

# 100 Allusion Examples in Songs

- **"American Pie" by Don McLean**

The line "The day the music died" alludes to the tragic plane crash in 1959 that claimed the lives of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. Richardson.

- **"Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen**

Mentions of "David" and "the secret chord" connect to the biblical story of King David and his composition of the psalms.

- **"Hotel California" by Eagles**

"Mirrors on the ceiling, pink champagne on ice" subtly hints at the excesses and hedonism of the 1970s California rock scene.

- **"Viva la Vida" by Coldplay**

"I hear Jerusalem bells a-ringing" references the city's historical and religious significance.

- **"Black" by Pearl Jam**

The line "Tattooed everything..." can be seen as a nod to the indelible impact of memories and experiences.

- **"Rolling in the Deep" by Adele**

"Your had my heart inside of your hand" alludes to the complete emotional control one person can have over another.

- **"Man Down" by Rihanna**

The chorus's cry of "Rum pa pa pum" echoes the refrain from the classic carol "The Little Drummer Boy."

- **"Cry me a River" by Justin Timberlake**

The title itself draws from the popular idiom which means to not care about someone's lamentations or problems.

- **"Money for Nothing" by Dire Straits**

The line "MTV ain't working" refers to the growing influence of MTV in the 1980s music industry.

- **"Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen**

Scaramouche and Galileo mentioned in the lyrics are respectively a commedia dell'arte clown and a famous astronomer, adding depth to the song's eclectic narrative.

- **"Empire State of Mind" by Jay-Z feat. Alicia Keys**

References to Tribeca and Sinatra are nods to New York's vibrant culture and history.

- **"Like a Rolling Stone" by Bob Dylan**

The titular phrase "rolling stone" evokes imagery of a nomad or someone without direction, as popularized by the proverb "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

- **"Can't Stop the Feeling!" by Justin Timberlake**

Mentions of "air" and "leaving this zone" could be nods to the ecstatic feeling of love or a new experience.

- **"I Took a Pill in Ibiza" by Mike Posner**

The song's title and lyrics reflect the transient nature of fame and the music industry, with Ibiza being a hotspot for electronic dance music.

- **"Space Oddity" by David Bowie**

"Major Tom" is a fictional astronaut character, but he embodies the isolation and vastness of space.

- **"Born to Run" by Bruce Springsteen**

The title and lyrics capture the universal yearning for freedom, escape, and the American Dream.

- **"Imagine" by John Lennon**

References to "no heaven" and "no hell below us" challenge traditional religious beliefs, advocating for a united world.

- **"Lose Yourself" by Eminem**

Mentions of "mom's spaghetti" became iconic, symbolizing nervousness and the high stakes of seizing an opportunity.

- **"Material Girl" by Madonna**

By naming the song after the popularized term for a woman who desires wealth, Madonna critiques and embraces materialistic values.

- **"Billie Jean" by Michael Jackson**

The line "The kid is not my son" taps into themes of mistaken identity and scandal.

- **"Every Breath You Take" by The Police**

Sting's lyrics allude to the omnipresence of a past lover, almost like the unceasing surveillance of Big Brother.

- **"Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones**

Mick Jagger introduces Satan as a gentleman and refers to historical events like the Russian Revolution and World War II.

- **"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" by The Beatles**

The surreal imagery of "tangerine trees" and "marmalade skies" is believed to paint a picture of an LSD trip, although the band has denied it.

- **"Sultans of Swing" by Dire Straits**

A reference to jazz bands and "guitar George" speaks of the passion for music even without widespread fame.

- **"Superstition" by Stevie Wonder**

Mentions of "13-month-old babies" and "broken looking glass" allude to common superstitions about bad luck.

- **"Californication" by Red Hot Chili Peppers**

The song speaks of the spread of American culture, referencing celebrities, Hollywood, and the superficiality of fame.

- **"Thriller" by Michael Jackson**

With Vincent Price's narration and ghoulish themes, it connects to classic horror films and stories.

- **"Sweet Home Alabama" by Lynyrd Skynyrd**

The song references Neil Young's "Southern Man," offering a retort to his critique of the South.

- **"Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey**

References to a "small-town girl" and "city boy" evoke classic American tales of youthful aspiration.

- **"Time After Time" by Cyndi Lauper**

The title phrase, a common idiom, emphasizes the enduring nature of love and connection.

- **"I Will Always Love You" by Whitney Houston**

Lyrics like "bittersweet memories" allude to a love that's treasured, yet must be left behind.

- **"Poker Face" by Lady Gaga**

The song title taps into the idea of hiding one's emotions, akin to poker players masking their reactions.

