

Nevermind by Nirvana



Total Songs: 13

Smells Like Teen Spirit

Smells Like Teen Spirit Lyrics[Verse 1]

Load up on guns, bring your friends
It's fun to lose and to pretend
She's over-bored and self-assured
Oh no, I know a dirty word

[Pre-Chorus]

Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello

[Chorus]

With the lights out, it's less dangerous
Here we are now, entertain us
I feel stupid and contagious
Here we are now, entertain us
A mulatto, an albino
A mosquito, my libido

[Post-Chorus]

Yeah, hey, yay

[Verse 2]

I'm worse at what I do best
And for this gift, I feel blessed
Our little group has always been
And always will until the end

[Pre-Chorus]

Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello

[Chorus]

With the lights out, it's less dangerous
Here we are now, entertain us
I feel stupid and contagious
Here we are now, entertain us
A mulatto, an albino
A mosquito, my libido

[Post-Chorus]

Yeah, hey, yay

[Guitar Solo]

[Verse 3]

And I forget just why I taste
Oh yeah, I guess it makes me smile
I found it hard, it's hard to find
Oh well, whatever, never mind

[Pre-Chorus]

Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello, how low
Hello, hello, hello

[Chorus]

With the lights out, it's less dangerous
Here we are now, entertain us
I feel stupid and contagious
Here we are now, entertain us
A mulatto, an albino
A mosquito, my libido

[Outro]

A denial, a denial

A denial, a denial

A denial, a denial

A denial, a denial

A denial407Embed

Our little group has always been

And always will until the end

ANNOTATION:

The "[True Meaning of 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'](#)" has been the source of much debate since its release in September 1991. Several years later, in January of 1994, [Kurt Cobain](#) would famously admit to [Rolling Stone](#) that he was just "trying to write the ultimate pop song."

His signature use of sarcasm and nihilistic wordplay throughout Nirvana's catalog makes it easy to write these cryptic lines off as meaningless; however, different iterations of Cobain's hand-written lyrics depict a much darker inception.

<https://images.genius.com/2fdb0eb475062df31c786cea229800a9.600x832x1.jpg>

This scan is taken from page 141 of Kurt Cobain's [Journals](#), published in November 2002---just eight years after his alleged suicide in April 1994 at the [age of 27](#). According to the [LiveNirvana](#) song guide, the original words were:

The secret handshakes pretend

Our little group has always been and always will until the end

We cut our hands & made a pact & swore we're never going back

[Guitar Solo]

ANNOTATION:

[Kurt Cobain](#)'s guitar solo is as simple as the chords required for this song. The guitar part is very similar to the vocal line sung by Kurt in verse one and two.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/3f09f59bbd7e8c22e1126c1239d5047f.438x344x1.jpg>

[Guitar World](#) magazine ranked it at #26 on their list of the 'Greatest Guitar Solos of All Time.'

Hello, hello, hello, how low

Hello, hello, hello, how low

Hello, hello, hello, how low

Hello, hello, hello

ANNOTATION:

[Kurt Cobain](#) is playing with [assonance](#)---or, the repetition of a vowel sound to create internal rhyme---perhaps in order to underscore the prevalence of nonsense in most mainstream music.

This is regarded as one of the most interesting sections Cobain ever wrote. The repetition of "hello" sounds rather simple; even dumb or silly. A slight change in pronunciation becomes a typical, depression-oriented Nirvana line, with "how low" likely being a commentary on Kurt's mood.

<http://images.genius.com/ce0748ffb55d8864d1c176b469284015.500x378x5.gif>

An alternative [interpretation](#) points out that "hello" becomes "hollow," just like the average artist's method for lyric-writing relies on basic repetitions, or catchiness over meaning.

And I forget just why I taste

Oh yeah, I guess it makes me smile

ANNOTATION:

When people inject drugs, they "taste" that drug in their mouth. Thus, getting high is sometimes called "having a taste." This probably refers to Kurt's [well-known drug use](#). He has stated on multiple occasions that drugs, especially [his heroin habit](#), made him feel better.

It might also allude to why he makes music. Kurt's [alleged suicide note](#)---which has been [transcribed](#)--includes the following statement:

I haven't felt the excitement of listening to as well as creating music along with reading and writing for too many years now. I feel guilty beyond words about these things.

It can also extend beyond his feelings on music, and into life. Two of [his uncles committed suicide](#), and Kurt suffered from bipolar disorder. He had frequent mood swings, causing him to feel conflicting emotions toward fame, drug use, the music industry, and his own identity.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/0e43495d5426c07d963e1637ff62a6b2.600x300x1.jpg>

I found it hard, it's hard to find

Oh well, whatever, never mind

ANNOTATION:

This example of [epanodos](#) presents Cobain acknowledging (and perhaps mocking) his own tendency towards ["simple, abstract, and nihilistic"](#) lyrics. It is also a reference to the group's album [Nevermind](#), which this song is featured on.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/d38c223139d9c79b54f3cfe445e20493.768x768x1.jpg>

Load up on guns, bring your friends

It's fun to lose and to pretend

ANNOTATION:

Some listeners thought that "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was a call for revolution. However, this gun reference is a possible allusion to getting ["loaded"](#) on heroin or other drugs. Nirvana's [Top of the Pops](#) performance included altered lyrics:

Load up on drugs, kill your friends
It's fun to lose and to defend

["In Bloom"](#) also has a reference to [guns being used for amusement](#).

The opening line of Kurt Cobain's most famous tune would take on an eerie resonance when a shotgun became the symbol of his [questionable 1994 death](#), presumably by suicide.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/4fzs5c6cviluxi7pgbq2mfqnr.552x293x1.jpg>

The second line may imply that when someone is down on their luck, they can keep their spirits up by pretending things are alright---a sentiment that might have been fueled by Cobain's breakup with former girlfriend [Tobi Vail](#).

I'm worse at what I do best

And for this gift, I feel blessed

ANNOTATION:

Kurt's saying that the more he practices something, the better he gets at it - but once he begins to understand it too well, he no longer finds it as fascinating as he did when he knew nothing about it.

"And for this gift, I feel blessed" shows Kurt realizing that the things he does best in life are done far better by others. He's using irony to show that he is in fact depressed by the thought that there are people that do what he does best far better than him.

It is a depressing feeling to realize your best traits are inadequate in comparison to others.

Here we are now, entertain us

I feel stupid and contagious

Here we are now, entertain us

ANNOTATION:

Kurt's depression was well-documented. He was an extremely humble and self-deprecating individual, coming to loathe his fame and hating the image that the media portrayed of him. It is ironic that in the song that propelled him to stardom he alludes to his disgust with himself.

This also has a tie to his suicide note where he feels that his daughter Frances B. Cobain would grow up to be like him, his worst fear. He says to Boddah (His imaginary friend) that she,

Reminds me too much of what I used to be, full of love and joy, kissing every person she meets because everyone is good and will do her no harm. And that terrifies me to the point to where I can barely function. I can't stand the thought of Frances becoming the miserable, self-destructive, death rocker that I've become."

In an [interview with Rolling Stone](#), Cobain explained the "Here we are now, entertain us" line saying:

That came from something I used to say every time I used to walk into a party to break the ice. A lot of times, when you're standing around with people in a room, it's really boring and uncomfortable. So it was "Well, here we are, entertain us. You invited us here."

In this setting, Kurt uses the line to mock his fans' attitude. "Teen Spirit" ends up being a bunch of teenage fans that expect to be entertained. Kurt feels the pressure of this demand, and he is cynical about the selfish desires that underlie fandom.

[Justin Timberlake](#) would later pay homage to this lyric in his collaboration with rapper [JAY-Z](#), [Holy Grail](#), the opening track [off of the latter's thirteenth album](#).

[And we all just entertainers](#)

[And we're stupid and contagious](#)

[And we all just entertainers](#)

A mulatto, an albino

A mosquito, my libido

ANNOTATION:

The word "[mulatto](#)" is an outdated term for a person of mixed European/African ancestry; someone with tan skin. In modern times, it is looked at as offensive or derogatory. More acceptable classifications would be "mixed" or "biracial." [Albinism](#), from the Latin word *albus*, meaning "white," is a genetic condition which results in melanin deficiency; the complex polymer responsible for pigmentation in skin. Albino humans typically have red eyes, blond hair, and extremely pale skin.

