MEAN

Taylor Swift
Teaching Similes, Inferences, Imagery with Anti-Bullying Message

By Elyse Allen
"Mean"

By Taylor Swift

You, with your words like knives
And swords and weapons that you use against me
You have knocked me off my feet again
Got me feeling like a nothing
You, with your voice like nails on a chalkboard
Calling me out when I'm wounded
You picking on the weaker man

Well you can take me down with just one single blow
but you don't know, what you don't know...

Someday I'll be living in a big ol' city
And all you're ever going to be is mean
Someday I'll be big enough so you can't hit me
And all you're ever going to be is mean
Why you gotta be so mean?

You, with your switching sides
And your wildfire lies and your humiliation
You have pointed out my flaws again
As if I don't already see them
I walk with my head down
Trying to block you out 'cause I'll never impress you
I just wanna feel okay again

I bet you got pushed around
Somebody made you cold
But the cycle ends right now
Cause you can't lead me down that road
And you don't know, what you don't know...

Someday I'll be living in a big ol' city
And all you're ever going to be is mean
Someday I'll be big enough so you can't hit me
And all you're ever going to be is mean
Why you gotta be so mean?
And I can see you years from now in a bar
Talking over a football game
With that same big loud opinion
But nobody's listening
Washed up and ranting about the same old bitter things
Drunk and grumbling on about how I can't sing
But all you are is mean

All you are is mean
And a liar, and pathetic, and alone in life
And mean, and mean, and mean, and mean

But someday I'll be living in a big ol' city
And all you're ever going to be is mean, yeah yeah
Someday I'll be big enough so you can't hit me
And all you're ever going to be is mean
Why you gotta be so mean?

Someday I'll be living in a big ol' city
And all you're ever going to be is mean, yeah yeah
Someday I'll be big enough so you can't hit me
And all you're ever going to be is mean
Why you gotta be so mean?

"Mean" lyrics ©Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC
Questions over “Mean”

Answer in complete sentences.

1. In the first stanza, find the two similes that the writer uses and write them on the lines.

2. What does the first simile mean?

3. In the first four lines of Stanza 1, what inference can you make as to what the other person has done repeatedly to the writer’s self esteem?

4. To which sense does the imagery in line 5 appeal?

5. In Stanza 2, why do you think the writer uses wildfire to describe lies? Think about things that a wildfire suggests.

6. In Stanza 2, what does the writer reveal about herself?
7. In Stanza 3, lines 1 and 2, what does the author infer happened to the other person to make him/her the way he/she is?

______________________________________________________________________________

8. What does the writer predict will happen to the other person in the future?

______________________________________________________________________________

9. What does the writer predict for herself in the future?

______________________________________________________________________________

10. Do you believe meanness or kindness is the stronger? Why?

______________________________________________________________________________

Proofread your answers to make sure you have written in complete sentences.
KEY

Answer in complete sentences.
1. In the first stanza, find the two similes that the writer uses and write them on the lines.
The two similes in the first stanza are “words like knives” and “your voice like nails on a chalkboard.”
2. What does the first simile mean?
The first simile describes how words can hurt as much as a knife would cutting into our hearts.
3. What does the second simile mean?
The second simile refers to the sound of the bully’s voice hurting her when she’s already upset.
4. In the first four lines of Stanza 1, what inference can you make as to what the other person has done repeatedly to the writer’s self esteem?
The writer has had her self esteem receive a blow by his hurtful words before and now she’s dreading them again.
5. To which sense does the imagery in line 5 appeal?
The imagery in line 5 appeals to our sense of hearing.
6. In Stanza 2, why do you think the writer uses wildfire to describe lies? Think about things that a wildfire suggests.
A wildfire spreads quickly as lies can. A wildfire can hurt or kill things in its path and is difficult to control as lies are.
7. In Stanza 2, what does the writer reveal about herself?
The writer has moments of low self esteem and has let the other person make her feel even lower about herself.
8. In Stanza 3, lines 1 and 2, what does the author infer happened to the other person to make him/her the way he/she is?
The writer thinks the other person was treated badly by someone else. This kind of abuse is cyclical.
9. What does the writer predict will happen to the other person in the future?
The writer predicts the other person will be drinking and giving opinions and no one will be listening.
10. What does the writer predict for herself in the future?
The writer predicts she will be living in a big city and be so big herself that the other person can never “hit” her again.

Do you believe meanness or kindness is the stronger? Why?
Answers will vary. Accept any reasonable answer.
Credits

Song released in 2010 from Swift’s third studio album, *Speak Now*. ©Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. Lyrics written by Taylor Swift. This lesson is not affiliated with Taylor Swift or Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC; IT IS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.

Cover border courtesy of”
http://the3amteacher.blogspot.com/

************************************************************

If you enjoyed this freebie, please check out my store listed below. I have all levels of English/Language Arts and math products. I am constantly adding lessons to make your job easier.

www.TeachersPayTeachers.com/Store/Elyse-Allen

Please “Follow Me” so you will be notified when I add new lessons or have a sale.

A lesson you might like is “Interpreting Personification in ‘Mirror’ a poem by Sylvia Plath” which, among other things, deals with self esteem. It is shown below as are other lessons.

© Elyse Allen 2012