

Taylor Swift: Superstar Songwriter

Taylor Swift has sold millions of albums, filled stadiums and arenas, and won a growing list of awards. She has become such a celebrity that it's easy to forget that her success grows out of her talent as a songwriter.

Swift hasn't forgotten. "Songwriting is my favorite part of my job," she said. "I would not be a singer if I wasn't a songwriter. I wouldn't want to stand on a stage and sing something someone else wrote."

Born December 13, 1989, in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, Swift showed an early gift for writing, recording her thoughts in journals and discovering a love for poetry as she tried "to figure out the perfect combination of words, with the perfect amount of syllables, and the perfect rhyme to make it completely pop off the page."

Swift wanted to be a country singer, and at age eleven, she talked her parents into bringing her to Nashville, where she tried to get noticed by producers. Unsuccessful, she returned home realizing, "I need to figure out a way to be different." She learned the guitar and turned her poems into songs.

Her family moved to the Nashville area when Swift was fourteen, and she soon became the youngest writer at Sony/ATV's Nashville office, where she teamed up with top songwriters.

In 2005, Swift signed a recording contract with Big Machine, and a year later, she released her successful debut album. Her first five albums have gone multi-platinum. Though at first she staked her claim in pop-country music, Swift crossed over into pop with her fifth album, *1989*, released in 2014.



Swift writes deeply personal lyrics—mostly about love, found and lost. "The number one priority in my life," she said, "is figuring out how to process what I'm feeling and translate it into musical form."

Swift has reached the height of popularity, but she knows superstardom rarely lasts a lifetime. She's not worried. "When I'm forty, and nobody wants to see me in a sparkly dress anymore, I'll be, like, 'Cool, I'll just go in the studio and write songs for kids.' It's looking like a good pension plan."

Sources: *Encyclopedia of Country Music*, *Marie Claire*, *New York Magazine*, *Scholastic.com*, *The Washington Post*

LISTEN:

"Love Story"	"Our Song"
"Mean"	"Shake It Off"
"Mine"	"You Belong with Me"

READ:

Taylor Swift: The Story of Me by Riley Brooks and Molly Hodgins (Scholastic Inc., 2012): Written at a third-grade level, this book tells the story of Swift's rise to fame.

Taylor Swift: The Whole Story by Chas Newkey-Burden (HarperCollins Publishers, 2013): For ages 11 and older, the book also traces Swift's career.