Both of these terms can be seen as opposites, even though people of mixed race have the [same chances](#) of being born with albinism. Due to the inherent differences from the Western "norm," these separate groups of people may feel "left out" in society. This could be one of the reasons why [Kurt Cobain](#) mentioned them---because he could relate to not fitting in.

Interestingly, a "[Mulatto](#)," an "[Albino](#)," and a "[Mosquito](#)" are all different types of old-fashioned cocktails. It is widely known that alcoholic beverages are capable of enhancing one's [libido](#), or sex drive.

She's over-bored and self-assured

Oh no, I know a dirty word

ANNOTATION:

This line, and much of *Nevermind*, is about [Bikini Kill](#) drummer [Tobi Vail](#), who began dating [Kurt Cobain](#) in 1990. According to Everett True's 2006 book [Nirvana: The Biography](#):

The couple started dating officially a week before Tobi's 21st birthday, July 1990---when [his previous girlfriend] Tracy moved out of the Pear St. apartment, to go back to Tacoma.

Tobi was different from Tracy in terms of how she viewed relationships: where Tracy was nurturing, Tobi considered herself an equal, not to be taken advantage of. It was quite an eye-opener for Kurt, who up to that point had undeniably been influenced by society's insidious belief that it's a man who is the leader, woman the comforter.

The second line regarding "a dirty word" is largely open to interpretation.

In Bloom

In Bloom Lyrics[Verse 1]

Sell the kids for food

Weather changes moods

Spring is here again

Reproductive glands

[Chorus]

He's the one who likes all our pretty songs

And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun

But he don't knows what it means

Knows what it means, and I say

He's the one who likes all our pretty songs

And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Knows not what it means, and I say, "Yeah"

[Verse 2]

We can have some more
Nature is a whore
Bruises on the fruit
Tender age in bloom

[Chorus]

He's the one who likes all our pretty songs
And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Knows not what it means, and I say
He's the one who likes all our pretty songs
And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Knows not what it means, and I say, "Yeah"

[Guitar Solo]

[Chorus]

He's the one who likes all our pretty songs
And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Knows not what it means, and I say
He's the one who likes all our pretty songs
And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Knows not what it means
Knows not what it means
Knows not what it means, and I say, "Yeah"

[Guitar Solo]

ANNOTATION:

The song is actually a sing-along, even though it criticizes a casual fan who is clueless and only loves the "pretty songs."

Tender age in bloom

ANNOTATION:

This line could be referring to quite a few different things. The "tender age" in question could be a person's actual age, expressing the emotional roller coaster a person (or specifically Cobain) would go through in their early twenties (not so different from Neil Young's ["Old Man"](#)).

The "tender age" could also be the entire generation that Kurt Cobain later felt he was wrongly put as the "front-man" for. A whole generation of the children of Baby-Boomers was "blooming" (growing up) with radically different viewpoints and ideals than the generation before them.

Bruises on the fruit

ANNOTATION:

Referring to the last line, the people abuse the world.

The point of nature is reproduction, and humans are a part of nature, but the fruit and the children (whatever is being reproduced) can become damaged by the environment. They can also be damaged by mutations in the tender process of cell-division and formation. A bad combination of genes and environment can also cause damage. Considering Kurt's interest in biology and reproduction, this could be a metaphor for that. Maybe he felt like he was damaged.

We can have some more

Nature is a whore

ANNOTATION:

We convince ourselves that mother nature will just keep giving and giving for us, like how a whore will keep giving sex, when in reality, nature works for no one but itself, not us or any other living creature.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/15a007779a381aecb2be980bef102b03.650x650x1.jpg>

Sell the kids for food

Weather changes moods

Spring is here again

Reproductive glands

ANNOTATION:

"Sell the kids for food" brings to mind a state of extreme famine. If the crop was bad in summer you might starve in winter. "Weather changes moods", shows that the time of famine is over. When spring comes, it's time for harvest and there's usually celebration.

"Spring is here again / reproductive glands" is a straightforward reference to how the prettiest part of springtime -- blooming flowers -- is really just a bunch of plants [exposing their reproductive glands](#).

<http://images.rapgenius.com/74e7f00a39bc21a6bdac9dd2ca46a203.1000x563x1.jpg>

Alternately, This verse is possibly a comment on Cobain's tough upbringing. He believed his parents didn't care about him ("sell the kids for food").

Additionally, Kurt's mother has changed her loyalties as in 'weather changes moods'. Suddenly she's 'young' again, and Kurt exposes the falseness of this with the ironic lines 'bruises on the fruit', 'tender age in bloom'. Finally, the conflict between his mother as his loving parent and her concealed identity as a sexual being is crystallized in the lyric 'reproductive glands'.

Kurt also uses a technique called CUT-UP... copied from the author of the lunch naked William Burroughs.

Sell the kids for food [Verse 1]

We can have some more [Verse 2]

Weather changes moods [Verse 1]

Nature is a whore [Verse 2]

Spring is here again [Verse 1]

Bruises on the fruit [Verse 2]

Reproductive glands [Verse 1]

Tender age in bloom [Verse 2]

He's the one who likes all our pretty songs

And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he don't knows what it means
Knows what it means, and I say
He's the one who likes all our pretty songs
And he likes to sing along and he likes to shoot his gun
But he knows not what it means
Knows not what it means, and I say, "Yeah"

ANNOTATION:

Kurt Cobain is criticizing the "fair-weather fans." Sure they jumped on the bandwagon but they don't really know what it's about.

Cobain was very much aware that many people would not get the point of his songs and simply sang along with them blindly. On this song, he wrote a very sing-a-long chorus so that people would find themselves singing but not understanding the song: "He's the one who likes all the pretty songs, and he likes to sing along, but he knows not what it means."

<http://images.rapgenius.com/2ef8b820f55422040f704278addf104d.300x300x1.jpg>

"Likes to shoot his gun" is probably a reference to the type of people that Cobain hated the most: thoughtless macho guys with guns who lack a deeper artistic interest in the music. As the band grew more popular, these facetious people like started to come to their shows and he hated it. Cobain doesn't mean that they're about to shoot at him or anything, just that recklessly shooting guns is the type of thoughtless, testosterone-driven activity that these men do for enjoyment. They're into the grunge scene just for the thrill of it, and as an excuse to go crazy and raise hell. Rock is very macho, but that's not why Kurt was into it. He liked anti-authoritarian rebellion and wailing but not the chest-pounding male bravado aspect of it.

Come as You Are

Come as You Are Lyrics[Verse 1]

Come as you are, as you were
As I want you to be
As a friend, as a friend
As an old enemy
Take your time, hurry up
Choice is yours, don't be late
Take a rest as a friend
As an old memoria

[Refrain]

Memoria

Memoria

Memoria

[Verse 2]

Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach

As I want you to be

As a trend, as a friend

As an old memoria

[Refrain]

Memoria

Memoria

Memoria

[Chorus]

And I swear that I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

[Guitar Solo]

[Refrain]

Memoria

Memoria

Memoria

Memoria (No, I don't have a gun)

[Chorus]

And I swear that I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

[Refrain]

Memoria

Memoria147Embed

Memoria

ANNOTATION:

The key to this song is found in the combination of two lines, "Memoria" and "I swear that I don't have a gun."

"Memoria" is one of the five canons of rhetoric (Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery) taught by the ancient Romans and Greeks. As explained in this university article ("<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Canons/Memory.htm>"),

"At first, Memory seemed to have to do solely with mnemonics (memory aids) that would assist a budding orator in retaining his speech. However, it clearly had to do with more than simply learning how to memorize an already composed speech for re-presentation... (Memoria) invites consideration of how the audience will retain things in mind. To this end, certain figures of speech are available to help the memory

...

Rhetorical analysis in terms of (MEMORIA):

... an analysis of the methods a speaker uses in order for the message to be retained in the memory of those hearing..."

In other words, the narrator's use of the word "memoria" (rather than the much simpler word, "memory") directs the listener to pay attention to "certain figures of speech" used in the lyrics. In this case, the "figure of speech" involves the unexpected use of "opposite phrases," physically adjacent to each other on a line, such as:

"Come as you are, as you were

As I want you to be

As a friend, ...As an old enemy

...

Take your time, hurry up

Choice is yours, don't be late

...

Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach..."

