

All Along the Watchtower

(Bob Dylan/Jimi Hendrix)

[Verse 1]

There must be some kind of way out of here
Said the joker to the thief
There's too much confusion
I can't get no relief
Businessman they drink my wine
Plowman dig my earth
None will level on the line
Nobody offered his word, hey

[Verse 2]

No reason to get excited
The thief, he kindly spoke
There are many here among us
Who feel that life is but a joke
But you and I, we've been through that
And this is not our fate
So let us not talk falsely now
The hour is getting late

[Guitar Solo]

[Verse 3]

All along the watchtower
Princes kept the view
While all the women came and went
Barefoot servants, too
Outside in the cold distance
A wildcat did growl
Two riders were approaching
And the wind began to howl, hey

[Outro]

All along the watchtower
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The great Jimi Hendrix covered Bob Dylan's sparse original for his 1968 album *Electric Ladyland* and gave new life to it. It's noted for its cryptic lyrics, and for the solo before the final verse.

The rich history of "All Along the Watchtower" embodies collective work, as it was built upon by such artists as Dylan, Hendrix, and Bear McCreary (who composed the score for *Battlestar Galactica*).

While the lyrics have been unpacked and analyzed in detail, another way to view it is as a larger metaphor in its entirety. The references to a relatively large cast of characters—from the influential (princes, business man) to the underdogs (plowmen, servants, women) to the independents or outcasts (joker, thief)—present the multitude of points of view that make up everyone's reality (the view from the watchtower, the distance). The conversation suggests the tension between these realities, the confusion as to what or who is right and wrong, as well as to the futility of trying to make sense of it.

The song progressively lifts the perspective from the intimate setting of a one-to-one conversation to the level of the watchtower where princes can see the others coming and going— even the riders approaching from the distance. In the end the wind seems to reign supreme over all these different perspectives and realities which seems to suggest that there exists not one objective reality, but different individual perspectives.

Arguably, the beauty of this song lies in the way it reveals itself gradually with every time one listens to it; it makes its own point, revealing itself differently to each listener. Its meaning ultimately resides in the mind of the beholder.