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Opening extract from

The Beatles

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WAH-WAH-WHAAA!

This boy shows real talent!



John's mum, Julia, had found a new partner and had a new family, but she still visited John when she could.

1948–52

THE HARMONICA

What's that wailing sound? It's John! He's on his way to Scotland to visit his cousin Stanley in Edinburgh, and he has been playing his battered old harmonica all the way from Liverpool. He's showing real talent; yet he's been blowing that harmonica for mile after mile and it's starting to drive some passengers crazy! But the driver likes it – he likes it so much that he promises to give John a much better harmonica when they get to Edinburgh.



The next morning, at the bus depot, the driver showed John a professional 'chromatic' harmonica that he'd found on a bus. It had never been claimed, so the kindly man gave it to John. Many years later, John's harmonica-playing helped to give The Beatles' first single, *Love Me Do*, its distinctive sound.



One day The Beatles met two art students, Astrid Kirchherr and Klaus Voormann. Astrid became Stu's girlfriend and she began to take the first proper photos of the band.



One day she cut Stu's hair in a style popular with German students. She also made a collarless modern jacket for him.



1960–61

Bunk Beds

In Hamburg, The Beatles are shocked to find their home is a walk-in store cupboard. When they open the door they don't see any furniture, just bunk beds. It's next door to the Ladies toilet. Yuck! With no bath or shower, they have to wash in the toilet sink. But John makes a good group leader: whenever his band gets down in the dumps, he encourages them by shouting, "Where are we going, boys?" And the others shout back, "To the toppermost of the poppermost, Johnny!"



At first John and Paul teased Stu for his haircut and for not wearing his leather rocker gear. But then one day, while on holiday together in Paris, John and Paul changed their hairstyles too. This was the haircut that they later made famous as the 'mop-top'. After a fall-out with the German club owner, The Beatles returned to Liverpool. But Stu decided to stay behind with Astrid and he left the band to study art.

1962–63

Goodbye Pete, Hello Ringo

One day Brian meets a record producer called George Martin. George gives these Liverpool lads an audition and likes what he hears. At last they get a record deal! Meanwhile, The Beatles have taken Brian's advice and changed their image. They now wear suits – and John, Paul and George have mop-top haircuts!

But things don't go well for Pete Best, and their old buddy Ringo replaces him on drums. Their first single, *Love Me Do*, shoots into the charts. After they record their next single, *Please Please Me*, George Martin says, "You've just recorded your first Number One, boys!" His prediction comes true.



The Beatles had already begun to feel that they didn't have much in common with Pete; his personality was different from theirs, he was quieter and he didn't always share their jokes. So despite Pete's popularity with the fans, when George Martin announced he wasn't happy with Pete's drumming on The Beatles' debut recordings, the band decided to fire him. When Brian Epstein broke the news, it was a terrible shock for Pete.



Ringo was working in a holiday camp when he got the call. He happily swapped his Teddy Boy's quiff for a Beatle mop-top. At first Pete Best's fans chanted, "Pete forever, Ringo never!" One fan even gave George a black eye. But they soon accepted Ringo as a Beatle.



More hits followed. On The Beatles' first LP, also called *Please Please Me*, they recorded their version of *Twist and Shout*. John had a sore throat which produced such a raunchy sound that it is still considered the ultimate British Rock 'n' Roll vocal. Fans began to follow them everywhere, and the boys had to run to escape being torn into souvenir-sized pieces. When John married his girlfriend Cynthia, they tried to keep it a secret.



STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

This song is about the power of happy memories and favourite places.



John is happily remembering the grounds of a children's home called Strawberry Field. Mimi took him to garden parties there.



He also used to sneak in and play there with his mates. In the song he says that when life gets hard he likes to imagine Strawberry Field.

Modern therapy techniques urge us all to visit a safe place in our heads when we are somewhere worrying or unpleasant – at the dentist for example.



PENNY LANE

In the early sixties, while waiting to meet John at the bus station in Liverpool, Paul had jotted down some ideas. Now he turned it it into a nostalgic song full of everyday characters.

The barber and his shop window photographs of hairstyles...

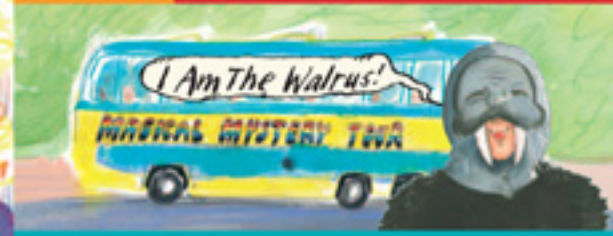
The pretty nurse selling poppies on the street for charity...

The banker without a coat in the pouring rain...

1967-68

All You Need Is Love

After *Sgt Pepper*, The Beatles are invited to make the first ever live worldwide TV broadcast. They record *All You Need is Love*, a message of world peace and goodwill. John's fascination for the power of TV commercials and propaganda inspires a hypnotic chant of the word 'Love', while he sings to over 400 million global viewers that love is all that matters. It has a huge impact on a world scarred by the war still raging in Vietnam and reaches Number One in many countries, topping their previous double single, *Penny Lane* and *Strawberry Fields Forever*.



In September, 1967, inspired by Paul's home-movie experiments, the band made a musical comedy, *Magical Mystery Tour*, about a brightly coloured wizards' coach trip. But in the UK, colour TV technology was so new that the film was first screened in black and white leaving many people bemused, it became their first critical failure. But it had some great new songs. In *I Am The Walrus* John mischievously wove into the crazy lyrics a version of the old schoolboy rhyme about custard and dead dogs' eyes, as well as a radio extract from Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

THE 1960s

The Beatles' music became the soundtrack to the amazing things that happened during the remarkable decade that was the 1960s. Many of those changes still affect our lives today. Here are just a few of them…



John F Kennedy is elected as president of the USA.

1960

Yuri Gagarin is the first man in outer-space. It is the start of the 'space race' between the USA and Soviet Union. President Kennedy promises the USA 'a man on the moon' by the end of the decade.

1961

The first trans-atlantic satellite is broadcast by Telstar.

The first ever computer video game is launched – *Spacewar!*

1962

Ringo Starr joins the band.

President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas in November.

The first home video recording tape cassettes are produced.

1963

Beatlemania begins.



Civil rights protests continue across the USA, led by Martin Luther King.

1964

The Beatles' first visit to the USA and appearances on US TV.

American combat troops join the Vietnam War.

1965

The Beatles perform the first ever stadium rock concert in history at Shea Stadium, New York City.



Fashion styles for young people continue to evolve as part of a growing worldwide 'youth culture'.

1966

The Beatles take a three-month break to record *Revolver*.

The first colour televisions are used in European homes.

The first successful heart transplant is carried out.

A youth movement begins that promotes peace and love. Wearing brightly coloured clothes they become known as 'hippies'. Many are Beatles fans.

Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band released.

The Beatles record the first-ever live worldwide TV broadcast.

1967



Peace demonstrations continue against the Vietnam War and against the threat of nuclear war between the USA and the Soviet Union.

The Beatles go to India and study meditation.

1968



Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin make the first human moon landing from Apollo 11.

Arpanet, the first prototype of the Internet, is developed.

The Beatles make their final recordings – *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road*.

John returns his MBE to Buckingham Palace with a letter protesting against the Vietnam War.

1969



Despite peace demonstrations in many countries, the war in Vietnam still rages. It continues until 1975.

The Beatles split up and begin solo careers.

1970



