The narrator is signaling that he is using "opposites" as a rhetoric device to convey meaning that will stick in the mind of his listener. The payoff is the wholly unexpected line, "And I swear that I don't have a gun." This line would likely be a response to an "unreported" question in the song, asked to the narrator, namely, "I'm scared about coming over. Do you have a gun?" The narrator replies, "I swear that I don't have a gun. No, I don't have a gun."

The story in the song, therefore, takes place as the narrator is contemplating using a gun, while inviting his companion to come over. It is ambiguous if the narrator is inviting his companion to come over to witness his suicide, prevent his suicide, or become a victim of a murder/suicide.

It is noted that the narrator repeats the word "memoria" as he rhetorically delivers his list of "opposites." This is, perhaps, a clue that the narrator deliberately *wants* his companion to deduce that he has a gun that he is about to use on himself, and, therefore, wants his companion to come over to stop him.

Memoria

Memoria

Memoria

ANNOTATION:

Memoria was the term for aspects involving memory in Western classical rhetoric. The word is Latin, and can be translated as "memory."

Memoria is a particularly choice word, as it contains the root word "moria", which [refers](#) to a state of mental dullness in which one is unable to act serious. This could possibly allude to one's suicide when on drugs, as they are not in a state of mind to control themselves.

[Refrain]

ANNOTATION:

In the original recordings for "Come As You Are", Cobain sung "I don't have a gun" a bar early; he decided to keep it, hence it's mix with the hook after Verse 2.

[Verse 2]

ANNOTATION:

The beauty of many of Kurt Cobain's lyrics were their poetic simplicity, through ambiguity.

Whilst offering no greater insight into the lyrics of [Verse 1](#), the lyrics of Verse 2 could also be taken from the perspective of God or a higher being, asking the listener to come regardless of the situations that they are in, to [achieve peace](#), [reach enlightenment](#) or attain [Nirvana](#).

Alternatively they could mean the **exact opposite** instead displaying Cobain's confusion and surfeit with insincere and deceitful people who say one thing, yet either mean another or say the converse to other people.

[Verse 1]

ANNOTATION:

The lyrics of the first verse seem to be contrary lines spliced together solely because of the way that they rhyme. However, as the title of the song urges the listener to 'come as they are', perhaps the lyrics are about eschewing the expectations and labels that society places, and rather being oneself with [no frills](#).

As a trend, as a friend

ANNOTATION:

When celebrities become famous, they tend to forget the "little people" - the friends they had from day one who supported them before they became a "trend." Cobain hated that part of fame and wanted to treat people equally and be treated the same way, no matter how famous he became.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/4e22fa98e7ed8d8a39a5544089f5896a.510x493x1.jpg>

It could also show Cobain's disdain for the influx of fair weather fans after the success of [Bleach](#); those who only listened because they were popular. This sentiment is also expressed in another *Nevermind* song: ["In Bloom"](#)

Take a rest as a friend

As an old memoria

ANNOTATION:

The common human experience suggests that even those in direct opposition can find some commonality. Cobain may be urging for this common-ground to be found, as a pathway for peace.

Alternatively, Cobain could be saying that you never know who your friends really are. Like trends they can come and go and in unfortunate circumstances turn into enemies.

And I swear that I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

No, I don't have a gun

ANNOTATION:

Kurt reportedly committed suicide in 1994 by shooting up an abundance of heroin, and shooting himself in the head. "I don't have a gun" is thus retrospectively ironic. Cobain was often vocal about his struggles with drug addiction in his songs.

Either Cobain is saying that he wants amity and that he comes in peace, or he is referring to duplicitous people who claim friendship, but secretly have metaphorical weapons: a [behavior that can unfortunately be expected](#) of some people.

Cobain also cautioned against interpreting his lyrics as being in the first-person:

Just because I say 'I' in a song doesn't necessarily mean it's me. A lot of people have a problem with that. It's just the way I write usually. I take on someone else's personality or character. I'd rather use somebody else's example, because my life is kinda boring. I just take stories from things I've read, off the television, or stories I've heard, maybe even some friends.

Take your time, hurry up

Choice is yours, don't be late

ANNOTATION:

By continuing with his contrary lyrics, Kurt highlights his own confusion with societies' seemingly contrary demands. However, despite asking the listener to hurry up and not to be late, these lyrics are sung quite nonchalantly. Kurt's focus, it seems, is to have a meeting or encounter, regardless of the specifics around how it occurs.

Side Note: This was actually referenced in Blink 182's "[Adam's Song](#)." Mark Hoppus used it to describe his depression and failed suicide attempts, drawing a parallel to Kurt's message:

[I took my time, I hurried up](#)
[The choice was mine, I didn't think enough](#)

Come doused in mud, soaked in bleach

ANNOTATION:

This line could refer to:

- A Seattle anti-heroin campaign slogan from the 1990s: "if doused in mud, soak in bleach"
- The polar opposites of being 'dirty' and 'clean' either physically, emotionally or the way that society views oneself
- Nirvana's [first album Bleach](#)

In considering the above, the whole song can take on several meanings.

It could still refer to the importance of relationship and contact over the way in which that contact is established. This call for intimacy could be from either the point of view of Kurt Cobain, the eyes of a deity or even a loving mother.

The specific meaning of each lyric is slightly irrelevant, as in each context it is intimacy and friendship that seems to be requested.

In ambiguity Cobain is **not** being ambivalent, but rather highlighting the complex nature of friendships. Accepting difference has importance, regardless of how one is presented.

Alternatively the whole song **could still mean the exact opposite** of this all. Kurt Cobain could be vocalising his displeasure and confusion with double-dealing friends, and the seemingly duplicitous standards promoted by capitalist society.

Breed

Breed Lyrics[Refrain]

I don't care, I don't care, I don't care
I don't care, I don't care, care if it's old
I don't mind, I don't mind, I don't mind
I don't mind, mind, don't have a mind
Get away, get away, get away
Get away, away, away from your home
I'm afraid, I'm afraid, I'm afraid
I'm afraid, afraid, ghost

[Chorus]

Even if you have, even if you need
I don't mean to stare, we don't have to breed
We could plant a house, we could build a tree
I don't even care, we could have all three
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said

[Refrain]

I don't care, I don't care, I don't care
I don't care, I don't care, care if it's old
I don't mind, I don't mind, I don't mind
I don't mind, mind, don't have a mind
Get away, get away, get away
Get away, away, away from your home
I'm afraid, I'm afraid, I'm afraid
I'm afraid, afraid, ghost

[Chorus]

Even if you have, even if you need
I don't mean to stare, we don't have to breed
We could plant a house, we could build a tree
I don't even care, we could have all three
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said

[Chorus]

Even if you have, even if you need
I don't mean to stare, we don't have to breed
We could plant a house, we could build a tree

I don't even care, we could have all three
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said
She said
[Outro]
Said... good40Embed

[Refrain]

ANNOTATION:

A rocking intro kicks off the song, with Dave Grohl's drumming being the standout.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRm8RmNGFg4>

[Butch Vig described the recording process:](#)

The song starts with a really scratchy guitar. That's where Kurt plugged straight into the mixing desk, a really punk thing. For the bass distortion we turned the amp up really loud and in the mix we also overloaded the board. We didn't use any pedals, just overloaded the channels. We went for a [Ramones](#)-type panning. Guitar hard right, drums hard left. The solo was played through a Tube Screamer [distortion pedal]. A lot of Kurt's solos had a simple melodic sensibility and he would record them very quickly"

She said, she said

She said, she said
She said, she said
She said, she said

ANNOTATION:

This sums the lyrics up as a couple's discussion, with writers even saying it "[conjures up images of what life would be like if things had worked out for Kurt and Tobi Vail](#)".

Could be an allusion to "[She Said She Said](#)" by [The Beatles](#), a song about how people have to grow up and deal with their lives. This is a reoccurring theme in Nirvana's music, appearing in songs like "[Pennyroyal Tea](#)" and "[Verse Chorus Verse](#)"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wp91YPGnLw>

I don't care, I don't care, I don't care

I don't care, I don't care, care if it's old
I don't mind, I don't mind, I don't mind
I don't mind, mind, don't have a mind
Get away, get away, get away
Get away, away, away from your home
I'm afraid, I'm afraid, I'm afraid

ANNOTATION:

These lines embody punk rock simplicity at its finest---four phrases repeated over and over before a crashing conclusion. As with most of [Kurt Cobain](#)'s lyrics, wordplay abounds. For example, "don't care if it's old" can be interpreted as "don't care if it sold," symbolizing his disregard of society's conventional concern for aesthetics and sales figures.

