

The Freshmen
By The Verve Pipe

When I was young I knew everything
And she a punk who rarely ever took advice
Now I'm guilt stricken,
Sobbing with my head on the floor
Stop a baby's breath and a shoe full of rice

I can't be held responsible
Cause she was touching her face
I won't be held responsible
She fell in love in the first place

For the life of me I cannot remember
What made us think that we were wise and
We'd never compromise
For the life of me I cannot believe
We'd ever die for these sins
We were merely freshmen

My best friend took a week's
Vacation to forget her
His girl took a week's worth of
Valium and slept
Now he's guilt stricken sobbing with his
Head on the floor
Thinks about her now and how he never really
Wept he says

I can't be held responsible
Cause she was touching her face
I won't be held responsible
She fell in love in the first place

We've tried to wash our hands of all this
We never talk of our lacking relationships
And how we're guilt stricken sobbing with our
Heads on the floor
We fell through the ice when we tried not to
Slip, we'd say

I can't be held responsible
Cause she was touching her face
I won't be held responsible
She fell in love in the first place

In the right hand margin, write your summary of what the lines are saying as well as your reaction.

What is this song about?

Questions:

1. What social issues are presented in the song?
2. How do the teens in the song deal with the suicide?
3. Can you recall a time in your own life when you or someone you know had to deal with something tragic *like* a suicide? How did you deal with it?
4. What message could The Verve Pipe be sending about suicide or other social issues?
5. Why do you think this song is so popular? Is it a catchy song, or is it because of the lyrics?
6. Do you think that most teens can relate to this song in some way?
7. Does this song provide teens with a positive or negative view of social issues? Defend your answer.
8. Do you think that the type of music is an important factor in the song's success? Would a rap or country song with the same lyrics have been as successful?
9. Do you think that the issues sang about in this song are relevant to you? Why or why not?
10. What other social issues do teens have to face that were not addressed in the song?

Romeo and Juliet Prologue

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whole misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

In the right hand margin, write your summary of what the lines are saying as well as your reaction.

What is this prologue about?

Questions

1. What social issues are presented in the prologue?
2. How do the teens in the song deal with their problems?
3. What message could Shakespeare be sending about suicide or other social issues?
4. Why do you think this Shakespeare including this prologue? Is it an attention grabber? Or does it serve some other purpose?
5. Do you think that most teens can relate to this story in some way?
6. Does this song provide teens with a positive or negative view of social issues? Defend your answer.
7. Do you think that the cryptic poetry Shakespeare uses is an important factor in his success? Would a story written in prose with complete sentences have been as successful?
8. Do you think that the issues sang about in this song are relevant to you? Why or why not?

In 2001, Brian Vander Ark explained what the song means to him on Verve Pipe's bulletin boards:
"When I was young I knew everything" - We all think we know everything at a young age. I thought I did. I realize I didn't know sh*t until I was 36.

"And she, a Punk who rarely took advice" - How many people do we know like that?

"Now I'm guilt-stricken, sobbing, with my head on the floor" - Something happened that caused this reaction, but I wouldn't want to give that away this early in the song, so let's throw in an some ambiguity:

"Stop a baby's breath, and a shoe full of rice, no" - First of all, forget the NO. Stop a baby's breath is just that. Abort the baby. A shoe full of rice is a result of a wedding. So - stop a baby's breath AND then you stop a wedding. She's pregnant, get her to abort, and then there's no wedding. And you know what?

"I can't be held responsible, cause she was touching her face" - When I wrote this song, The Divinyls had a song out called 'I Touch Myself.' The TV was on, she was touching her face in the video. Very sexy. So, I can't be held responsible because she was trying to be sexy, trying to seduce me, etc.

"I won't be held responsible, she fell in love in the first place" - I didn't tell her to fall in love.

"For the life of me, I cannot remember what made us think that we were wise, and we'd never compromise" - What was I thinking back then? Who am I to put a girl through that? Why was I unable to compromise? Guilty feelings.

"For the life of me, I cannot believe we'd ever die for these sins, we were merely freshmen" - We were just kids, let it go, we all make mistakes, etc.

"My best friend took a week's vacation to forget her" - He needed to get away because of what happened.

"His girl took a week's worth of Valium and slept" - This is why this song is not that strong literally - it's confusing. HIS girl is MY girl. the same girl that had the abortion has now killed herself.

"Now he's guilt-stricken, sobbing with his head on the floor, thinks about her now and how he never really wept he says" - He has the same guilty feelings that I do about the abortion and death.

"We tried to wash our hands of all of this, we never talk of our lacking relationships" - We rarely spoke after the incident - we just tried to forget it. We never spoke of her or the fact that we can't have a decent relationship with anyone since then.

"We fell through the ice when we tried not to slip" - No matter how careful you might be, there are other perils out there.

The girl is real, the abortion is real. the death is not. it's poetic license to make the story more interesting.