

INTRODUCTION

Manic Street Preachers is a Welsh rock band formed in 1986. The song "4st 7lbs" is featured on their 1994 album *The Holy Bible*. It was their last album before the disappearance of guitarist and lyricist Richey Edwards, who was struggling with depression, self-harm and anorexia at the time the songs were written and recorded.



4st 7lbs

MANIC STREET PREACHERS, 1994

st = stone ca. 6,35 kg
lb = pound pund, 454 g

Days since I last pissed
Cheeks sunken and despaired
So gorgeous sunk to six stone
Lose my only remaining home

de'spair (vb.) fortvive
'gorgeous lækker, dejlig

5 See my third rib appear
A week later all my flesh disappears
Stretching taut, cling-film on bone
I'm getting better

taut stram
cling-film husholdningsfilm

Karen says I've reached my target weight
10 Kate and Emma and Kristin know it's fake
Problem is diet's not a big enough word
I wanna be so skinny that I rot from view

rot rådne

I want to walk in the snow
And not leave a footprint
15 I want to walk in the snow
And not soil its purity

soil (vb.) tilsnude

Stomach collapsed at five
Lift up my skirt my sex is gone
Naked and lovely and 5st 2
20 May I bud and never flower

sex (sb.) køn

bud skyde knopper

My vision's getting blurred
But I can see my ribs and I feel fine
My hands are trembling stalks
And I can feel my breasts are sinking

blurred sløret

tremble skælve, ryste
stalk stilk

choke kvæle
'savour nyde
sole ene
Ry'vita mærke af
rugmelksnækbrød
co'coon puppe(hy)lster,
shed kastes af

Mother tries to choke me with roast beef
And sits savouring her sole Ryvita
That's the way you're built my father said
But I can change, my cocoon shedding

I want to walk in the snow ...
Kate and Kristin and Kit Kat
All things I like looking at
Too weak to fuss, too weak to die
Choice is skeletal in everybody's life

fuss lave vrøvl, protestere
'skeletal basal; som et skelet

I choose my choice, I starve to frenzy
Hunger soon passes and sickness soon tires
Legs bend, stockinged I am Twiggy
And I don't mind the horror that surrounds me

'frenzy vanvid

'stockinged (adj.) ifør:
strømpebukser
Twiggy kvindelig, engelsk
fotomodel fra 1960'erne, kendt
for sin tynde, drengele krop

Self-worth scatters, self-esteem's a bore
I long since moved to a higher plateau
This discipline's so rare so please applaud
Just look at the fat scum who pamper me so

scatter spredes (og forsvinder)
self-esteem selvværd
bore (sb.) kedelig ting,
dødbider
'applaud klappe (ad rogen)
scum rak, udskud
'pamper forkæle, pylle om

'epilogue efterord, efterspil
'dignity værdighed

Yeh, 4st 7, an epilogue of youth
Such beautiful dignity in self-abuse
I've finally come to understand life
Through staring blankly at my navel

blankly tomt



Yet another member of the notorious Club 27: Richey Edwards, who went missing at the age of 27 in 1995 and was officially presumed dead in 2008

Comprehension

Listen to the song on YouTube.



1. What is the "only remaining home" that the voice, or speaker, is about to lose?
2. What does the title refer to?
3. In your own words, list everything we are told about the speaker's physical condition.
4. In what sense is she "an epilogue of youth" at the end of the song?
5. How do her parents try to help her?

Analysis and interpretation



For help, see "Analysis Angles: Fiction Texts".

1. Why does the speaker want to lose weight? As part of your answer, explain in what sense she wants to
 - * "rot from view"
 - * "not leave a footprint" in the snow
 - * "not soil its purity"
 - * "bud and never flower"
2. What is the "beautiful dignity in self-abuse" the speaker has found?
3. Compare the speaker's view of her development with her friends' and parents' views of it. Is it obvious which views the speaker wants us to consider sane and not sane, respectively? Why/why not?
4. How does the song suggest that weight issues are especially common among females?
5. Which rhetorical devices are used in the song – and with what effects? Rhetorical devices include, for example, rhymes, alliteration, metaphors, similes, paradoxes and puns.
6. Does the music fit the meaning of the lyrics? Why/why not?

Discussion



1. Do you know anyone who suffers from anorexia or another eating disorder? If so, what in the song do you recognise from their situation (if anything at all)?
2. What do you think of the parents in the song? Do they seem to do enough and the right things to help their daughter? Why/why not?
3. As its full name indicates, anorexia nervosa is a psychiatric disorder – even though it has severe physiological consequences. What makes it a mental illness?
4. What may explain the fact that anorexia occurs much more often in females than in males?
5. Studies show that anorexia and other eating disorders are on the rise in many countries including the USA, the UK and Denmark. What might explain this?
6. What could be done to fight anorexia?



Woman with anorexia nervosa

Parallels



Compare the speaker of the song to Esther in *The Bell Jar*, p. 223.

1. Whose mental health problems are most serious and alarming in your opinion?
2. May some of the causes of the girls' problems be similar? For instance, consider perfectionism, difficulties in accepting the transition from childhood to adulthood, or their relationships with their parents.

Use quotes or other examples from the texts to support your answers.

Writing



Choose one of the following assignments:

1. Write a poem (or the lyrics for a song) in which the girl in "4st 7lbs" describes how she has overcome anorexia. Use each type of rhetorical device you found in the song at least once (see analysis and interpretation question 5).
2. Write a letter to the girl in "4st 7lbs" (your friend Mary) after she has told you about her "choice" and "discipline". Make sure you start and end the letter in ways typical of personal (or informal) letters written in English.
For help, go to www.englishpractice.com, choose "Letter Writing" and read the tips about personal letters.
3. Write an opinion piece on eating disorders and the fashion industry for an international newspaper. State whether you think there is a connection between the two, and if so, what it is and whether anything should be done about it. Give reasons for your views and use examples, e.g. from your own experience or from the media.

If you decide to write the poem or opinion piece, remember to come up with a title.

Information search



1. On the Internet, find information on
 - * the widespread rise in eating disorders among boys and men, or
 - * Manic Street Preacher Richey Edwards and his disappearance.
2. Find one or more classmates who have worked on the other question and tell each other what you have found out.