The lyrics also reflect how teens feel bogged down by fear, apathy, depression, and lack of motivation, leading to thoughts of running away from home. Kurt experienced a lot of this growing up. He barely had a place to call home, as he spent time in so many different households following his parents' divorce.

Well, I have apocalyptic dreams all the time. Two years ago, I wouldn't even have considered having a child. I used to say that a person who would bring a child into this life now is selfish. But I try to be optimistic, and things do look like they're getting a little bit better---just the way communication has progressed in the past ten years. [...] I was helpless when I was 12, when Reagan got elected, and there was nothing I could do about that. But now this generation is growing up, and they're in their mid-20s, they're not putting up with it.

--Kurt Cobain (from [The Advocate, February 1993](#))

Even if you have, even if you need

I don't mean to stare, we don't have to breed
We could plant a house, we could build a tree
I don't even care, we could have all three

ANNOTATION:

This seems to be about Kurt's inability to seek out a partner - poking fun at how a man has to take a woman out and do something productive with her before they have sex/breed.

He seems to be suggesting they start a family together, hoping to create the family tree and stable home that he never had (Kurt's parents divorced at age 7). However, the fact that "plant" and "build" are swapped seems to give it a more sarcastic tone.

Lithium

Lithium Lyrics[Verse 1]

I'm so happy, 'cause today I found my friends, they're in my head
I'm so ugly, that's okay, 'cause so are you, broke our mirrors
Sunday mornin' is every day for all I care, and I'm not scared
Light my candles in a daze, 'cause I've found God

[Chorus]

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah

[Verse 2]

I'm so lonely, that's okay, I shaved my head, and I'm not sad

And just maybe I'm to blame for all I've hurt, but I'm not sure
I'm so excited, I can't wait to meet you there, and I don't care
I'm so horny, that's okay, my will is good

[Chorus]

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah

[Bridge]

I like it, I'm not gonna crack

I miss you, I'm not gonna crack

I love you, I'm not gonna crack

I killed you, I'm not gonna crack

I like it, I'm not gonna crack

I miss you, I'm not gonna crack

I love you, I'm not gonna crack

I killed you, I'm not gonna crack

[Verse 1]

I'm so happy, 'cause today I found my friends, they're in my head

I'm so ugly, that's okay, 'cause so are you, broke our mirrors

Sunday mornin' is every day for all I care, and I'm not scared

Light my candles in a daze, 'cause I've found God

Related Songs[Chorus]

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah

Yeah

[Bridge]

I like it, I'm not gonna crack

I miss you, I'm not gonna crack

I love you, I'm not gonna crack

I killed you, I'm not gonna crack

I like it, I'm not gonna crack

I miss you, I'm not gonna crack

I love you, I'm not gonna crack

I killed you, I'm not gonna crack152Embed

I'm so lonely, that's okay, I shaved my head,

ANNOTATION:

As far as anyone knows, Kurt Cobain has never actually shaved his head and made this line up for the purpose of the song.

Shaving one's head can represent a [breaking free of sorts](#); a liberation from everything holding someone back. It's not entirely uncommon for a young person to shave their head when feeling anxious, depressed, or angry with their life situation. Kurt's persona in the song has just done this to cope with his loneliness.

This line could also be talking about shaving one's head for religious purposes. Since this song is about a man turning to religion, some of the religions that typically feature shaved heads are [Buddhism](#), [Hajj pilgrims](#), and [Vaishnavites](#). Hindu and Buddhist monks are also usually required to shave their heads. "Lithium" is a song about a man turning to religion so this is likely tied to that.

And I'm not sad

ANNOTATION:

He uses a negative phrase like "I'm not sad" rather than "I am happy" or something positive. This puts the word "sad" in the listener's head, and conveys a more depressed meaning than an uplifting one.

Maybe he's lying to himself about not being sad, or maybe, being [bipolar](#), people are so used to him being depressed he has to make it clear that he's not, now. Or maybe, even, he's just fine being [on a plain](#) mood, and can't really complain

Yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah
Yeah, yeah
Yeah, yeah
Yeah, yeah
Yeah, yeah
Yeah

ANNOTATION:

The chorus also contrasts the verses as to illustrate the contrast between mania and depression in the Bipolar mind.

Beyond that, there's not really anything to read into the chorus. Some of Kurt's lines he just wrote because they sounded good as he said repeatedly in interviews.

I'm so happy, 'cause today I found my friends, they're in my head

ANNOTATION:

This song is about a man becoming religious to get over the death of his spouse, so I would suggest that these lines set the tone of that story. He's happy because he has finally found friends in his head and this makes him happy because it is allowing him to finally get over his depression of his wife dying.

However, being that the song is title Lithium, a drug prescribed to people suffering hallucinations, a second interpretation comes forward more strongly: his friends are all imaginary. This may be Kurt referencing *Boddah*, his childhood imaginary friend, who was also referenced in his [suicide note](#).

I'm so excited, I can't wait to meet you there, and I don't care

ANNOTATION:

Cobain is speaking on terms of depression and mania, where something is simultaneously entertaining and awful. He wants to meet you and see you, but he also wants nothing to do with it. The subject joins the rest of the song, a perfect description of manic depression.

I'm so ugly, that's okay, 'cause so are you, broke our mirrors

ANNOTATION:

He talked about how ugly he thought he was all of the time. I remember one day he looked in a mirror and almost shed a few tears because he was so uncomfortable in his own skin. This photo was one of the only ones he's ever liked of himself. He told me he liked it because he thought he looked good. Kurt rarely looked at a photo of himself and felt he was attractive. he kept that photo in his wallet for a while, I think. He was proud of it."

- [Krist Novoselic.](#)

This is the picture: <http://images.genius.com/85f8a8918186c3226bb558c3b2890ae6.600x450x1.jpg>

When you're depressed, at times, you can only analyze the negative aspects of reality. Kurt might have been too conscious of his own flaws, but didn't feel like he could change it, just ("broke our mirrors") try his best to ignore it.

An alternate explanation of this line is that both Kurt and the person he is addressing have broken a mirror by being so hideous that it spontaneously cracks -- a [longtime trope](#) in cartoons. Cobain finds comfort in finding himself comparable to someone he either likes or despises -- if the former, they can feel a shared bond in their misery, and if the latter, he can feel vindication in an enemy being no better than him.

I'm so horny, that's okay, my will is good

ANNOTATION:

Hypersexuality is common among bipolar people. Kurt is experiencing this symptom.

[Hypersexuality is a clinical diagnosis used by mental healthcare researchers and providers to describe extremely frequent or suddenly increased sexual urges or sexual activity. People who suffer from bipolar disorder may often display tremendous swings in sex drive depending on their mood. As defined in the DSM-IV-TR, hypersexuality can be a symptom of hypomania or mania in bipolar disorder or schizoaffective disorder. In other words, a person becomes overly horny.](#)

"My will is good" could be a phallic reference: Shakespeare often used "will" as a euphemism for penis, and the way Cobain sings the line, it sounds like he's singing "My willy's good."

Light my candles in a daze, 'cause I've found God

ANNOTATION:

He lights votive candles, used for prayers:

<http://images.rapgenius.com/74b235bda5280220b0f08430f3c78476.800x532x1.jpg>

This line refers to [Kurt's](#) life after his parents divorced. After seeing his mom date an abusive man, and after not receiving the attention he craved from his father Kurt became rebellious. His father sent him to live with his friend Jesse Reed in a "born again" Christian family. This song is about how he rediscovered himself and became a devout Cristian while living with them. Lithium is used as a metaphor for religion ("religion is the opiate of the masses") and is used as a treatment for bipolar disorder and depression.

Religion is an empty comfort, like "opium for the people" as Marx put it. When people are desperate, they turn to religion for comfort, structure and meaning. But it's really an illusion. Just like heroin.

