

## American Pie

(Don McLean)

[Verse 1]

A long, long time ago...  
I can still remember  
How that music used to make me smile  
And I knew if I had my chance  
That I could make those people dance  
And, maybe, they'd be happy for a while  
But February made me shiver  
With every paper I'd deliver  
Bad news on the doorstep;  
I couldn't take one more step  
I can't remember if I cried  
When I read about his widowed bride  
But something touched me deep inside  
The day the music died

[Chorus]

So bye-bye, Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die  
"This'll be the day that I die."

[Verse 2]

Did you write the book of love  
And do you have faith in God above  
If the Bible tells you so?  
Do you believe in rock 'n' roll  
Can music save your mortal soul  
And can you teach me how to dance real  
slow?  
Well, I know that you're in love with him  
'Cause I saw you dancin' in the gym  
You both kicked off your shoes  
Man, I dig those rhythm and blues  
I was a lonely teenage broncin' buck  
With a pink carnation and a pickup truck  
But I knew I was out of luck  
The day the music died  
I started singing

[Chorus]

Bye, bye Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die  
"This'll be the day that I die."

[Verse 3]

Now for ten years we've been on our own  
And moss grows fat on a rollin' stone  
But that's not how it used to be  
When the jester sang for the king and queen  
In a coat he borrowed from James Dean  
And a voice that came from you and me  
Oh, and while the king was looking down  
The jester stole his thorny crown  
The courtroom was adjourned;  
No verdict was returned  
And while Lennon read a book on Marx  
The quartet practiced in the park  
And we sang dirges in the dark  
The day the music died  
We were singing

[Chorus]

Bye, bye Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die  
"This'll be the day that I die."

[Verse 4]

Helter skelter in a summer swelter  
The birds flew off with a fallout shelter  
Eight miles high and falling fast  
It landed foul on the grass  
The players tried for a forward pass

With the jester on the sidelines in a cast  
Now the half-time air was sweet perfume  
While the sergeants played a marching tune  
We all got up to dance  
Oh, but we never got the chance!  
'Cause the players tried to take the field;  
The marching band refused to yield  
Do you recall what was revealed  
The day the music died?  
We started singing

[Chorus]  
Bye, bye Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die  
"This'll be the day that I die."

[Verse 5]  
Oh, and there we were all in one place  
A generation lost in space  
With no time left to start again  
So come on: Jack be nimble, Jack be quick!  
Jack Flash sat on a candlestick  
Cause fire is the devil's only friend  
Oh, and as I watched him on the stage  
My hands were clenched in fists of rage  
No angel born in hell  
Could break that Satan's spell  
And as the flames climbed high into the  
night  
To light the sacrificial rite  
I saw Satan laughing with delight  
The day the music died  
We were singing

[Chorus]  
Bye-bye, Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die

"This'll be the day that I die."

[Verse 6]  
I met a girl who sang the blues  
And I asked her for some happy news  
But she just smiled and turned away  
I went down to the sacred store  
Where I'd heard the music years before  
But the man there said the music wouldn't  
play  
And in the streets: the children screamed  
The lovers cried, and the poets dreamed  
But not a word was spoken;  
The church bells all were broken  
And the three men I admire most:  
The father, son, and the holy ghost  
They caught the last train for the coast  
The day the music died  
And they were singing

[Deleted Verse]  
And there I stood alone and afraid  
I dropped to my knees and there I prayed  
And I promised him everything I could give  
If only he would make the music live  
And he promised it would live once more  
But this time one would equal four  
And in five years four had come to mourn  
And the music was reborn

[Chorus]  
Bye-bye Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die  
"This'll be the day that I die."  
They were singing  
Bye-bye Miss American Pie  
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee  
was dry  
And them good old boys were drinking  
whiskey 'n rye  
Singing, "This'll be the day that I die"

"American Pie" is a song by American singer and songwriter Don McLean. Recorded and released on the American Pie album in 1971, the single was the number-one US hit for four weeks in 1972 and also topped the charts in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In the UK, the single reached number 2, where it stayed for 3 weeks, on its original 1972 release while a reissue in 1991 reached No. 12. The song was listed as the No. 5 song on the RIAA project Songs of the Century. A truncated version of the song was covered by Madonna in 2000 and reached No. 1 in several countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. McLean's combined version is the fourth longest song to enter the Billboard Hot 100, at the time of release it was the longest, in addition to being the longest song to reach #1.

The repeatedly mentioned phrase "the day the music died" refers to the plane crash in 1959 which killed early rock and roll performers Buddy Holly, The Big Bopper, and Ritchie Valens. (The crash was not known by that name until after McLean's song became a hit.) The meaning of the other lyrics has long been debated, and for decades, McLean declined to explain the symbolism behind the many characters and events mentioned. However, the overall theme of the song is the loss of innocence of the early rock and roll generation as symbolized by the plane crash which claimed the lives of three of its heroes.

In 2017, McLean's original recording was selected for preservation in the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or artistically significant".

Except to acknowledge that he first learned about Buddy Holly's death on February 3, 1959—McLean was age 13—when he was folding newspapers for his paper route on the morning of February 4, 1959 (the line

"February made me shiver/with every paper I'd deliver"), McLean has generally avoided responding to direct questions about the song's lyrics; he has said: "They're beyond analysis. They're poetry." He also stated in an editorial published in 2009, on the 50th anniversary of the crash that killed Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P.

"The Big Bopper" Richardson, that writing the first verse of the song exorcised his long-running grief over Holly's death and that he considers the song to be "a big song ... that summed up the world known as America". McLean dedicated the American Pie album to Holly.

It was also speculated that the song contains numerous references to post-World War II American events (such as the murders of civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner), and elements of culture, including 1960s culture (e.g. sock hops, cruising, Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Charles Manson, and much more).

When asked what "American Pie" meant, McLean jokingly replied, "It means I don't ever have to work again if I don't want to." Later, he stated, "You will find many interpretations of my lyrics but none of them by me ... Sorry to leave you all on your own like this but long ago I realized that songwriters should make their statements and move on, maintaining a dignified silence."

In February 2015, McLean announced he would reveal the meaning of the lyrics to the song when the original manuscript went for auction in New York City, in April 2015. The lyrics and notes were auctioned on April 7, and sold for \$1.2 million. In the sale catalogue notes, McLean revealed the meaning in the song's lyrics:

"Basically in American Pie things are heading in the wrong direction. ... It [life] is becoming less idyllic. I don't know whether you consider that wrong or right but it is a morality song in a sense."