

# Rock and Roll

*“Rock and roll is here to stay.”*

—Neil Young

## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is your favourite kind of music?  
Do you like rock and roll?
2. Where did rock and roll music originate?
3. Do you know when rock and roll first became popular?
4. Who was the first rock and roll star or the “king of rock and roll”?
5. What is a disc jockey (DJ)?



### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| ___ 1. indecent    | a) the words of a song                             |
| ___ 2. popular     | b) a very famous singer or actor                   |
| ___ 3. performer   | c) a supporter, an admirer                         |
| ___ 4. hit         | d) a choice, a different kind                      |
| ___ 5. fan         | e) not proper, not good or moral                   |
| ___ 6. star        | f) to have an effect or cause something to happen  |
| ___ 7. suit        | g) liked by many people                            |
| ___ 8. alternative | h) a great success                                 |
| ___ 9. lyrics      | i) fit, satisfy, be right for                      |
| ___ 10. influence  | j) an entertainer (singer, dancer, musician, etc.) |

## Reading

1. Rock and roll is a type of music that developed in the United States in the 1950s. Rock and roll bands usually feature singers and electric guitars.
2. Popular music began to change in America after World War II. The big bands of the 1930s and early 1940s were replaced by small groups or single **performers** with backup singers.
3. Black musicians such as Louis Jordan, Fats Domino, and Muddy Waters were recording rhythm and blues records before 1950, but most American radio stations would not play them. White audiences thought that black music was crude and **indecent**. But in 1951, Alan Freed, a white disc jockey in Cleveland, Ohio, began to play their music on his program. He called it “rock and roll.”
4. As this music became more **popular** with white teenagers, white singers from the South started to blend rhythm and blues with country and western music from Appalachia. It became the new rock and roll.
5. In 1955, Bill Haley & His Comets recorded “Rock Around the Clock.” It was a **hit** all across the United States, and white teenagers became huge **fans** of rock and roll. Elvis Presley recorded his first rock and roll song in 1954 and he went on to become the first rock and roll **star**.
6. The demand for rock and roll music increased. White singers like Pat Boone performed and recorded songs written by blacks, but they would change the **lyrics** or the music to **suit** white audiences. It would be several more years before black performers and their music were accepted by most white Americans.
7. Rock and roll has **influenced** musicians around the world, from British rock in the 1960s to **alternative** rock in 2004. Most of today’s popular music is based to some degree on 1950s’ rock and roll.

## Comprehension

### A. True or False?

Write T if the statement is true. If the statement is false, write F and correct the information in your notebook.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Big bands were popular in the United States in the 1960s.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The music of black musicians played a large part in the development of rock and roll.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Alan Freed was the first rock and roll star.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The recording "Rock Around the Clock" was popular all over the United States.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Electric guitars are an important feature of rock and roll music.

### B. Ask and Answer

Practise asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write the answers in full sentences in your notebook.

- 1. What is rock and roll?
- 2. How did popular music change in the United States after the second World War?
- 3. Why did most American radio stations refuse to play the music of black musicians?
- 4. Who was Alan Freed and what role did he play in the development of rock and roll?
- 5. What two styles of music blended together to become the new rock and roll?
- 6. Who was Elvis Presley?
- 7. What did white singers do when they first started to perform songs written by blacks?
- 8. How has 1950s' rock and roll influenced the popular music of today?

## Vocabulary Review

### A. Choose the Closest Meaning

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word(s) in the following sentences.

1. Rock and roll bands usually feature singers and electric guitars.
  - a) record an album
  - b) show as the main part of something
  - c) sell to fans
2. The big bands were replaced by single performers with backup singers.
  - a) supporting
  - b) backstage
  - c) many
3. White audiences thought the black music was crude.
  - a) adults
  - b) disc jockeys
  - c) listeners
4. Singers began to blend rhythm and blues with country and western music.
  - a) listen to
  - b) mix
  - c) record
5. Most of today's popular music is based to some degree on 1950s' rock and roll.
  - a) partly comes from
  - b) is very different from
  - c) is much better than

### B. Different Meanings

Many words in English may have two or more very different meanings. Give a different meaning from the one used in the story for each of the following words. Work with a partner or use your dictionary. Write your answers in your notebook.

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| 1. hit     | 4. star   |
| 2. feature | 5. suit   |
| 3. fan     | 6. backup |

## Discussion

1. Do you like to dance? What is your favourite kind of dance music?
2. In the 1950s many parents thought that rock and roll music was having a very bad influence on their children. Do you think that parents today also worry about the kind of music their children are listening to? Explain your answer.
3. Name some current singing stars and popular bands in your country today. What do you think makes them so popular?