I like it, I'm not gonna crack

I miss you, I'm not gonna crack
 I love you, I'm not gonna crack
 I killed you, I'm not gonna crack
 I like it, I'm not gonna crack
 I miss you, I'm not gonna crack
 I love you, I'm not gonna crack
 I killed you, I'm not gonna crack

ANNOTATION:

According to biographer Michael Azerrad, the song references a man's turn towards religion to cope with the death of his girlfriend and keep from suicide. Similarly, Lithium, a mood stabilizer often prescribed for those suffering from manic depression, can help manage the depressive, sometimes suicidal feelings that accompany the illness. Lithium can dull emotions, making them, in some ways, more manageable, just as religion can dull the pain of loss enough to keep him from cracking.

The lyrics suggest the narrator could be going crazy inside his own head. Everything denotes some type of mental breakdown.

Sunday mornin' is every day for all I care, and I'm not scared

ANNOTATION:

Every day is lazy Sunday...

<http://images.rapgenius.com/524fbb4b2e8ee2d349312461cc806cd1.600x415x1.jpg>

Also a reference to the idea that Sunday is the holy day/God's day -- a day in which we should honor God, be good, moral, and kind. He's playing with this idea as he definitely resents this idea, religion, and people who only show kindness one day of the week (see, "Ain't It a Shame" by Nirvana).

"Sunday Morning" is also the [first Velvet Underground song](#) on their first album. Taken alone, the song sounds sweet; it's only after you hear the whole album that you realize how depressed the narrator of "Sunday Morning" is.

Polly

Polly Lyrics[Verse 1]

Polly wants a cracker
I think I should get off her first
I think she wants some water
To put out the blow torch

[Chorus]

Isn't me, have a seed
Let me clip dirty wings
Let me take a ride, cut yourself
Want some help, please myself
Got some rope, haven't told
Promise you, have been true
Let me take a ride, cut yourself
Want some help, please myself

[Verse 2]

Polly wants a cracker
Maybe she would like some food
She asked me to untie her
A chase would be nice for a few

[Chorus]

Isn't me, have a seed
Let me clip dirty wings
Let me take a ride, cut yourself
Want some help, please myself
Got some rope, haven't told
Promise you, have been true
Let me take a ride, cut yourself
Want some help, please myself

[Verse 3]

Polly said
Polly says her back hurts
She's just as bored as me
She caught me off my guard
Amazes me, the will of instinct

[Chorus]

Isn't me, have a seed
Let me clip dirty wings
Let me take a ride, cut yourself
Want some help, please myself
Got some rope, haven't told
Promise you, have been true
Let me take a ride, cut yourself
Want some help, please myself

73Embed

Maybe she would like some food

ANNOTATION:

This could be the rapist's perspective, and the smallest bit of his humanity poking through, realizing that she is starving and would most likely want food, before going back to his terrible acts.

She asked me to untie her

A chase would be nice for a few

ANNOTATION:

Cobain is referring to how [the victim was tied up and suspended from a pulley on the ceiling of Gerald Friend's mobile home](#).

In the song, the victim is pleading with the protagonist to untie her. The protagonist analyzes her request without empathy. He admits that he would enjoy the pursuit and subsequent recapture that would likely result if he did untie her.

Got some rope, haven't told

Promise you, have been true

ANNOTATION:

The kidnapper and rapist uses rope to restrain the girl, and promises her that he's being "true" to himself in his sick, depraved actions. In his own twisted way, he is being authentic in his terrible act---he acknowledges that this is the real him, a person with no regard to the will or feelings of the young girl before him. It may also refer to his fidelity to her, whether she wants it from him or not.

Polly said

ANNOTATION:

According to *Nevermind* producer [Butch Vig](#), Cobain sang this part of the line too early, but they decided to leave it in. It even appears on later performances.

She caught me off my guard

Amazes me, the will of instinct

ANNOTATION:

It can be assumed the captor has sympathized with his rape victim, because of her back hurting. This had caught the captor off guard, before he noticed it was a plot in order for her to somehow escape. He is amazed what a human being will do, and their '*instinct*', in order to survive even though the chance of survival is low.

Polly says her back hurts

She's just as bored as me

ANNOTATION:

Dropping a candid comment on back pain caused by the rape, Polly attempts to level with the rapist and earn his trust. By being almost funny, she hopes to make the rapist slip up and let her go.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/12dc4e01169e4d4a9af4ebd040382e5d.300x400x1.jpg>

She is trying anything to gain sympathy, even if it's futile.

Let me take a ride, cut yourself

Want some help, please myself

ANNOTATION:

The victim is crying out for help in the hope that she would be saved. The narrator, in true psychopath fashion, takes her pleas as a request for him to help her sexually please him. By pleasing himself, he is "helping her" get him off.

Isn't me, have a seed

Let me clip dirty wings

ANNOTATION:

"Have a seed" likely has a double meaning. It refers to him feeding her sparsely to keep her weak, and also refers to sperm, since he is raping her.

Continuing the metaphor in which the victim is a caged bird, Gerald is going to "clip her wings" (e.g. tie her up, lock her in a room, etc.) in order to stop her from escaping.

This will prevent the victim to proceed through life normally again, as if he doesn't want her to become something in the world. Dirty shows how the offender has negativity towards the victim wanting to escape and make a life for herself after this.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/226e90c28e0f3b5f880f2dd58ed350ff.388x600x1.jpg>

I think she wants some water

To put out the blow torch

ANNOTATION:

Kurt Cobain was inspired by news reports about Gerald Friend, who kidnapped a 14 year old girl, kept her captive with extended rape sessions, and tortured her with a [propane torch](#).

<http://images.rapgenius.com/a48eb8e75a9ae0b6564ae0e233ee67e1.1000x1000x1.jpg>

I think I should get off her first

ANNOTATION:

This shows that Polly isn't a parrot, but a girl being raped by the narrator. He realized that he should stop his abuse to feed her because she is starving.

The rapist realizes he can control "Polly" by raping her before feeding her, making her more likely to give in instead of fighting back so she can survive.

Territorial Pissings

Territorial Pissings Lyrics[Intro]

Come on, people, now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now

[Verse 1]

When I was an alien
Cultures weren't opinions

[Chorus]

Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there
Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait

[Verse 2]

Never met a wise man
If so, it's a woman

[Chorus]

Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there
Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait
Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there
Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait!

[Verse 3]

Just because you're paranoid
Don't mean they're not after you

[Chorus]

Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there
Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait
Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there
Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait!

[Outro]

Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there
Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait!
Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there!
Gotta find a way! Aah! Aah!
Yeah!

Gotta find a way, find a way, when I'm there

Gotta find a way, a better way, I'd better wait

ANNOTATION:

- Kurt yells angrily in a super punk-rock way, trying to make sense of the idiots around him. <http://images.rapgenius.com/1a8e707300211fb9fd135d897adc75a2.700x457x1.jpg>
- The song as a whole probably borrows impression that he formed from his childhood and onward. His experiences with misogyny, xenophobia, and his paranoia, are a lot of the things he finds wrong with the world.
- 'When I'm there' is a reference for when he is famous and he should 'find a way' to make the world better. However in the end, he gives up and says 'better wait', meaning it might always be terrible.

Just because you're paranoid

Don't mean they're not after you

ANNOTATION:

Cobain uses this [Joseph Heller quote](#) to fuck with your mind. He plays on the notion that paranoia doesn't necessarily have to be just that.

What if they really are out to get you? Huh?! Huh!?!? Some sort of uber-paranoia.

When I was an alien

Cultures weren't opinions

ANNOTATION:

Cobain is talking about himself when he was younger. Kurt can be heard in About a Son saying when he was a kid he used to fantasize that he was an alien who was adopted by his human parents and would eventually meet other aliens and find out why they were all here.

As he grew older, he saw how much people of different cultures look down on each other, [witnessing firsthand](#) the mistreatment of Native Americans:

"Territorial Pissings" references Native Americans – people smashed by raging attacks

Never met a wise man

If so, it's a woman

ANNOTATION:

This verse points to Kurt Cobain's feminist views.

I'm definitely a feminist, I'm fucking disgusted by the way women are still treated. It's 1993 and some people think we're in the 1950s. We need to make more progress. There needs to be more female musicians, more female artists, more female writers. Everything is dominated by males and I'm fucking sick of it --- [source](#)

Because I couldn't find any friends, male friends that I felt compatible with, I ended up hanging out with girls a lot. And I just always felt that they weren't treated with respect, especially because women are just totally oppressed.

