

***Hard Feelings/Loveless'* Literary Tool Box: How Music Shapes Our Love for Language**



Although my blog posts tend to highlight my expertise of language coupled with my professional endeavors, every language lover has an origin story—a song, a book, a reason for why they write. Today I plan on showing you mine.

During my sophomore year English class, my teacher started class displaying Lorde's *Liability* on the SmartBoard. Although I assumed this was his attempt to appear cool to his students and build rapport after giving us all Bs or below on our *Mrs. Dalloway* papers, the exercise changed the trajectory of my academic career. Our class picked apart each lyric, pointing out the literary devices we saw and showing how they worked together to create a masterpiece on the art of being emotionally “too much” for another person. Somehow, the relatability I found in Lorde's work and the intimacy of hearing each student's perspective sparked a love that led me to my major and minor. Now, as I obtain my English degree and embark on my next academic journey, I hope to do the same for someone else by analyzing a song from the same album, *Melodrama*.

Please, could you be tender?

And I will sit close to you

Let's give it a minute before we admit that we're through

Although *Liability* shaped my adolescence, *Hard Feelings/Loveless* shaped my young adulthood. I sit here writing to you all today three months after enduring a breakup with my best friend and roommate of three years, sitting and typing in the ghost of a room we once both cherished. I look to the matching Squishmallows that say “Best Friends.” I look to the wood sign that says “Our House,” which I painted during my sophomore year of college. The physical remnants of our friendship reside in this room, but the psychological remnants of my grief and turmoil reside in Lorde’s music.

Lorde’s six minute, five second dual song encompasses the gradual process of healing after an intense relationship—a process I continue to endure. We both begged the other to be “tender” and to show us love in *Hard Feelings* up until the last moment—the moment where we both walked away. The song ends with Lorde properly healing, reaching acceptance of her partner’s inability to love her as she sings *Loveless*—a feeling I soon hope to relate to. Each and every literary device, rhythm, and transition showcase how language embodies the human experience, connecting humans to one another and to the craft of writing.

Before all of the winds of regret and mistrust

Lorde’s third to last line in her first verse uses a natural element metaphor: wind. Her choice perfectly encompasses the way in which regret and mistrust forever destabilize a relationship, emulating a wind’s blow. Wind gusts through our atmosphere fast and unpredictably, smacking you when least expected. You are left with lingering chills on your body, which Lorde can’t escape when she reflects on her partner’s actions—forced to feel the everlasting effects of windchill. As she states, “all of the wind,” we realize the detachment was windy, occurring repeatedly and gradually. Every time the couple may have re-stabilized, another massive gust threw them off balance. This simple metaphor unveils the intensity of the couple’s relationship; the wind that once knocked them off their feet in love has now knocked them off their feet into hard cement.

Now we sit in your car and our love is a ghost / Well, I guess I should go, yeah, I guess I should go

The last two lines in verse one incorporate symbolism, consonance, and repetition, packing a punch of language and emotions that drive us into the first chorus. A “Ghost” not only symbolizes the relationship’s death but also the fact that the relationship has been long gone. The body of Lorde’s relationship isn’t freshly cold with a corpse of blue

lips; instead the real and raw emotions have hollowed out the couple's collective figure, leaving two, soulless, separated bodies who pretend that their relationship has not already taken its course. Furthermore, the following two phrases' consonance and repetition highlight Lorde's inability to abandon her ghost, leave her baggage behind, and let go—even after the love has long passed. She brilliantly takes the consonants (and singular vowel) of the symbol "Ghost" and weaves them together through the repeated line "Well I guess, I **should**, **go**." Lorde's repetition of the phrase stalls the final moment shared between the couple, reinforcing the awkwardness of their break-up's overdue burial. However, the chorus buries the couple for good stating that "I'll leave us right here in the cold-old-old."

We journey into the warm unknown with Lorde by verse two, finally ready to part ways with the chill-inducing ghost she once knew too well.

I light all the candles / Cut flowers for all my rooms / I care for myself the way I used to care about you

The home imagery introducing Lorde's second verse centers around reframing her home as a space of personal ownership rather than a place shared between lovers. Thus, these small actions of self-care commemorate the process of prioritizing herself. She no longer shares a bed with another body and no longer overspends her energy on another soul. We walk alongside her through each hall and room as she meticulously reclaims her space by lighting candles and cutting flowers. These two symbols of romance—candles and flowers—are now symbols of individual agency, powerfully reminding women that we set the tone for the love we receive.

Three years, loved you every single day, made me weak / It was real for me, yup, real for me / Now I'll fake it every single day / 'Til I don't need fantasy, 'til I feel you leave

But I still remember everything / How we'd drift buying groceries / How you'd dance for me / I'll start letting go of little things / 'Til I'm so far away from you / Far away from you, yeah

As we venture into *Hard Feeling*'s profound bridge, Lorde admits the hardship in moving on and concludes the song with the turning point of her healing: acceptance. We have all been a Lorde at one point—frozen from the pain of giving everything to a relationship that would never be fixed. The lyrics stop our progression as she remains haunted by the

subtle signs of the relationship's fallout, seen in little actions that were once done in sync like grocery shopping and dancing. She sings these simplistic moments in a staccato rhythm that further represent the couple's disconnect. Eventually, her hopeless reminiscing changes into healing. We return to repetition with "Far away from you" as Lorde steers herself away from the individual she once loved. These transformative lyrics are also coupled with strings to highlight the beauty of the final moment.

Every word, every beat, and every transition of *Hard Feelings* has intention, coming together to unite listeners of all backgrounds through depicting a tragically universal process. But most importantly, Lorde uses language to help us process the grief of a relationship's loss and move forward into acceptance as we dive into the two minute and twelve second finale known as *Loveless*.

Look out, lovers / We're L-O-V-E-L-E-S-S generation / L-O-V-E-L-E-S-S generation / All fuckin' with our lover's heads, generation

Although many argue that *Loveless'* interlude is pointless, the choppy rhythm and minimal song lyrics represent how young adults are detached from the deep, profound love humans crave; the same love Lorde once begged for in the beginning of *Hard Feelings*. She ends her song with an important message: society normalizes and thrives on unstable relationships. This final message shows Lorde's growth and acceptance of her circumstance. Loss is inevitable in a society where we struggle to love and are naive in regards to healthy relationships. So let Lorde and I remind you that we are better off loving ourselves deeply than settling for the love that our society thinks we deserve.

L-O-V-E-L-E-S-S generation

If you made it to the end of my analysis, then congratulations! Either you have found a love for the craft of writing, you too went through the debilitating process of staying in an unreciprocated relationship and needed validation, or you hated my post and wanted to find a reason to critique my logic. Nonetheless, I hope you now see lyricism's potential to be a literary powerhouse. And maybe even become an english major because of it.

If you loved my analysis, check out my podcast—*Pookie's Poetry and Melodies*—to hear more about my interpretation of musical theater numbers.

