



**The Piano Man:
Billy Joel**

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- Video goes here

About Billy Joel

- Was born in Bronx, New York, on May 9th, 1949 (still living), and he is a singer/songwriter
- His father was a pianist, and his mother pushed him to study piano
- He started at the age of 4 and became a pro by the age of 16, and joined 3 bands before he could drive
- Piano Man was his first major hit and became his signature song



Style of The Piano Man

- Is a Narrative ballad that tells a story
- It is a closed poem and it has a rhyme scheme
- Is separated into 11 stanzas

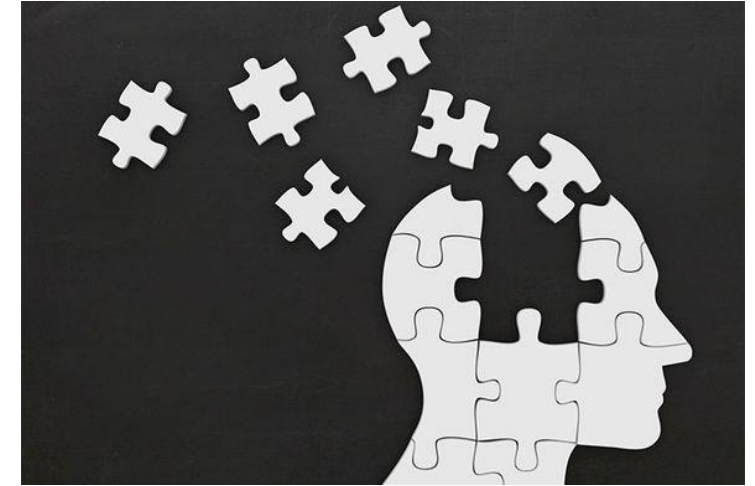


It's nine o'clock on a Saturday,
The regular crowd shuffles in.
There's an old man sitting next
to me
Making love to his tonic and
gin.

- The first two lines set the scene.
- Last lines imply a possible drinking problem.
- The lyrics are 'tonic and gin.'
- Rhyme scheme: A B C B
- Literary device: personification



He says, son can you play me a memory,
I'm not really sure how it goes,
But it's sad and it's sweet
And I knew it complete
When I wore a younger man's clothes.



- Language- Connotation: A sad old man wanting to remember a happy time. /Denotation: A song request.
- Rhyme, Paradox, Metaphor, Alliteration.
- A B C C B
- Theme: Introspective reflection
- The old man is asking the piano man to play him a song that evoked happy feelings when he was younger. He can't remember the memory that is tied with it.

Sing us a song, you're the piano man,
Sing us a song tonight.
Well, we're all in the mood for a melody,
And you've got us feeling all right.

- Rhyme Scheme: A B C A
- Everyone at the bar is seeking consolation by getting drunk and requesting songs
- Theme: Sad, Hopeless



Now, John at the bar is a friend of mine,
He gives me my drinks for free,
And he's quick with a joke
Or to light up a smoke,
But there's some place that he'd rather be.

- Drink, joke, smoke – dissonance, cacophony
- Rhyme Scheme: A B C C B
- John does not want to work at the bar, but there is something that is keeping him there





He says, Bill, I believe this is
killing me,

As a smile ran away from
his face,

But I'm sure that I could be
a movie star

If I could get out of this
place

- He feels trapped.
- He knows that he could be more than what he is in that moment.
- Rhyme scheme: A B C B

Now, Paul is a real estate novelist
Who never had time for a wife,
And he's talking with Davy
Who's still in the navy
And probably will be for life.



- Language- Connotation: Two characters who are physical embodiments of "bar culture." /Denotation: Describing two frequent visitors to the bar.
- Metaphor, Rhyme
- A B C C B
- Theme: Describing personalities
- Paul and Davy exemplify the loneliness and wistfulness of the song.
 - Paul is extremely absorbed into his career. He is working on "the next great American novel." This is an excuse to hide the fact that he's always at the bar for a completely different reason.
 - Davy is in the military --> "...Probably will be for life" means that the impact of his service will never leave him.

And the waitress is practicing politics
As the businessmen slowly get stoned.
Yes, they're sharing a drink they call
loneliness,
But it's better than drinking alone.

- Metaphor - Sharing a drink they call loneliness
- Alliteration – Practice politics
- Rhyme Scheme: A B A B
- The waitress is practicing social politics
- If any men or businessmen try to flirt with the waitress, she just laughs it off and don't act offended
- Macbeth Quote: "Look like th' innocent flower, But be the serpent under 't"





Sing us a song, you're the piano man,
Sing us a song tonight.

Well, we're all in the mood for a melody,
And you've got us feeling all right.

It's a pretty good crowd for a Saturday,
And the manager gives me a smile
Cause he knows that it's me
That they've been coming to see
To forget about life for a while

- The piano man attracts costumers.
- His music provides a getaway for the patrons.
- Rhyme scheme: A B C C B
- Literary Devices: Rhymes



And the piano sounds like a carnival,
And the microphone smells like beer,
And they sit at a bar
And put my bread in my jar
And say, man, what are you doing here?



- Language- Connotation: Daydreaming of a happy time, and giving the pianist money so he can make it "big." /Denotation: The pianist is talented (much like Joel himself.) He receives tips.
- Simile, Rhyme
- A B C C B
- Theme: Being transported to a better time—even just for a moment
- For a moment, the pianist and the bar patrons are able to forget that they are in an (assumedly) dingy, lonely place.
- Like the bar patrons, the pianist is "stuck."
- They ask him "what he's doing here" because they believe he should be playing big concerts on stages across the country. Dramatic/Situational Irony because we as readers know he's going to big places.

- Sing us a song, you're the piano man,
- Sing us a song tonight.
- Well, we're all in the mood for a melody,
- And you've got us feeling all right.





Interpretation

- The over all tone of the song is sad and almost hopeless (bittersweet)
- This song is from the point of view of Billy Joel, a bar piano player that focuses on everyone else at the bar. Most of these characters at the bar (John the bartender, Davy from the Navy, Paul and the waitress, and the business men) are people with unfulfilled dreams, and the piano man's job is to help these people forget about their life for a while.
- The theme of this song is that these people are coming to the bar with no where else to go, and at the bar they are drinking for forget the dreams that they have not accomplished, and are asking Billy to play these songs because he is helping them temporarily forget, and feel like they belong somewhere and that they are not alone.