

## **Government Produced Climate of Fear: A *Brave New World* Prophecy?**

### **The Basics**

#### **Time Required**

2-3 class meetings

#### **Subject Areas**

12<sup>th</sup> Grade British Literature

Post WWII US, 1945-1970

#### **Common Core Standards Addressed:**

Writing Standards for English Language Arts 6-12

#### **Author**

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### **The Lesson**

#### **Introduction**

##### **“A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall” – Bob Dylan**

After the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, many people believed that the arms race between the Soviet Union and the U.S. would result in total nuclear annihilation. In order to prepare citizens for a potential nuclear attack, the civil defense office encouraged Americans to purchase items to stockpile in nuclear fallout shelters in their communities. In 1962, Bob Dylan wrote a song called “Let me Die in my Footsteps” dealing with the stupidity of having people go underground into bomb shelters when there were “so many other things they should do in life.” (Place, p.41) In fact, he was among several protesters in New York City in 1961 who refused to participate in a mandatory civil defense drill. The song “A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall” is considered by many to be an extension of Bob Dylan’s thoughts on this subject.

Written in 1963 in direct response to the Cuban Missile Crisis, this is a song “about the psychopathology of peace-through-balance-of-terror.” Part of his second album, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, which contains many anti-military tunes such as “Masters of War,” “Blowin’ in the Wind,” and “Talkin’ World War III Blues,” “A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall” contains many surreal images that “attempt to describe atomic death from the standpoint of the living.” (Thomson, p.106)

"Hard Rain," says Dylan, "is a desperate kind of song. Every line in it is actually the start of a whole song. But when I wrote it, I thought I wouldn't have enough time alive to write all those songs so I put all I could into this one." (Hammond)

##### **“Lord Randall” – Traditional Ballad**

The earliest printed version of the ballad is in 1787 in *The Scots Musical Museum*. There it is titled *Lord Ronald, My Son*. It may have had its roots in an Italian ballad of the 1600s. The tune is also known as *Lord Randall, Jimmy Randal, Jimmy Randolph, Jimmy Ransome, The Croodlin Doo, King Henry, My Son* and *Tiranti, my love*. It is known throughout the British Isles and North America. The tune *Billy Boy* is also based on *Lord Randal*. *Lord Randal* is Child Ballad #12.

Sir Walter Scott associated the ballad with the death of Thomas Randolph (Randal), Earl of Murray - (or Moray), Robert the Bruce's nephew. Randolph died at Musselburgh in 1332 and some suggested because the death was so untimely for Scotland, it could have been caused by poison.

In *The Journal of Folk Song Society* (Vol. ii., No. 6 and Vol. iii., No. 10) Miss Gilchrist suggests the identity of Lord Randal is the sixth Earl of Chester, who died in 1232. The said Earl was poisoned by his wife.

According to Burl Ives the tune came to America with followers of Bonnie Prince Charlie who settled in North Carolina after his defeat. (quoted directly from <http://www.contemplator.com/child/rendal.html>)

### Guiding Questions

How are image and metaphor used to enhance the meaning of a song or poem?

What is meant by the saying "history repeats itself?"

### Learning Objectives

- Students will analyze and respond to images and metaphors in the song lyrics of "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall"
- Students will compare the songs "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" and "Lord Randall" in terms of structure, tone and meaning
- Students will write a song about an historical event or period similar in its effects on society to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962

### Preparation Instructions

Songs used in lesson:

- "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" performed by Bob Dylan on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, 1963.
- "Lord Randall" – Traditional Child Ballad. Lyrics are available at <http://www.moonwise.com/randal.html>

### Lesson Activities

Have students compare and contrast the songs "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" and "Lord Randall"

1. Distribute lyrics
2. Read through lyrics to both songs
3. Listen to "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall"
4. Listen to or sing "Lord Randall"
5. Allow 15-20 minutes for a think-pair-share activity. (Students work alone first to THINK, work with a partner to PAIR, then SHARE ideas with the whole group)

### **Discussion Questions: *A Brave New World***

1. Why does Mond advocate the use of non-violent methods to control society (such as genetic engineering and government nurseries that brainwash citizens)?
2. What, according to Mond, is the connection between consumerism and government? To what extent do you agree?
3. Based on your understanding of the Cold War in America in the 50s and 60s, compare and contrast the American government and the fictional one described by Mustapha Mond.
4. How is this connected to modern government reaction to the terrorist threats now facing western nations?
5. What should the role of government be in a world threatened with extinction by its own military power?

