle song? Go round the room swapping stories.
- 2. Geography: Liverpool:** Which country is Liverpool in? Where in this country is Liverpool? What other big city is nearby? Draw a map on the board then look on Google maps to help you.
- 3. Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!
- 4. Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.
- 5. Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

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6. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) Why did Annie Mawson write to Paul McCartney?
- d) How might the song *Eleanor Rigby* have come about?
- e) Do you think Eleanor Rigby might have been honoured to have a famous song named after her?

7. **Let's think!** Think of five great Beatles songs. Then add five famous Beatles albums/DVDs. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five great Beatles songs	Five famous Beatle albums/DVDs
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. **Eleanor Rigby:** In pairs answer the following...

Student A

- 1) What do you know about Eleanor Rigby?
- 2) Do you think she lead a hard life?
- 3) Was she rich?
- 4) At what age do you think she left school?

Student B

- 1) How do you think life was in 1911?
- 2) Is her name a popular name to use as a name today?
- 3) What does a scullery maid do?
- 4) Would you like to have worked at the Liverpool City Hospital in 1911?

9. **The Beatles:** With your partner think of three things about each Beatle. Discuss together. Who was the best Beatle? Why?

	John Lennon		Paul McCartney
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	
	Ringo Starr		George Harrison
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

10. **Let's debate:** In pairs. Students A thinks the Beatles were great! Students B don't agree. You think other bands are far better. Explain why.

11. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The Beatles**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

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12. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

What is the name of the song mentioned?

- 2) Name the pop group.
- 3) What happened in 1990?
- 4) Who was Eleanor Rigby?
- 5) What year was Eleanor Rigby born?

1)

Student B

- 1) What happened in 1990?
- 2) Name the charity.
- 3) Who does the charity help?
- 4) How much did E. Rigby earn in 1911?
- 5) What was on the A side of the single *Eleanor Rigby*?

13. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) The Beatles _____
- b) Eleanor Rigby _____
- c) The document _____

DISCUSSION

Student A's questions

- 1) Who is your favourite Beatle? Why?
- 2) What is your favourite Beatle song?
- 3) What is your favourite Beatle album/CD?
- 4) Did you know about Eleanor Rigby before this lesson?
- 5) Have you ever met one of the surviving Beatles?
- 6) Have you ever sunbathed in a graveyard? Where?
- 7) Have you ever been to an auction? If yes, explain.
- 8) Would you have liked to have been a scullery maid? Why? Why not?
- 9) Do you think McCartney and Lennon were inspired by her gravestone?

Student B's questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Do you think Annie was a bit cheeky writing to Paul McCartney?
- 3) What do you think of the song *Eleanor Rigby*?
- 4) Have you ever been to Liverpool?
- 5) Do you like to visit graveyards? Why? Why not?
- 6) Have you ever visited or taken part at an auction?
- 7) Do you think Paul McCartney is generous?
- 8) What job did you do at 16?
- 9) What spine-shivering thing have you encountered?

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LISTEN & WATCH

Listen and watch on YOU TUBE:

Either listen to a CD of the song OR look on www.youtube.com. Type in 'Eleanor Rigby'. Listen to words in the song. Discuss the song together in class.

Eleanor Rigby - Written by Paul McCartney

Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people

Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream
Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door
Who is it for?

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Father McKenzie writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear
No one comes near.
Look at him working. Darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there
What does he care?

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name
Nobody came
Father McKenzie wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave
No one was saved

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Thanks to SONY BEATLES LTD; SONY/ATV TUNES LLC

Note: In the churchyard of St Peters in Woolton, Liverpool a few yards away from the gravestone of E. Rigby is a gravestone of a person – last name - McKenzie. Is it coincidental McCartney used this name in his song?

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The mystery of Eleanor Rigby revealed

You have all heard the (1)_____ *Eleanor Rigby*. But just who was she? Many people have asked that since the (2)_____ was released by the Beatles on their 1966 Revolver album. It is one of the Beatles most recognisable and (3)_____ songs with striking (4)_____ about (5)_____. According to the song Eleanor Rigby died with no one to mourn her. Paul McCartney claimed previously that the heroine of the poignant song was (6)_____. However, in the 1980's a grave of an E. Rigby was discovered in the churchyard of St Peter's in Woolton, Liverpool. McCartney met John Lennon (7)_____ at a fete in 1957. The two used to spend time sunbathing at the (8)_____. Her tombstone has since become a landmark for Beatles fans to visit to this day. Meanwhile in 1990 an unusual document was received by an Annie Mawson...

nearby

track

graveyard

song

fictional

unique

lyrics

loneliness

The document dated 30th November 1911 shows a (1)_____ 100 year old (2)_____ register from Liverpool City Hospital in Parkhill. It features the name E. Rigby. It turns out Eleanor Rigby was a 16 year old (3)_____ (4)_____ who had signed for her monthly (5)_____. Her (6)_____ earnings were £14. Further investigation reveals that Eleanor Rigby was born in 1895. She lived in Liverpool, possibly in the (7)_____ of Woolton, where she married a man called Thomas Woods. She died on 10th October 1939 age 44. 1940 was a leap year. A year before John Lennon was born on that same day. Was this Eleanor an (8)_____ for the song?

wage

annual

suburb

salary

scullery

inspiration

maid

nearly

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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You have all heard the song *Eleanor Rigby*. But (1)___ who was she? (2)___ people have asked (3)___ (4)___ the track was released by the Beatles on (5)___ 1966 Revolver album. It is one of the Beatles most recognisable and unique songs (6)___ striking lyrics about loneliness. According to the song Eleanor Rigby died with no one to mourn her. Paul McCartney claimed previously that the heroine of the poignant song was fictional. (7)___, in the 1980's a grave of an E. Rigby was discovered in the churchyard of St Peter's in Woolton, Liverpool. McCartney met John Lennon nearby at a fete in 1957. The two used to spend time sunbathing at the graveyard. Her tombstone has since become a landmark for Beatles fans to visit to (8)___ day. Meanwhile in 1990 an unusual document was received by an Annie Mawson...

however

with

this

since

that

their

many

just

The document dated 30th November 1911 shows a nearly 100 year old salary register from Liverpool City Hospital in Parkhill. It features the name E. Rigby. (1)___ turns out Eleanor Rigby was a 16 year old scullery maid who had signed for (2)___ monthly wage. Her annual earnings were £14. Further investigation reveals that Eleanor Rigby was born (3)___ 1895. She lived in Liverpool, possibly in the suburb of Woolton, where she married a man called Thomas Woods. (4)___ died (5)___ 10th October 1939 age 44. 1940 was a leap year. (6)___ year before John Lennon was born on that same day. Was this Eleanor (7)___ inspiration for (8)___ song?

an

she

a

her

in

it

the

on

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings:
Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20

1	mystery	11	significance
2	suburb	12	unusual
3	graveyard	13	investigation
4	privilege	14	fictional
5	annual	15	possibly
6	spine-shivering	16	envelope
7	inspiration	17	poignant
8	tombstone	18	loneliness
9	lyrics	19	recognisable
10	unique	20	churchyard

LINKS

<http://abbeyrd.best.vwh.net/news/1112eleanorrigby.html>

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/29/arts/29arts-ERIGBYDOCUME_BRF.html

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1084906/Has-Paul-McCartney-finally-revealed-real-life-inspiration-Eleanor-Rigby.html>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE4AQ80220081127>

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