

Eleanor Rigby

Introduction

Eleanor Rigby is a song by the Beatles that dates back to 1966. The words and music were written mainly by Paul McCartney.

We suggest you listen to the song a couple of times, reading the lyrics while the song is playing, and then discuss in as much detail as possible what we learn about the two characters.

Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people
Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream
Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door
Who is it for?
All the lonely people
Where do they all come from ?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong ?
Father McKenzie writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear
No one comes near.
Look at him working. Darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there
What does he care?
All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?
Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name
Nobody came
Father McKenzie wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave
No one was saved
All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Further Questions

1. Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church after the wedding. Why might she do this? (Remember that she also dies in church.)
2. Eleanor picking up the rice is a powerful image. What might it suggest about Eleanor's dreams?
3. Eleanor "Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door". How can a woman keep a face in a jar? What does this mean?
4. If you darn your socks you use a needle and thread to sew up a hole. How might the image of the priest darning his socks suggest that his life is incomplete?
5. After Eleanor died, she was "buried along with her name". What might that mean? How can you bury a name?
6. If the priest's hands became dirty at the funeral, he would obviously want to wipe them clean, but what else might this image suggest about his reaction to Eleanor's death?
7. Looking at the situation after the funeral, the song tells us that no one was saved. How could they have been saved?