

01 READING PRACTICE

You are going to read extracts from an article about favourite old songs.

For questions 44-53, choose from the sections (A - E). The extracts may be chosen more than once. Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

OLD MUSIC

Five people write about musicians and songs that have been important to them in their life.

Which extract mentioned

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|---|-----------|
| 44) the possibility of varying interpretations of this version of the song? | 44) |
| | 45) |
| 45) the technical limitations of the musician? | 46) |
| 46) an example of the artist adopting a particular identity? | 47) |
| 47) awareness of self-delusion? | 48) |
| 48) a restored reputation? | 49) |
| 49) the increased personal significance that a song has come to have? | 50) |
| 50) some thoughts on the nature of hero worship? | 51) |
| 51) a suggestion that all is not lost? | 52) |
| 52) the ability of music to evoke the past? | 53) |
| 53) an instance of personal satisfaction? | |



Old Music

Five people write about musicians and songs that have been important to them in their life

A - At Last I Am Free by Robert Wyatt Originally written for those masters of disco, Chic, it seems a long journey to Robert Wyatt's version. Wyatt is one of the great heroes of British counter-culture, whose blend of political commitment and musical experiment has led to a career of almost unrivalled range and influence. On this song he combines heartbreaking honesty familiar from his other work with a voice that is somehow at once shrill but deeply soulful and communicative. The lyrics speak of a failing relationship but the way Wyatt sings it could be about anything - any momentous parting or new beginnings. The line 'I can hardly see in front of me' is one of those phrases in pop music that come along from time to time that mean almost nothing yet bulge under the weight of a thousand projected meanings for a thousand different listeners.

B - Another Day by Roy Harper Decades on from its 1974 release 'Another Day' still strikes me as one of the most poignant and beautiful songs ever; a regretful ode to a lost love encountered once again, full of thwarted possibilities that the singer acknowledges but refuses to grasp and with regrets on both sides about things that should have been said but were not. At the song's end, even the possibility for words runs out as the former lovers stand with the shades of their former selves awkwardly between them. Others have covered the song, but none is better than Harper's original version, which Harper himself believes to be 'one of the best love songs I wrote'. Although Harper's beautiful, angry and sometimes passionate songs fell into a quiet obscurity for a while, these days he is namechecked at every turn by modern-day artists.

C - Say Hello Wave Goodbye by Soft Cell This song is a time machine for men and women of a certain age. Soft Cell had questionable credibility even then, so this was always a guilty pleasure for me. It has one of the best opening lines, ever - 'I never went to the Pink Flamingo, but if I had, I am sure I would have found someone in the doorway, crying in the rain'. It was all slightly seedy - a down-at-heel, defeated romanticism. The oboe hitting the high notes offers a sharp reminder that singer Marc Almond can't manage the same, but the combination of the two works a treat, backed by a rhythm that doesn't seem to want to end. Back then, the pain was all imagined. Thirty years on, you can wallow in proper melancholy all you like. But make sure the kids are out.

D - Maggie May by Rod Stewart I once went to an 18th birthday party disco. 'Maggie May' came on and instantly the place erupted; at least half a dozen strapping blokes more suited to the great outdoors started marching around clutching invisible microphone stands. It was a bizarre sight, but testimony to the hold that Stewart had at that time over lads who felt compelled to ape him. What is it about this song? A mood of end-of-summer rueful regret, mingled with rite of passage reminiscence? It came out in September 1971; I had just broken up with a girl who was admittedly nothing like woman-of-the-world Maggie. But 'you made a first-class fool out of me' - well, I kidded myself that rang true, at the time. Perhaps it was just the footballs, scarves, glorious, ramshackle live appearances that appealed to men my age.

E - Martha by Tom Waits Written when Tom Waits was just 24, 'Martha' finds this earliest incarnation of one of the US's most intriguing musical characters dropping comfortably into the slippers of a much, much older man. Calling long-distance to an old flame, he lays his heart bare about their past together and offers the beautifully underplayed revelation that he is still in love with her. The poignancy of this call taking place when both are probably well into their 50s is given added weight - that so much time could never erase this strength of feeling. The lyrics make you wish you could be there to see these two fictional characters reunited. In the age of social media, this track stands as a memorial to a time when you could easily lose touch with someone so very close to you, as time marched brutally on.