- from [Blank on Blank interview](#)

I definitely feel closer to the feminine side of the human being than I do the male – or the American idea of what a male is supposed to be. Just watch a beer commercial and you'll see what I mean. - [Rolling Stone](#)

<http://images.rapgenius.com/2babd50ded34ff0c89b47927e4e08d24.382x500x1.jpg>

Come on, people, now

Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now

ANNOTATION:

["Get Together"](#), also known as "Let's Get Together", is a song written in the early 1960s by American singer-songwriter Chet Powers (aka Dino Valenti), and best known for its 1967 recording by The Youngbloods.

The '60s hippie anthem was an appeal for peace and brotherhood, presenting the polarity of love versus fear, and the choice to be made between them.

"Maybe some baby boomers will hear that and wonder what happened to those ideals," [said Krist Novoselic](#), whose screechy interpretation of the refrain does not exactly imply respect for it or his parents' generation.

Novoselic tells that he just randomly sang this when they were in the studio recording and it just stuck.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/85bbe3da51583f3f446fbf33e43e138b.200x225x1.jpg>

Drain You

Drain You Lyrics[Verse 1]

One baby to another says, "I'm lucky to have met you"
I don't care what you think unless it is about me
It is now my duty to completely drain you
I travel through a tube and end up in your infection

[Chorus]

Chew your meat for you
Pass it back and forth
In a passionate kiss
From my mouth to yours
I like you

[Verse 2]

With eyes so dilated, I've become your pupil
You taught me everything without a poison apple

The water is so yellow, I'm a healthy student
Indebted and so grateful, vacuum out the fluids

[Chorus]

Chew your meat for you
Pass it back and forth
In a passionate kiss
From my mouth to yours
I like you

[Bridge]

You, you, you
You, you, you

[Verse 3]

One baby to another says, "I'm lucky to have met you"
I don't care what you think unless it is about me
It is now my duty to completely drain you
I travel through a tube and end up in your infection

[Chorus]

Chew your meat for you
Pass it back and forth
In a passionate kiss
From my mouth to yours
Sloppy lips to lips
You're my vitamins
I like you

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Sloppy lips to lips

ANNOTATION:

By sloppy lips to lips he is refering to when him and his girlfriend would kiss.

The water is so yellow, I'm a healthy student

ANNOTATION:

Possibly a Drug Test?

You're my vitamins

ANNOTATION:

Just like it's necessary for people to get their dosage of vitamins it's necessary for Kurt to get his dosage of Tobi Vail whether that be in the form of a kiss or just by being in her presence.

Indebted and so grateful, vacuum out the fluids

ANNOTATION:

(Refers to the poison apple line as well)

According to an article by the Children's Museum of Indianapolis <https://www.childrensmuseum.org/blog/why-do-teachers-like-apples#:~:text=In%20the%20United%20States%2C%20early,an,d%20noted%20in%20Smithsonian%20Magazine.>, having students bring apples to teachers is a convention that started in the 1700's; poor students in Denmark and Sweden would bring baskets of apples to their teachers if they could not pay for their education with money. It was to avoid being 'indebted' to the teachers and the schools. Nowadays bringing an apple has morphed into a way to show appreciation for teachers.

I'm assuming the nature of these particular teachings is sexual, as the next part of the line could be a reference to oral sex.

So, Cobain is saying that he did not even have to "bring an apple," to be taught or sexually enlightened by this person, they just began willingly.

This song takes non-sexual themes and interactions and perverts them, adding a primal, lusty, and sexual undertone. It complicates the imagery that we typically conjure up when we think of school, teachers, and learning and distorts it, subverting what we once accepted to be normal.

[Bridge]

ANNOTATION:

During the bridge, [various toys and trinkets Kurt Cobain brought to the studio are heard, such as a rubber duckie, a can of hair spray, a mechanic monkey, and chains.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRK6c7uXvJE#t=3m28s)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRK6c7uXvJE#t=3m28s>

With eyes so dilated, I've become your pupil

You taught me everything without a poison apple

ANNOTATION:

When looking at someone you love or have a sexual attraction to, your pupils dilate.

This line is saying the guy will do anything the girl says, and through this, she's changed his point of view on things without a poison apple, meaning she's changed his point of view without forcing him to.

<https://images.genius.com/789872390b435e3f03db2b0d4c20613f.640x366x36.gif>

Chew your meat for you

Pass it back and forth

In a passionate kiss

From my mouth to yours

I like you

ANNOTATION:

The baby is then completely dependent on adults to care for it, i.e. chew its meat. When we hear the chorus this 1st time, passionate kiss is not meant to be sexual, but remind us once again of our animalistic nature, like how a bird feeds it's young. The baby likes you only because you keep it alive. Same way a dog only likes you because you give it kibble and scratch it's belly.

I travel through a tube and end up in your infection

ANNOTATION:

While it could be a penis or umbilical chord, the tube is probably the mouth-esophagus\trachea, draining the other person to the mouth and sucking all their diseases from within.

It is now my duty to completely drain you

ANNOTATION:

Like most of the songs on the album Nevermind, this is about Kurt Cobain's life in and around Olympia, Washington. At the time he was seeing a girl named Tobi Vail of the band Bikini Kill and the line, "It is now my duty to completely drain you," was a phrase she said to Kurt at the time of their breakup. It's unclear whether she broke up with him or vice versa.

One baby to another says, "I'm lucky to have met you"

ANNOTATION:

The babies in question are Kurt and his then-girlfriend Tobi Vail (with him he had a breakup), as [she said that line at a certain point to him.](#)

<https://images.rapgenius.com/d3758aa14deb767550920b08c924d35c.400x275x1.jpg>

Lounge Act

Lounge Act Lyrics[Verse 1]

Truth covered insecurity
I can't let you smother me
I'd like to but it couldn't work
Trading off and taking turns
I don't regret a thing

[Chorus]

And I've got this friend, you see, who makes me feel
And I wanted more than I could steal
I'll arrest myself, I'll wear a shield
I'll go out of my way to prove I still
Smell her on you

[Verse 2]

Don't tell me what I wanna hear
Afraid of never knowing fear
Experience anything you need

I'll keep fighting jealousy
Until it's fucking gone

[Chorus]

I've got this friend, you see, who makes me feel
And I wanted more than I could steal
I'll arrest myself, I'll wear a shield
I'll go out of my way to prove I still
Smell her on you

[Verse 3]

Truth covered insecurity
I can't let you smother me
I'd like to but it couldn't work
Trading off and taking turns
Don't regret a thing

[Chorus]

And I've got this friend, you see, who makes me feel
And I wanted more than I could steal
I'll arrest myself, I'll wear a shield
I'll go out of my way to make you a deal
We'll make a pact to learn from who
Ever we want without new rules
And we'll share what's lost and what we grew
They'll go out of their way to prove they still
Smell her on you
They still smell her on you
Smell her on you

I can't let you smother me

I'd like to but it couldn't work

ANNOTATION:

In his relationship with Tobi Vail he had to prove himself to her over and over, and besides that she was always changing him to be more like someone who he isn't. (She was (is) a huge feminist who didn't appreciate norms of that time. She didn't want kids, marriage etc. , but Kurt, in spite of that, did.

Ever

ANNOTATION:

There is a production mistake here in the studio version of the song.

The vocal track for Kurt actually has two different versions of him saying "ever" here, so it sounds like "Ever-ever" with the first word getting cut off a bit early.

The intended line is supposed to form "learn from who- / -ever we want" as an extension from the previous line.

When sung live, like at Reading, Kurt instead started this line with "who" again, most likely to fit with the timing, thus forming "learn from who / Whoever we want."

<https://youtu.be/7xeasq05zxc?t=124>

Truth covered insecurity

ANNOTATION:

This line could be heard in two ways:

"Truth covered in security" would mean the narrator is completely secure in their feelings of truth however...

the actual line of "Truth covered insecurity" reveals a feeling of comfortability in the narrator's ideas of what is true.

The idea of insecurity is one that remains prevalent throughout both this song and other songs by [Kurt Cobain](#).

They'll go out of their way to prove they still

Smell her on you
They still smell her on you
Smell her on you

ANNOTATION:

In a 1993 interview, Kurt Cobain told the lady interviewing him that *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* by Patrick Süskind was his favorite book, and one that he has read countless times. Maybe this has some correlation? A stretch, yes, but maybe.

