

# “Say What?”: Song Lyrics We Completely Misunderstood.

Everyone’s done it. Whether as children or even as adults, we hear a song and our brain processes what we are hearing incorrectly. We substitute words or phrases in place of the actual lyrics and we proceed to sing nonsense. Sometimes, we get pretty close – (See Gowdy’s “Africa” by Toto blunder below) and sometimes we aren’t even in the same ballpark – “We built this city on sausage rolls” instead of “We build this city on rock and roll.” Seriously, that’s a real thing.

In that spirit, here are five song lyrics we totally botched.

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## ***Money For Nothing* by Dire Straits (Gowdy Cannon)**

I knew so many factual things about this song when it was released. I knew it was released in 1985. I knew there was a longer version of the song that would be extremely Non-PC today. I could recognize the song after two seconds of the drum intro, or if I had to from about one second of the opening guitar riff. This song played over and over in my life when I was seven and eight years old, including on rides to school in the back seat of my brother Tracy’s T-top convertible.

But 7-year old Gowdy was badly, badly mistaken by the lyrics. I had no idea if it was “chicks for free” or “checks for free,” but that is a common misunderstanding of the song, at least if the Google search bar on my computer is right when I type in “Money for nothing and my...” But even more embarrassing was that I thought the song was saying “Money for workin’.” It was around 1989—four years later—that my future sister-in-law corrected me. I pretended I got it wrong on purpose but that

was a lie.

Also, I just found out that in the song “Africa” by Toto it’s “bless the rains” and not “miss the rains” but I forewent that one based on how I already displayed my ignorance about its lyrics in [another REO article on the 80s](#).

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### ***Get on Your Knees and Fight Like a Man* by Petra (Phill Lytle)**

I don’t have a lot of excuses here. The lyric I “misheard” is literally the title of the song, and yet, to this day, I can’t hear it correctly. (In my defense, I was pretty young when this album came out – 10 or so.) The entire song is about the power of prayer, something that Petra sang about often, and the lyrics were a great subversion of the world’s idea of manliness and what Scripture says about it. I understood that even then, yet I still always heard (and sang along) to “Get on your knees, and cry like a man!” It made no sense to me, yet that is what I heard so that is what it was.

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### ***We Three Kings* (Ben Plunkett)**

The first line of this song has always been a bit frustrating to me in that it is actually written to make it confusing. We three kings of *Orient Are*? It makes it even more frustrating that sometimes the song is actually called *We Three Kings of Orient Are*. (insert Tim “the tool man” Taylor question grunt). So I was a kid in church at Christmas time and I was always like, “Where is this magical land called *Orient Are*?”

Like many poetic type works, the blame is on the author awkwardly manipulating it for the sake of rhyming. I can’t stand it when poets and songwriters do that. In this case, this little bit of manipulation madness was brought to you

just so the author could rhyme “are” with “afar”. Just say “we are three kings of Orient” and end our misery. Come on! (Of course, that creates a little awkwardness in itself, but at least it’s a starting point for a revision).

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### ***Brother* by NEEDTOBREATHE (Michael Lytle)**

A few years ago the band NEEDTOBREATHE scored a hit with the song *Brother*. It’s a great anthem on the theme of brotherly love. My family enjoyed the song, but one line in the chorus gave us some trouble. For those who are unfamiliar, the chorus says:

*Brother let me be your shelter  
Never leave you all alone  
I can be the one you call when you’re low  
Brother let me be your fortress  
When the night winds are driving on  
Be the one to light the way, bring you home*

The second to last line was the one we couldn’t figure out. Various alternatives were suggested. My son was convinced it was “In the night with the diamond ore”. My personal favorite was “When you might need a Tylenol”. Eventually, we figured it out. Or maybe we just looked it up. Either way, we all can now sing “When the night winds are driving on” with confidence, and all is right with the world again.

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### ***Bringing in the Sheaves* (Ben Plunkett)**

It never crossed my young mind to wonder why they were singing “Bringing in the Cheese” on “The Little House On the Prairie” nor did it phase me when we sang it at church. Never mind that the rest of the song offers the biblical metaphor of harvesting. Actually, at that point in my life, it would not

have mattered what food product they were bringing in, sheaves, cheese, beef steak, pizza. it was all the same to me. While sheaves alone really does fit best with the visual and biblical context of the rest of the song, I was a kid, I didn't give a hoot for context—so get off my back! Now I want some pizza. Bring in the cheese!

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Now it's your turn. Tell us what song lyrics you have butchered – use the comment section below. And if you enjoy this article, please consider liking and sharing it on Facebook or Twitter. We appreciate the support!