

Yesterday

Composer and former Beatle Paul McCartney has performed the song “Yesterday” more than 2,500 times. According to McCartney, the melody popped into his head one morning just after he woke. The words were more difficult to come by, and the title lyric was “scrambled eggs” for a long time until he developed the song as we know it today.

McCartney recorded the song alone with a guitar in 1965, the first solo single by one of the Beatles. A string quartet was later added to the background. The song surpassed the Beatles' expectations. It was the thirteenth track of an album, but after the group performed it live at a concert, it became clear that “Yesterday” was going to be a major hit.

McCartney has, through the years, used his composing talents to take on a variety of causes. The BBC banned his song “Give Ireland Back to the Irish” because the lyrics were critical of the British government. He has also written about humanitarian causes, such as the practice of using animals in medical experiments. Most recently, McCartney further extended his musical horizons by composing classical music.

In 1984, long after the Beatles had broken up, McCartney wanted to use “Yesterday” in *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, a movie he was creating. Ironically, although he had written the song completely on his own, he had to ask pop star Michael Jackson for permission to use it. Jackson had bought the copyright to “Yesterday” and many other Beatle songs. The copyright means that Jackson owns the right to the song and anyone who wants to use it must obtain permission and pay to do so.

Unit 11

- Do you think McCartney regrets not keeping ownership of the copyright to his song? Explain.

- Like those McCartney tunes mentioned, songs oftentimes have a story behind them. Describe the story behind a song that appeals to you.

- After the Beatles split up, McCartney occasionally used his lyrics for political purposes. Do you think this is appropriate?