- **"Drops of Jupiter" by Train**

With lines referencing "Mozart" and "Van Gogh," the song connects love and loss to the broader human experience.

- **"Radioactive" by Imagine Dragons**

The term "radioactive" speaks to a profound change or awakening, evoking nuclear imagery.

- **"Respect" by Aretha Franklin**

The spelling out of "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" has since become iconic, emphasizing the demand for respect in relationships.

- **"Viva la Vida" by Coldplay**

References to "saints" and "sinners" along with the tale of a fallen king echo historical and biblical narratives of rises and falls.

- **"Blackbird" by The Beatles**

Incorporates references to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for racial equality.

- **"Cassidy" by the Grateful Dead**

Contains allusions to Neal Cassady, a figure from the Beat Generation, and to the mythological Icarus.

- **"Battle of Evermore" by Led Zeppelin**

The song carries Tolkien-inspired imagery, likely referring to the wars in "The Lord of the Rings."

- **"Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones**

Mick Jagger's lyrics give nods to historical events like the Russian Revolution and World War II from the perspective of the devil.

- **"Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen**

Filled with biblically-inspired imagery, including references to King David and Bathsheba.

- **"Man Down" by Rihanna**

Rihanna sings of shooting a man, drawing parallels to the traditional song "I Shot the Sheriff."

- **"Lose Yourself" by Eminem**  
Eminem references Moby and the techno genre, establishing the timeline of his song.
- **"Sultans of Swing" by Dire Straits**  
Hints at the changing music landscape and pays homage to older music traditions.
- **"Money for Nothing" by Dire Straits**  
Alludes to the rise of MTV and how it transformed the music industry.
- **"A Day in the Life" by The Beatles**  
John Lennon's verses allude to contemporary events and figures in British society of the 1960s.
- **"Take Me to Church" by Hozier**  
Hozier's song is packed with religious imagery, critiquing institutionalized religion while celebrating human love.
- **"Radio Ga Ga" by Queen**  
Alludes to the golden days of radio before the rise of television, reflecting a nostalgic yearning.
- **"Only the Good Die Young" by Billy Joel**  
Joel alludes to Catholic upbringing and questions religious restrictions on youthful behavior.
- **"God Save the Queen" by Sex Pistols**  
Directly confronts and critiques the British Monarchy, particularly Queen Elizabeth II.
- **"Suzanne" by Leonard Cohen**  
Infused with religious and personal imagery, Cohen touches on themes of love and spirituality.

- **"Wind of Change" by Scorpions**  
Captures the political transformation of Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War era.
- **"London Calling" by The Clash**  
Addresses a variety of then-contemporary issues, including nuclear concerns and the decline of British empire.
- **"Don't Stand So Close to Me" by The Police**  
Sting, the lead singer, alludes to Vladimir Nabokov's novel "Lolita" in his lyrics about a schoolgirl's crush.
- **"Beds Are Burning" by Midnight Oil**  
This Australian rock song alludes to the mistreatment of indigenous Australians and their forced removal from their lands.
- **"The Night We Met" by Lord Huron**  
References the time-travel concept, creating a poignant sense of longing and nostalgia.
- **"Pumped Up Kicks" by Foster The People**  
Touches upon the dark subject of school shootings, although in a subtle manner.
- **"American Idiot" by Green Day**  
Confronts the media landscape in America during the Iraq War, critiquing mainstream narratives.
- **"Empire State of Mind" by Jay-Z featuring Alicia Keys**  
Pays homage to New York City, mentioning places like Tribeca and Harlem, symbolizing the American dream.
- **"Hotel California" by Eagles**  
Filled with ambiguous allusions that could point to the excesses of the American dream or the dark side of fame.

- **"Kashmir" by Led Zeppelin**  
Robert Plant weaves in Eastern themes, inspired by his travels to exotic places like Morocco.
- **"Jolene" by Dolly Parton**  
Though not direct, there's an implicit allusion to the biblical character Salome, known for her seductive power.
- **"Zombie" by The Cranberries**  
References the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, questioning the cycles of violence.
- **"Piano Man" by Billy Joel**  
The characters in the song echo the disillusionment in the American society of the '70s.
- **"Killing Me Softly" by Roberta Flack**  
The song captures the power of music, akin to Orpheus's enchanting melodies in Greek mythology.
- **"Space Oddity" by David Bowie**  
Clearly inspired by Stanley Kubrick's film "2001: A Space Odyssey," it explores existential themes.
- **"Romeo and Juliet" by Dire Straits**  
Takes inspiration from Shakespeare's tragic love story but gives it a modern twist.
- **"Master of Puppets" by Metallica**  
Talks about addiction, personifying it as the puppet master controlling one's life.
- **"Like a Rolling Stone" by Bob Dylan**  
Dylan's lyrics seem to evoke the biblical story of the fall from grace.
- **"Hurt" by Nine Inch Nails (Covered by Johnny Cash)**  
Touches upon depression and self-harm, encapsulating the darker sides of human emotions.