Smell her on you

ANNOTATION:

This is likely a reference to the "Kurt smells like teen spirit" graffiti Kathleen Hanna from Bikini Kill sprayed on a wall. This would make sense as this is one of the few songs about Kurt's girlfriend at the time, Tobi Vail

I'll go out of my way to prove I still

Smell her on you

ANNOTATION:

This could be a reference to Nirvana's iconic tune that catapulted them to fame, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. The title from the song came from Kurt's Nevermind-era girlfriend, Tobi Vail's use of the deodorant brand Teen Spirit. Kathleen Hanna joked that Kurt smelled like Tobi's deodorant, therefore "still smell her on you".

<https://images.genius.com/4036a0129a92bcd328bc18e9986bf374.188x399x1.jpg>

Afraid of never knowing fear

ANNOTATION:

In the Grimm fairy tale "The Boy Who Wanted To Learn What Fear Was," a young boy sets off to "learn how to shiver," leading him to spend the night in a haunted castle with many frightening apparitions. The boy is so innocent and foolish that through very practical means, he vanquishes all the spirits, all without ever learning how to tremble. His time in the castle wins him the king's daughter in marriage, but he proves so annoying in his complaints about never learning what fear was that his new bride dumps a bucket of cold water over his head. At last he learns how to shiver, and the two settle down to a happy married life.

In light of the context of this song, being about a specific girl, it might be significant that only a woman could teach the boy what fear is. Cobain could be seen as the classic Fool, an innocent and irrepressible character. The Fool is also a symbol of childlike simplicity echoed by the "shield" referenced in the chorus below.

And I've got this friend, you see, who makes me feel

ANNOTATION:

Apparently the one there is Kurt's old girlfriend Tobi Vail, of [Bikini Kill](#). In an unsent letter addressed to Tobi (seen on biography *Heavier Than Heaven*) he wrote:

"Every song on this record [In Utero] is not about you. No, I am not your boyfriend. No, I don't write songs about you, except for 'Lounge Act,' which I do not play, except when my wife is not around."

<http://images.rapgenius.com/35b2f1b258f3c7c1168eecf539ee8b87.600x450x1.jpg>

I'll arrest myself, I'll wear a shield

ANNOTATION:

This line refers to Kurt Cobain's [tattoo](#) which was a shield with a letter "K" inside of it.

<http://images.rapgenius.com/96f6a342c6fab5b855089e0c3bcad3f9.100x105x1.jpg>

The tattoo is the K Records logo. The tattoo served as a reminder to always embrace a childlike spirit, as many of the bands that recorded under K Records like Beat Happening played music that was coy, minimal and seemingly naive, yet at the same time deceptively melodic and mature.

It could mean that he'll protect his emotions and heart from being hurt and broken.

Stay Away

Stay Away Lyrics[Verse 1]

Monkey see, monkey do (I don't know why)
 Rather be dead than cool (I don't know why)
 Every line ends in rhyme (I don't know why)
 Less is more, love is blind (I don't know why)

[Chorus]

Stay

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

[Verse 2]

Give an inch, take a smile (I don't know why)

Fashion shifts, fashion style (I don't know why)

Blow it out, keep it in (I don't know why)

Have to have poison skin (I don't know why)

[Chorus]

Stay

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

[Bridge]

(I don't know why)

(I don't know why)

[Chorus]

Stay

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

[Verse 1]

Monkey see, monkey do (I don't know why)

Rather be dead than cool (I don't know why)

Every line ends in rhyme (I don't know why)

Less is more, love is blind (I don't know why)

[Chorus]

Stay

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

[Bridge]

(I don't know why)

(I don't know why)

[Chorus]

Stay

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

[Outro]

Yeah!

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away

Stay away
God is gay20Embed

Less is more, love is blind

ANNOTATION:

There is a popular phrase that states that "love is blind." This means that people in relationships often ignore the errors or shortcomings of their partners because they love them. Kurt says that he doesn't understand why people would do this.

Every line ends in rhyme

ANNOTATION:

Here, Kurt may be talking about how generic and "patterned" music has become. Tunes, rhythms or structures that have been used dozens of times before, highly simple lyrics, entire songs that are "by the book", stuff like that.

Blow it out, keep it in

ANNOTATION:

This line refers to the act of blowing smoke out of one's mouth -or a fart or a burp-, but also may mean to talk something out or keep it to oneself. <https://images.genius.com/9985d8037b430f429eeb69c1df974b5b.540x360x1.jpg>

(I don't know why)

(I don't know why)

ANNOTATION:

This song also refers to everything Kurt didn't appreciate or what he despised, such as "macho" and overly-masculine men, mass media attention, and speculation/rumours. Kurt wishes they would all go away; "I don't know why" is referring to how Kurt doesn't know why he has to put up with all that he hates.

Give an inch, take a smile

ANNOTATION:

The actual way this saying is phrased is "Give an inch and they will take a mile". It means making small concessions to someone will allow that person to take advantage of you in a much larger way; that act of making those concessions perhaps leads to one becoming miserable and sick of being taken advantage of.

Rather be dead than cool

ANNOTATION:

"I'd rather be dead than cool" shows us that Kurt wasn't bothered about whether or not people disagreed with him, or did not like his image or thought process, and he didn't want to pretend to be something he wasn't just to be popular; he wanted to be himself, and if he couldn't achieve that, he would rather die than live with that fake persona.

When Neil Young used the word "cool," in his lyric "That's one more kid that will never ... get to be cool.", he was talking about people who are non-conformists. It's a major challenge to be a non-conformist in the modern world. The pressure to be dull and bland is overwhelming. With enough effort and discipline, though, you can deflect these social influences. You can develop yourself – create your own map to life – such that you become truly unique. However, like Kurt Cobain, who was unique, accurately perceived, this is no longer the meaning to which the term "cool" applies.

Real cool is dead. It has been transformed, transmogrified actually, into "corporate cool." Cool is no longer what you become through your own creative expression, your dedication to being original. Instead, it is what you are told is cool, through advertisements, as a stimulus to get you to buy. (A Buddhist monk has described the current use of the word as "narcissistic detachment," i.e., a new and subtle form of socially approved personal selfishness.)

A non-conformist is someone who has an alternative approach to life, who takes a stand against the rotten and depraved uniformity that is now shoved down our throats. Cool was first established by hippies and other long hairs in the late sixties and early seventies. (Another term used then was "far out.") Social institutions took note, and as a defensive response turned the word against us. Cool is now used as a weapon, by corporate and media fascists, to brainwash weak and undisciplined minds.

The word has been re-engineered to describe the exact opposite of what it originally meant. So now we have Nike cool, Pepsi cool, even extreme sports cool.

(I don't know why)

ANNOTATION:

This song also refers to everything Kurt didn't appreciate or what he despised, such as "macho" and overly-masculine men, mass media attention, and speculation/rumours. Kurt wishes they would all go away; "I don't know why" is referring to how Kurt doesn't know why he has to put up with all that he hates.

Monkey see, monkey do

ANNOTATION:

Monkey see, monkey do is a saying that appeared in American culture in the early 1920s. The saying basically means to learn a process without understanding why or how it really works. Another definition implies the act of imitation, usually with limited knowledge and/or concern for the consequences.

<https://images.genius.com/d2a4ee13f5cf2cc6cdc35dad33d810bc.1000x383x1.png>

Less is more, love is blind (I don't know why)

ANNOTATION:

There is a common phrase that states that "love is blind." This means that people in relationships often overlook the faults of their partners because they love them. Cobain states that he does not understand why people do this.

On a Plain

On a Plain Lyrics[Verse 1]

I'll start this off without any words
I got so high, I scratched till I bled
I love myself better than you
I know it's wrong so what should I do?
The finest day that I've ever had
Was when I learned to cry on command
Love myself better than you
I know it's wrong so what should I do? (Ooh, ooh)

[Chorus]

I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)

[Verse 2]

My mother died every night
It's safe to say, don't quote me on that
I love myself better than you
I know it's wrong so what should I do?
The black sheep got blackmailed again
Forgot to put on the zip code
Love myself better than you
I know it's wrong so what should I do? (Ooh, ooh)

[Chorus]

I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)

[Bridge]

Somewhere I have heard this before
In a dream my memory has stored
As a defense I'm neutered and spayed
What the hell am I trying to say?