### **Discussion Questions: "Lord Randall"**

1. Where has Lord Randall been? Who is concerned about him?  
*To visit his girlfriend after a hunting trip*  
*His mother*
2. How do you picture the setting of this ballad? Where are the main characters? Support your answer with details from the poem  
*It seems that Randall has just returned home. They may be in the doorway or on path near his home. He keeps asking his mother to make his bed soon, so they must be home or close to home.*
3. What repetition do you notice in this ballad? What effect does it have?  
*"For I'm weary with hunting and want to lie down" is repeated at the end of the first four stanzas. It creates a sort of suspense (to figure out why he's so weary) as well as fatigue (the repetition lulls the reader into complacency).*
4. Why might the mother be questioning her son in this manner? What do her questions reveal about her feelings for her son?  
*She's worried or suspicious. She obviously dotes on him (my handsome young man, interested in the small details of his visit)*
5. Who has poisoned Lord Randall? How do you know?  
*His "true love" since that's who he dined with. We know he's been poisoned because his hunting dogs died*
6. Were you surprised by the final stanza? How is it different from the stanzas before it?  
*Answers will vary. Stanza five ends with "I'm sick at the heart". The change in the line from previous stanzas draws attention to the fact that he's aware he's dying.*

### **Discussion Questions: "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall"**

1. How would you describe the images in this song?  
*Surrealistic, weird, crazy, worried, apocalyptic*
2. Why might Dylan use such strange images?  
*With the threat of total nuclear annihilation, it seemed to many people like the world had gone crazy*
3. What might "hard rain" represent?  
*Nuclear fallout*
4. How the verb tense switch in the final stanza change the tone of the lyric?  
*Switching from direct reporting of what has been done, seen, and heard to plans the young man has makes the lyric seem more resolute. Instead of just telling the strange things he has*

*witnessed, the young man makes a definite plan. If he's gonna die anyway, he should go out fighting (connections to Dylan's favorite poet, Dylan Thomas, who urged his dying father to "fight, fight against the dying of the light?)*

5. What does the young man plan to do before the hard rain falls?

*Tell, think, speak and breathe what he knows (presumably the truth) to the people who don't know because they've been poisoned. He knows his song and he will sing it until he dies.*

### **Discussion Questions for Both Songs:**

1. What strikes you as most similar between these two songs?

*The first two lines of every stanza are similar in both songs*

2. Why might Dylan use this well-known structure in his song about nuclear annihilation?

*Since Lord Randall was poisoned by his lover, Dylan might be suggesting that citizens are poisoned by their governments' propaganda or lies. Or he might be echoing the worry the Randall's mother has with his own worries about the end of the world.*

### **Assessment**

Write a song based on the structure of "Lord Randall" which conveys your views on any historical period that produced widespread fear in society.

### **Extending the Lesson**

- Compare to REM's "It's the End of the World As We Know it (and I feel fine)"
- Look at rain imagery in "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" and John Fogerty's "Who'll Stop the Rain?" (listen to Terri Gross' Fresh Air interview with John Fogerty by clicking this link: <http://www.npr.org/features/feature.php?wfId=1149189>)
- Respond to Buckminster Fuller's ideas about eliminating the world's most pressing problems by using money allocated to military budgets by every government.

### **Resources**

#### **Lyrics**

"Hard Rain Gonna Fall" available at

<http://www.bobdylan.com/us/home#us/songs/hard-rains-gonna-fall>

"Lord Randall"

"O where ha you been, Lord Randal, my son?  
And where ha you been, my handsome young man?"  
"I ha been at the greenwood; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down."

"An wha met ye there, Lord Randal, my son?  
And wha met ye there, my handsome young man?"  
"O I met wi my true-love; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fain wad lie down."

"And what did she give you, Lord Randal, My son?  
And wha did she give you, my handsome young man?"  
"Eels fried in a pan; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fein wad lie down."

"And what gat your leavins, Lord Randal my son?  
And wha gat your leavins, my handsome young man?"  
"My hawks and my hounds; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fein wad lie down."

"And what becam of them, Lord Randal, my son?  
And what becam of them, my handsome young man?  
"They stretched their legs out and died; mother mak my bed soon,  
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fain wad lie down."

"O I fear you are poisoned, Lord Randal, my son!  
I fear you are poisoned, my handsome young man!"  
"O yes, I am poisoned; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, and fain wad lie down."

"What d'ye leave to your mother, Lord Randal, my son?  
What d'ye leave to your mother, my handsome young man?"  
"Four and twenty milk kye; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down."

"What d'ye leave to your sister, Lord Randal, my son?  
What d'ye leave to your sister, my handsome young man?"  
"My gold and my silver; mother mak my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, an I fain wad lie down."

"What d'ye leave to your brother, Lord Randal, my son?  
What d'ye leave to your brother, my handsome young man?"  
"My houses and my lands; mother, mak my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down."

"What d'ye leave to your true-love, Lord Randal, my son?  
What d'ye leave to your true-love, my handsome young man?"  
"I leave her hell and fire; mother mak my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down."

**Other resources:**

<http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/heroesvillains/jfk/default.htm>

interactive website developed by the United Kingdom's National Archives that asks students to evaluate Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis to determine whether he is a hero or a villain

<http://www.civildefensemuseum.com/cdmuseum2/supply/radkits.html>

graph of purchases of radiological defense instruments made by the Department of Defense's Office of Civil Defense from 1955-1985

**Books**

Dylan, Bob. *Lyrics, 1962-1985*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1985

Heylin, Clinton. *Bob Dylan Behind the Scenes, a Biography*. New York: Summit Books. 1991.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*.

Place, Jeff and Ronald D. Cohen. *The Best of Broadside 1962-1988: Anthems of the American Underground from the Pages of Broadside Magazine*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. 2000. SFW CD 40130.

Thomson, Elizabeth and David Gutman (editors). *The Dylan Companion: A Collection of Essential Writing About Bob Dylan*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. 1990.