



BOB DYLAN: A GIANT AMONG THE GREATS

Any list of the greatest songwriters ever includes Bob Dylan, who has made an enormous impact on music and culture.

When Dylan received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012, President Barack Obama said, “There is not a bigger giant in the history of American music.” When *Rolling Stone* magazine compiled a list of greatest songs of all time, Dylan’s “Like a Rolling Stone” was among the Top Five. And when *Time* magazine selected the one hundred most important people of the twentieth century, Dylan was among them.

Born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota, on May 24, 1941, Dylan began writing poetry as a boy, bought a guitar at age fourteen, and soaked up country, folk, blues, and rock music on the radio. In high school he played in rock bands, but his interests turned to folk music in college. He moved to New York when he was nineteen, and he quickly earned a recording contract and became serious about songwriting. He officially changed his name from Robert Zimmerman to Bob Dylan when he was twenty-one.

“I learned lyrics and how to write them from listening to folk songs,” Dylan explained in 2015. “And I played them, and I met other people that played them back when nobody was doing it.”

Dylan’s lyrics took on difficult topics such as war, injustice, and racism in the 1960s, a time when the



country was being torn apart over these issues. Young people connected with his music, and he became known as “the voice of a generation.”

Over the years, Dylan has continued to be a trailblazer, changing his music again and again and experimenting

Continued on back

LISTEN

“All Along the Watchtower,” “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “To Make You Feel My Love”



BOB DYLAN: A GIANT AMONG THE GREATS (CONTINUED)

across different music genres. In 1998, in the fourth decade of his career, he won three Grammy Awards—an amazing accomplishment.

“Everybody owes a debt to Dylan,” said rock star Bruce Springsteen. “He really did change the face of popular music, particularly in how a singer could sound and what topics you could take on.”



CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. At what age did Dylan buy his first guitar?

2. Circle the phrase “soaked up” in the third paragraph. Underline the clue words and phrases that help you understand the meaning of this phrase. Then, define it in your own words.

3. Why was Dylan called the “voice of a generation”?
