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Bob Dylan

Word Count: 1192

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Some people think that the role of singer, songwriter and musician is to entertain people with good songs containing soft lyrics about love or broken heart and fancy rhythm or beat that make people want to dance. The songs do not carry any message about society and current events. The duty to tell the truth about society and current events belongs to activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. However, during 1960s one skinny young singer with the wild hair, sharp suit and glowing eyes had made a huge impact in his career, and that singer was Bob Dylan who was regarded to be one of the most influential people at that time. In his career, Bob Dylan has made the impact and breakthrough that is new and unique in music industry, literature, and songs for society.

Bob Dylan was born as Robert Allen Zimmerman on May 24, 1941 and grew up in Hibbing, Minnesota. Bob Dylan is not only a singer but also songwriter, musician, producer, artist and writer. When Bob Dylan was fourteen years old, he learned how to play guitar and harmonica and later formed a rock & roll band called the Golden Chords in high school. At college, he used the name Bob Dylan taking after the poet Dylan Thomas to perform folk songs at coffeehouse.<sup>1</sup> To become the

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<sup>1</sup> Erlewine, Stephen Thomas. "Bob Dylan Bio | Bob Dylan Career | MTV." *New Music Videos, Reality TV Shows, Celebrity News, Pop Culture | MTV*. 31 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.mtv.com/artists/bob-dylan/biography/>>

music icon, Bob Dylan dropped out from college and made his way to New York with two goals to be the significance part of folk music at Greenwich Village and meet Woody Guthrie, his hero.<sup>2</sup> Bob Dylan accomplished both of his goals; he sang to Woody Guthrie who was dying from Huntington's chorea in the hospital.<sup>3</sup> He is still the music icon since 1960s until now.

In music industry, Bob Dylan has used his prodigious talent to compose a lot of good music and impact in the field. In 1961, Bob Dylan signed contact with Columbia; his first album was a simply name, *Bob Dylan*, which included tradition folk songs and two original songs. The second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, was his masterpiece that had all of his original songs, and the songs are about protesting such as *Blowin' in the Wind*, *A Hard Rain A-Gonna Fall* and *Don't Think Twice* which picked up the current issues at that time. *The Times They Are A-Changin'* was the third album which is pretty much the same as the second album.<sup>4</sup> Later, Bob Dylan was bored with folk music. He made his breakthrough to the pop music in the album, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Like A Rolling Stone* which has four verses and six minutes long was the most famous song from this album and new in pop music.<sup>5</sup> Bob Dylan changes people's belief that singers must have beautiful voice; his voice is not beautiful but unique. His music is not tuned only guitar and harmonica. His songs are about civil movements and anti-war happening in 1960s, and his songwriting to use music as a way to communicate with people about current issues inspired most

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<sup>2</sup> Millar, BJ. "The Life of Bob Dylan." *Angelfire Build A Free Website of Your Own*. 31 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.angelfire.com/on/dylan/bio.html>>

<sup>3</sup> Erlwine, Stephen Thomas. "Bob Dylan - Music Biography, Credits and Discography: AllMusic." *AllMusic: Music Search, Recommendations, Videos and Reviews*. 31 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/bob-dylan-mn0000066915>>

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia contributors. "Bob Dylan." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 2 Feb. 2013. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob\\_Dylan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Dylan)>

<sup>5</sup> Millar, BJ. "The Life of Bob Dylan." *Angelfire Build A Free Website of Your Own*. 31 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.angelfire.com/on/dylan/bio.html>>

people. Over four decades, Bob Dylan has produced about 40 albums, and most people try to follow his way of music especially The Beatles.

Bob Dylan does not write any songs without meaning, and most of Bob Dylan's songs have interesting lyrics considered as literature. When he was ten years old, he started writing poems. He was a very good student, got good grades and interested in literature,<sup>6</sup> so he made his music like poem. Most people also regard him as a poet, but he admitted that he is not a poet. The lyrics in the songs, however, include good metaphors, amazing rhymes, and different meaning to be interpreted. *The Times They Are A-Changin'* is the good example of metaphor; in the first verse he compared the idea of people as standing in the water. If you have an idea to change something, don't wait until it hurts you or disappears. You have to create change now. Bob Dylan has used the amazing word to rhyme with others for example he used the word juiced as verb which normally is not used and not important meaning in the song, *Like A Rolling Stone*, just to rhyme with the word used in the next stanza.<sup>7</sup> The meaning of the songs can be interpreted in different ways. Each verse in one song tends to have different meaning. Even the short stanza can inspire people. Steve Jobs when he was fired from Apple listened to *The Times They Are A-Changin'* over and over especially the stanza - For the loser now/Will be later to win...<sup>8</sup>

The voice of generation who communicated with inspiring songs about politics was what people called Bob Dylan during 1960s. During 1960s, there was a civil right movement of black people lead by Martin Luther King Jr., and United States of America had Vietnam War. Bob Dylan who could absorb what was going on

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<sup>6</sup> Bell, Ian. *Once Upon A Time The Lives Of Bob Dylan*. 2012. p.81

<sup>7</sup> Lehrer, Jonah. *Imagine: how creativity works*. 2012. p.23

<sup>8</sup> Isaacson, Walter. *Steve Jobs*. 2011 p.207

at that time wrote the songs <sup>9</sup> about current issues in politics, anti-war and black people. His songs do not provoke people to fight violently, but the songs inspire softly and let people to think and continue what they were doing in 1960s for the right choice. There are many songs which made him famous in protesting. *Blowin' in The Wind* from his second album is one example, the song encourages America to stop Vietnam War no bomb and urge the authority to open their eyes how many people had been killed in the war. Every time that people heard this song in 1960s they would have a feeling of *Blowin' in The Wind* to be the hope of song for every protest and situation. *The Times They Are A-Changin'* is one of a good protest song that encourage the new generation and everyone in every career to change the society, and this song kindly asks the old generation to step out of the new way if they cannot help anything. Bob Dylan had a chance to play the song *Only A Pawn in Their Game* which is about class rule as the root of racism <sup>10</sup> after Martin Luther King Jr. gave the speech *I Have a Dream*.<sup>11</sup> Then, Bob Dylan and his song are considered having power to create change.

In conclusion, Bob Dylan has fulfilled his role of singer, songwriter and musician. He has composed many amazing songs and made a big breakthrough in folk, blue, rock & roll and pop music. His songwriting is regarded as literature being studied by many people about using words to compare with something, rhymes and expressing the idea. During 1960s, Bob Dylan changed people view to singers that they do not sing to entertain people only. The songs can carry message about social issues, politics, war and right of people too, so Bob Dylan was recognized to be a

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<sup>9</sup> Bell, Ian. *Once Upon A Time The Lives Of Bob Dylan*. 2012. p.22

<sup>10</sup> Marqusee, Mike. "The Politics of Bob Dylan." *Red Pepper - Independent magazine of the green and radical left, featuring links to progressive sites worldwide*. 5 Feb. 2013.  
<<http://www.redpepper.org.uk/The-Politics-of-Bob-Dylan/>>

<sup>11</sup> Corbett, Ben. "Bob Dylan Protest Songs - Bob Dylan Protest Songs and the Civil Rights Movement." *American Folk Music - All About American Folk Music and Americana*. 5 Feb. 2013.  
<<http://folkmusic.about.com/od/bobdylan/a/Bob-Dylan-Civil-Rights.htm>>

spokesman of the generation who sang songs to create change in society. If one says Bob Dylan does not create anything it will be misinterpreted; Bob Dylan is a legend forever.