- **"Ring of Fire" by Johnny Cash**  
References love as both elemental and destructive, akin to natural calamities like fires.
- **"Under Pressure" by Queen and David Bowie**  
Describes the societal pressures, echoing the weight of modern existential crises.
- **"Tangled Up In Blue" by Bob Dylan**  
Embedded with literary allusions, including references to the works of poets like Verlaine and Rimbaud.
- **"Thriller" by Michael Jackson**  
Makes implicit allusions to classic horror movies and zombie apocalypse scenarios.
- **"Stan" by Eminem featuring Dido**  
Utilizes the concept of fan obsession, making a modern twist on the tale of Mark David Chapman, who killed John Lennon.
- **"Every Breath You Take" by The Police**  
Mentions the idea of constant surveillance, somewhat parallel to Orwell's "Big Brother" concept.
- **"Firework" by Katy Perry**  
The theme of individual potential is likened to the uniqueness and brilliance of a firework.
- **"Born to Run" by Bruce Springsteen**  
Evokes the idea of the 'American Dream,' as the characters search for freedom and happiness on the open road.
- **"Hey Jude" by The Beatles**  
Possesses an uplifting theme similar to pastoral hymns or anthems, offering comfort and encouragement.

- **"The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel**

Touches on the concept of isolation and loneliness, which can be paralleled to the existentialist ideas of philosophers like Sartre.
- **"Yesterday" by The Beatles**

The song's sense of loss and nostalgia can be likened to Marcel Proust's literary explorations of memory and time.
- **"Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen**

Its narrative can be seen as an allegory for Freddie Mercury's personal struggles.
- **"Purple Haze" by Jimi Hendrix**

Draws on the surreal and dream-like, a landscape similar to Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland."
- **"Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen**

Blends Biblical themes like David's harp and Samson and Delilah with modern questions of faith and love.
- **"Formation" by Beyoncé**

Tackles issues of race and identity, much like Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man" did in literature.
- **"The Times They Are A-Changin'" by Bob Dylan**

Resonates with historical moments of change and can be compared to Dickens' portrayal of revolutionary France.
- **"Highway to Hell" by AC/DC**

While it could be seen as just a song about the rock and roll lifestyle, it also has a darker undercurrent, similar to Goethe's "Faust."
- **"Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones**

Takes a perspective similar to John Milton's "Paradise Lost," showing a more complex view of good and evil.

- **"Money" by Pink Floyd**  
Talks about the corrupting influence of money, a concept explored extensively in works like "The Great Gatsby."
- **"We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel**  
Provides a crash course in 20th-century history, much like a modern epic poem would.
- **"Eleanor Rigby" by The Beatles**  
Touches on themes of loneliness and existential despair, which are recurrent in the works of Albert Camus.
- **"Superstition" by Stevie Wonder**  
Reflects on human belief systems, akin to the superstitious rituals in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."
- **"American Pie" by Don McLean**  
Filled with cryptic references to the 1950s and 1960s American culture, functioning like a modern-day ballad.
- **"This Land is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie**  
Inspired by the ethos of the American Dream, yet offers a critique of its inequalities.
- **"Radioactive" by Imagine Dragons**  
Deals with the anxieties around nuclear age and dystopian futures, which parallels works like "Brave New World."
- **"Hotel California" by Eagles:**  
The line "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave" could be an allusion to the myth of the Hotel California as a type of purgatory or inescapable situation, commenting on the trappings of fame or excess.
- **"Rolling in the Deep" by Adele:**  
The lyrics, "We could have had it all," might hint at the lost paradise referenced in

religious texts like the Bible, underscoring the song's theme of lost love and opportunity.

- **"Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones:**

The entire song serves as an allusion to the biblical character of Satan, offering an alternate perspective that encourages listeners to reflect on the nature of evil and culpability.

- **"American Pie" by Don McLean:**

With lines like "The day the music died," this song serves as an allusion to the plane crash that killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, marking it as a point of cultural loss.

- **"The Night We Met" by Lord Huron:**

The lyrics, "I had all and then most of you, some and now none of you," might allude to the waxing and waning phases of the moon, symbolizing the inevitable cycles of love and loss.