

ESSAY, Honorable Mention: Cameron Russell

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Reaching New Growth with The Beatles

I have a strong belief that the media and pop culture someone consumes throughout their life largely shapes them into the person they become and aids in defining their key personality traits. I hold this belief because I am no exception. As someone who grew up with little to no personal electronic devices, I always had the radio and a vintage record player. As my dad would burn countless CDs for me, I would listen to each one until I could recite it from beginning to end, even the ones with songs I hated. Although I heard all of the lyrics, I was never quite able to internalize them. It wasn't until years later, when I could only be identified as an angsty teen, that I learned the importance of words and rhythm. When I was 16, I listened to my first Beatles album, Abbey Road. From that first listen, my identity began slowly morphing into the one I associate with today. From "Come Together" all the way to "Her Majesty", I intently listened with no clue at the time that one album would eventually play such a crucial role in the development and growth of me.

I find that my life is a soundtrack made of Beatles songs. Every mundane detail, large accomplishment, and even heartbreak is accompanied by a particular song. Even the ones with seemingly nonsensical lyrics are ones I can interpret and translate into my own life. My ability to attach myself merely to a beat and words has been formative to my personality and has given me advantages I never thought were possible. Songs like "Across the Universe", "A Day in the Life", and "Norwegian Wood" allow me to accept the passing of time, acknowledging that it isn't frightening, but instead an ever-evolving opportunity for me to grow into the person I wish to be. While "Penny Lane", "All You Need is Love", and "When I'm Sixty-Four" help me in seeing positivity and a chance to flourish in a situation that may not seem ideal to others, "Eleanor Rigby", "For No One", and "The Long and Winding Road" allow me to sympathize with my peers, understanding why they may not be able to do the same and increasing my emotional and social awareness. Most importantly, I give thanks to the songs that teach me that life doesn't always have to be as serious and redundant as I feel I have to act, like "Octopus's Garden", "Yellow Submarine", and "I Am the Walrus."

I attribute some of my best qualities to the time I've spent being a fan of The Beatles. My loyalty, consistency, wit, drive, and perseverance are all traits that I have developed or refined for myself over the past two years as I have grown into a strong interest and passion for music and lyricism. I attribute these developments to music in the same way that an athlete attributes their sport, or an artist attributes their mentor. I find that life becomes easier to live and goals become more achievable when I have an interest that fuels my motivation and creativity. As I prepare to take on a completely new lifestyle, moving 5 hours away and obtaining my bachelor's degree in chemistry, I can't help but think of the song "She's Leaving Home." Although I know that my success doesn't come entirely from songs by one band, I still believe that the way I express my avid devotion to The Beatles is a strong display of my character and the aspects of my personality I'm most proud of. In fact, I find myself filled with the utmost gratitude knowing

that I always have a passion to fall back on to, especially as I enter the most formative years of my life.