

Musical Text Analysis

Paul Simon

"I Am a Rock"

(verse 1)

A winter's day

In a deep and dark December;

I am alone,

Gazing from my window to the streets below

On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow.

(chorus)

I am a rock.

I am an island.

(verse 2)

I've built walls-

A fortress deep and mighty-

That none may penetrate.

I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.

It's laughter and it's loving I disdain.

(chorus)

I am a rock.

I am an island.

(verse 3)

Don't talk of love,

I've heard the words before;

It's sleeping in my memory.

I won't disturb the slumber of feelings that have died.

If I never loved I never would have cried.

(chorus)

I am a rock.

I am an island.

(verse 3)

I have my books

And my poetry to protect me;

I am shielded in my armor,

Hiding in my room, safe within my womb.

I touch no one and no one touches me.

(chorus)

I am a rock,

I am an island.

(outro)

And a rock feels no pain;

And an island never cries.

1. What does the speaker mean when he says, "I am a rock; I am an island."
2. How is the extended metaphor, "I am a rock," developed throughout the text?
3. What is the tone of the song?
4. Identify six examples of diction that help create the tone?
5. Highlight the figurative language. Select two examples. Explain what each shows.
6. There is a shift in tone somewhere in this song. Where does it occur? Describe the shift.
7. Identify syntactical features in the song (parallelism, anaphora, epistrophe, etc)?

5. Describe the melody and music during the chorus (I am a rock/I am an island). Specifically, how does the speaker feel about being a “rock” based on the chorus’ melody?

6. How does the song end? Why did the artist end the song this way?

Analysis Writing

Select a prompt:

Read, annotate, and listen to “I Am a Rock” by Paul Simon. Then, in a well-written essay, discuss the textual and musical features Simon uses to create the song’s tone.

Restate the song’s tone:

Read, annotate, and listen to “I Am a Rock” by Paul Simon. Then, in a well-written essay, discuss the textual and musical features Simon uses to reveal the song’s meaning.

Restate the song’s meaning:

Thesis:

In _____, the speaker uses _____

(title of song)

_____ to _____

(State textual features and musical features)

(show, create, etc.)

(state the tone or meaning here)

Diction: How does the word help create tone or meaning? What do we associate with the word? What deeper meanings could the word have on the text as a whole?

Figurative Language: What does the example show? How does it create tone or meaning?

Music: Specifically, how does the music help create tone or meaning? Consider the following for your examples: structure, instruments, volume, melody, beat, etc.

***Feel free to use other textual features, too.**