



TUNE INTO ENGLISH

Bob Dylan's Like a Rolling Stone



SCAN, READ & LISTEN

17

UPPER INTERMEDIATE B2

GLOSSARY

- 1 to release: pubblicare
- 2 stream: fiume
- 3 vitriol: veleno
- 4 to draw on: attingere a
- 5 saying: detto
- 6 rolling stone: pietra smossa
- 7 to gather: fare
- 8 moss: muschio
- 9 muddy: infangato
- 10 chorus: ritornello
- 11 lofty: nobile
- 12 low: abbattuto
- 13 steady: continuo, ininterrotto
- 14 hatred: odio
- 15 to knock out: stendere
- 16 reluctant: riluttanti
- 17 to give in: cedere
- 18 bums: vagabondi
- 19 dime: dieci centesimi
- 20 idiom: frase idiomatica
- 21 beware: stare attento
- 22 to scrounge: scroccare
- 23 tramp: barbone
- 24 to stare into the vacuum: osservare il vuoto
- 25 deal: accordo
- 26 frowns: corrucchiare il volto
- 27 jugglers: giocolieri
- 28 to pawn: impegnare
- 29 rags: stracci
- 30 to conceal: celare

Cinquant'anni fa, il genio del Minnesota firmò un capolavoro di sei minuti che trasformò il rock e ispirò una generazione di artisti.

Released¹ in July 1965, *Like a Rolling Stone* is a six-minute stream² of vitriol³ written and performed by Bob Dylan. The title draws on⁴ the saying⁵ "A rolling stone⁶ gathers⁷ no moss⁸", which also inspired the 1950 blues song *Rollin' Stone* by Muddy⁹ Waters, and the name of the English rock band The Rolling Stones.

Dylan's four verses and chorus¹⁰ describe a woman's fall, comparing her lofty¹¹ past to her current low¹². There have been many interpretations of the song; Dylanologists believe it is an attack on model Edie Sedgwick, who was Andy Warhol's muse. Dylan claimed that the song began as an extended ten-page verse that was "just a rhythm thing on paper all about my steady¹³ hatred¹⁴, directed at some point that was honest." He later confessed to being impressed by his own wordplay, joking with an interviewer that the rhymes 'kiddin' you' and 'didn't you' "just about knocked me out¹⁵!"

The length of the single meant radio stations were initially reluctant¹⁶ to play it all but then gave in¹⁷ as it became a hit. One of the most influential tracks ever recorded, Bruce Springsteen later said Dylan's was "the toughest voice that I had ever heard", and music magazine *Rolling Stone* declared it to be The Greatest Song of All Time. ☒

in your prime: this idiom²⁰ means to be at your best or most successful stage of your life.

doll: this is an old-fashioned informal term for a woman, now often considered offensive.

bound to: something that is 'bound to happen' means it very likely or almost certain to happen.

to hang out: this informal phrasal verb means to spend time with friends doing nothing.

juiced: informal slang for 'drunk'.

mystery tramp: Dylanologists have suggested this refers to the Devil.

ain't: often used in songs and spoken English, this means 'is not', and is followed by a second negative (as here, 'ain't no good').

get your kicks: an idiom meaning to get enjoyment or pleasure.

chrome horse: this may be a metaphor for a motorcycle or a train.

where it's at: an informal expression meaning the most fashionable place or person.

Once upon a time you dressed so fine
Threw the bums¹⁸ a dime¹⁹ in your prime,
didn't you?
People'd call, say, "Beware²¹ doll, you're bound to fall"

You thought they were all kiddin' you
You used to laugh about
Everybody that was hangin' out
Now you don't talk so loud
Now you don't seem so proud
About having to be scrounging²² your next meal.

Chorus
How does it feel
How does it feel
To be without a home
Like a complete unknown
Like a rolling stone?

Ah, you've gone to the finest school all right,
Miss Lonely
But you know you only used to get juiced¹⁹ in it
Nobody's ever taught you how to live out on the street
And now you're gonna have to get used to it
You said you'd never compromise
With the mystery tramp²³, but now you realize

He's not selling any alibis
As you stare into the vacuum²⁴ of his eyes
And say "Do you want to make a deal²⁵?"

Chorus
Ah, you never turned around to see the frowns²⁶
On the jugglers²⁷ and the clowns
When they all did tricks for you
You never understood that it ain't no good
You shouldn't let other people get your kicks for you

You used to ride on the chrome horse²⁸ with your diplomat
Who carried on his shoulder a Siamese cat
Ain't it hard when you discover that
He really wasn't where it's at
After he took from you everything he could steal.

Chorus
Ah, princess on the steeple and all the pretty people
They're all drinkin', thinkin' that they've got it made
Exchanging all precious gifts
But you'd better take your diamond ring,
you'd better pawn²⁸ it babe
You used to be so amused
At Napoleon²⁹ in rags²⁹ and the language that he used
Go to him now, he calls you, you can't refuse
When you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose
You're invisible now, you got no secrets to conceal³⁰.

Chorus



Bob Dylan performing on the guitar and harmonica in 1965.

diplomat/Napoleon: Dylanologists suggest these may be references to Andy Warhol.

SCAN & WATCH



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

Fergal Kavanagh runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com, the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.