[Verse 3]

It is now time to make it unclear
To write off lines that don't make sense
Love myself better than you
I know it's wrong so what should I do?
And one more special message to go
And then I'm done and I can go home

Love myself better than you
I know it's wrong so what should I do? (Ooh, ooh)
[Chorus]
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)
(Ooh, ooh)²⁴Embed

It is now time to make it unclear

To write off lines that don't make sense

ANNOTATION:

Most likely a reference to the last line: "What the hell am I trying to say?"

Cobain said in an interview in August 1993:

[...] People expect more of a thematic angle with our music. They always want to read into it. And before, I was just using pieces of poetry, and just garble—just garbage. Y'know, just stuff that would spew out of me at the time. And a lot of times when I write lyrics it's just at the last second, 'cause I'm really lazy. And then I find myself having to come up with explanations for it, you know?

The finest day that I've ever had

Was when I learned to cry on command

ANNOTATION:

It's easy to get what you want when you can manipulate people through tears.

I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)

I can't complain (Ooh, ooh)
I'm on a plain (Ooh, ooh)

ANNOTATION:

Kurt is stating that he feels like he "cant complain" because no one cared about what he said.

My mother died every night

It's safe to say, don't quote me on that

ANNOTATION:

This is a reference to when Kurt was a child, in elementary school. He made up a story to his friend saying that his mother is a demon and dies every night and wakes up in a new body, and then he said that "I didn't say this though". His friend (Johnny) ran and told the teacher and they called Kurt's mom and told her about what he said.

I'll start this off without any words

ANNOTATION:

Before the verse starts, Nirvana messes with their instruments, which is cleverly referenced in this line.

I got so high, I scratched till I bled

ANNOTATION:

Histamine (a chemical which makes you feel itchy, this chemical is released by mosquitoes but also naturally produced within our bodies) is released when you take opioids. It is extremely common for opioid users to experience itchiness, especially when taking high doses of a drug.

Source: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22417016/>

What the hell am I trying to say?

ANNOTATION:

In an August 1993 [interview](#), Kurt Cobain described his writing process:

[...] People expect more of a thematic angle with our music. They always want to read into it. And before, I was just using pieces of poetry, and just garble---just garbage. Y'know, just stuff that would spew out of me at the time. And a lot of times when I write lyrics it's just at the last second, 'cause I'm really lazy. And then I find myself having to come up with explanations for it, you know?

This song could be an example of or a reflection on this supposed piecemeal, nonsensical approach to songwriting. At times, Cobain struggled to explain his artistic choices. Whether statements like this should be taken at face value, or as an example of his habitual evasiveness with interviewers, has been the topic of much debate throughout Nirvana's history.

Something in the Way

Something in the Way Lyrics[Verse]

Underneath the bridge, tarp has sprung a leak
And the animals I've trapped, have all become my pets
And I'm living off of grass, and the drippings from the ceiling
It's okay to eat fish 'cause they don't have any feelings

[Chorus]

Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm

[Verse]

Underneath the bridge, tarp has sprung a leak
And the animals I've trapped, have all become my pets
And I'm living off of grass, and the drippings from the ceiling
It's okay to eat fish 'cause they don't have any feelings

[Chorus]

Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmmRelated Songs71Embed

And I'm living off of grass, and the drippings from the ceiling

ANNOTATION:

The term "[grass](#)" is common slang for marijuana. Kurt Cobain had an [affinity for cannabis](#) throughout his youth, but it's likely that he's simply referring to the greenery that grows around the [Wishkah River](#) and the [Young Street Bridge](#) which inspired this song:

<https://images.genius.com/b80fda1803e6c4c432cd767b1449e3c5.750x500x1.jpg>

The water droplets collecting on the ceiling would have been due to the heavy [rain climate](#) in the Pacific Northwest:

On average, Seattle gets 38 inches of rain over 156 days throughout the year, and temperatures stay between 40 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit most of the time, depending on the season.

[Verse]

ANNOTATION:

By 1993, with Kurt showing all the discontent that would lead to his suicide one year later, he would [change the lyrics aside from the chorus to an angry manifest:](#)

Underneath the toll bridge
I refuse to pay my tax
And all the Limeys will invent
All the fish and chips to sex
And the grease seep through my lower intestine
I wish I could have sex with journalists in diapers
(chorus)
[I could shit on stage, and you would eat it up](#)
My best friend is [Bret Michaels](#), from [Poison](#)

He wrote a rock epic, called [the crown of thorns](#)
I would like to compare [Guns N' Roses](#) to [Led Zeppelin](#)

Something in the way, mmm

Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm
Something in the way, mmm
Something in the way, yeah, mmm

ANNOTATION:

The lyrics to this song were spray painted on the [Young Street Bridge](#), which Kurt Cobain supposedly lived under when he was homeless. This turned out to be a myth, but Cobain did hang out there when he was a kid.

<https://images.genius.com/c33d619507bbf5ebc05790af97caa023.490x294x1.jpg>

The graffiti was later removed due to a [beautification project](#) in Aberdeen, Washington.

And the animals I've trapped, have all become my pets

ANNOTATION:

He trapped animals to keep as pets, for he was lonely and wanted company. Though this story has been [debunked](#), Kurt liked docile pets throughout his life, especially turtles. He talks about it in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qynK_wGrD0

It's okay to eat fish 'cause they don't have any feelings

ANNOTATION:

The notion that animals do not feel pain dates back to the 1600s, when [René Descartes](#) theorized that [non-humans do not experience consciousness](#). This concept has been backed by [various studies](#) and refuted by others, including research compiled in an April 2010 book by Victoria Braithwaite, titled [Do Fish Feel Pain?](#)

According to an October 2002 [Billboard article](#) about an unsent letter found in Kurt Cobain's [Journals](#), at one point in his life he was trying vegetarianism as a means of treating his stomach ailments; perhaps this diet would have more accurately been described as [pescetarian](#). It's clear that he abandoned this practice before his untimely death, as he can be seen eating pepperoni pizza in a January 1994 interview with [Nardwuar](#).

<https://youtu.be/-XZCca-d10o?t=45>

Interestingly, Cobain's astrological sign was [Pisces](#), which is Latin for "fishes." He mentioned this in his alleged April 1994 [suicide note](#):

The sad little, sensitive, unappreciative, Pisces, Jesus man.

Underneath the bridge, tarp has sprung a leak

ANNOTATION:

Kurt Cobain supposedly claimed that he briefly lived underneath a bridge in Aberdeen, Washington, which crossed the [Wishkah River](#). This bit of mythology was [debunked](#) in the 2001 Cobain biography, [Heavier Than Heaven](#), by Charles R. Cross.

Endless, Nameless

Endless, Nameless Lyrics[Verse 1]

Silence, Here I am

Here I am, silent

Bright and clear, It's what I am

I have died

[Interlude]

Mother

Mother

Mother

Mother

[Verse 2]

Death and violence

Excitement, right here

Died, go to hell

Here I am, right here

Ow!

[Interlude]

Mother

No más

No más

Mamá

[Verse 3]

Death is what I am

Go to hell, go to jail

In back of that crime

Here I am, take a chance

Dead

Die33Embed

Death is what I am

Go to hell, go to jail

In back of that crime

Here I am, take a chance

Dead

Die

ANNOTATION:

"Now I am become death, destroyer of worlds." is a Robert Oppenheimer quote. In this verse Kurt starts with "Death, Is what I am" this may be a reference to that quote.

He leads on with "Go to hell" he is now death, meaning he has the power to send you to hell

Silence, Here I am

Here I am, silent
Bright and clear, It's what I am
I have died

ANNOTATION:

Kurt is screaming random thoughts that are coming to his mind to express his rage.

Mother

Mother
Mother
Mother

ANNOTATION:

["No más"](#) is Spanish for "no more." The dark humor and subtle implications behind these lines are a signature characteristic of [Kurt Cobain's](#) lyricism.

It's also possible that the repetition of "mother" was inspired by [Queen's](#) 1975 hit single, ["Bohemian Rhapsody,"](#) or [John Lennon's](#) 1970 album opener, ["Mother"](#)---one of [Cobain's biggest influences](#):

John Lennon was definitely my favorite Beatle, hands down.

--Kurt Cobain
