

# Dig the Sixties?

The sixties delivered the final blow to make English the linguistic world power for good. English rock music lyrics reached young people's ears in the remotest places of the world and the hippie slogans traveled around the globe: *Give peace a chance! Make love, not war? Think global, act local! Why? Black is beautiful! Power to the people! Flower power!*

By Lorenz Becher

## The Times They Are A-Changin'

Looking back at the creative poetic output of the sixties we realize that Bob Dylan's song *The Times They Are A-Changin'* captures the very spirit of the age. Nothing stayed the same in those ten years, which might very well have been the most progressive decade ever. The time was one of departure towards new territories in almost every field of human activity. Even if most people don't know, the sixties are in every nook and corner of today's life. We wouldn't walk and talk the way we do without the sixties. They are in our clothes, music, ideas, schools, supermarkets, politics and homes.

### The Times They Are A-Changin'

1. come **gather** 'round people  
wherever you **roam**  
and admit that the waters  
around you have grown  
and accept it that soon  
you'll be **drenched** to the bone  
if your time to you  
is worth savin'  
then you better start swimmin'  
or you'll sink like a stone  
for the times they are a-changin'

2. come writers and critics  
who prophesize with your pen  
and keep your eyes wide  
the chance won't come again  
and don't speak too soon  
for the wheel's still **in spin**  
and there's no tellin' who  
that it's namin'  
for the loser now  
will be later to win  
for the times they are a-changin'

3. come mothers and fathers  
throughout the land  
and don't criticize  
what you can't understand  
your sons and your daughters  
are **beyond your command**  
your old road is  
rapidly agin'  
please get out of the new one  
if you can't lend your hand  
for the times they are a-changin'

4. the line it is drawn  
the **curse it is cast**  
the slow one now  
will later be fast  
as the present now  
will later be past  
the order is  
rapidly **fadin'**  
and the first one now  
will later be last  
for the times they are a-changin'

5. come senators, congressmen  
please heed the call  
don't stand in the doorway  
don't block up the hall  
for he that gets hurt  
will be he who has stalled  
there's a battle outside  
and it is ragin'  
it'll soon shake your windows  
and rattle your walls  
for the times they are a-changin'

Words: 1. gather: get together, roam: be, drenched: wet 2. in spin: turning 3. beyond your command: you can't control them  
4. curse it is cast: the spell (Fluch) is spoken, fadin': getting weak 5. heed: listen to, stall: slow down, ragin': going on

### **Race to the Moon**

Let us look at a mixed list of major innovations of the sixties. The list is not complete but it should create a general idea of the decade. On one of the battlefields of the Cold War the Russians and the Americans were trying to beat each other in the race to the moon. The American spaceship Apollo 11 finally made it and Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon in 1969. On first touching the surface of the moon he delivered his famous line about the little step for himself and the giant leap for mankind. But the first round of the costly space game had been won by the Russians in 1961, when their Jurij Gagarin was the first man in space. In the same year the anti baby pill was put on the market, ushering in the age of free love and sexual promiscuity. In 1967 they successfully transplanted a human heart. Computer technology was still in its dinosaur stage, but alive and kicking and so were all sorts of satellite projects and nuclear tests in Russia, China and America.

### **And the Stars**

One of the most conspicuous changes in the world of technology was television, which invaded the western living room. The age of the mass media had begun. Political, cultural and scientific events were now reported verbally and visually worldwide and within the hour. Thus the necessary framework for the creation of pop stars was established too. Pop stars become icons of their time. They changed the world of musical entertainment radically, reaching mass audiences and finding a perfect stage for absolute narcissistic release and self-destruction. Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison of the Doors and Jimi Hendrix experienced short, intense, creative and incredibly successful musical careers before fame and drugs killed them in their twenties. Other stars like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, James Brown or Bob Dylan just barely survived the first surge of the new and stressful music business world. Dead or alive they all symbolized and incorporated rebellious, youthful and Dionysian archetypes and many of the ideologies, hopes and causes of their time.

### **And Equal Rights and Peace for All**

Then there was the civil rights movement with Martin Luther King and their peaceful protest marches (the Mississippi freedom march (1966)), the struggle of the black Americans to become what they officially were by constitution: Americans with equal rights. Race riots in big American cities shook the foundations of white American society. For the first time Afro-Americans shouted it out loud and said they were proud of being African and black. For the first time they stopped trying to be as white as possible, thus creating a new sense of self, identity and pride. Malcom X and the Black Panthers did it the militant and violent way, King tried to do it non-violently. Both leaders died by the gun, Malcom X in 1965, King in 1968, just like another figure of youthful hope, John F. Kennedy, who got assassinated in 1963.

Apart from the civil rights movement the sixties brought forth the peace movement, which was mainly a reaction to the absurd war in Vietnam, in which thousands of (often black) young Americans died a meaningless death in a jungle far away from home. And of those who came home, many were crippled for life, psychically and/or physically. Watch the movies *The Homecoming* or *The Deer Hunters* and read Kovic's *Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July* in this context! People put flowers into guns, organized huge peace demonstrations and spread the gospel of trying to solve conflicts non-violently in a world of negative examples like the erection of the Berlin wall (1961), the Cuba crisis (1962), the military coup d'état in Indonesia (1965), the Bolivian revolution in which Che Guevara died (1967), the six-day-war in Israel (1967), the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) and the civil war in Ireland.

### **And New Ways of Life**

The roots of ecological awareness and the insight that mother earth must be protected if mankind wants to survive lie in the sixties as well and so do all the gay and lesbian coming-out movements and above all the women's liberation movement of course. Feminism was born and the roles of the sexes were questioned, discussed and modified like never before. The great variety of individual life styles and the relative tolerance characterizing the western civilization is largely the result of the sixties too. Positive and negative as the individual trips and experiments might have been and still are, they all mainly began in the sixties. People also got interested in drugs, eastern philosophies and cultures as well as psychoanalysis to enlarge their awareness.

In schools, families and communes people tried new ways of coexistence, of raising and educating children. In its most radical form the result was antiauthoritarianism. Students at universities no longer accepted traditional teachers and teaching methods. Dress codes at schools were abolished or modified. Black students were accepted at schools and universities, segregation was gradually canceled. The first steps towards multicultural societies had been taken.

Apart from pop music the sixties created innovative art, literature and film. Check out the artists Andy Warhol, Sam Francis, Jackson Pollock, Joseph Beuys, Mark Rothko and the writers Edward Albee, Anthony Burgess, Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Margaret Atwood, Max Frisch, Günter Grass, Joseph Heller or Ken Kesey. Great movies of the time are e.g. *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Dr. No* (first James Bond movie), *The Birds* (Hitchcock), *Easy Rider*, *Alexis Sorbas*, *The Pawnbroker*, *Belle de Jour*, *2001 – Space Odyssey*, *If*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Blow up*, *Barbarella* etc.