

TRANSCRIPT · EPISODE 69

# Learn English with Music

Full episode script · English

349 lines

Your English Toolbox

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, the podcast that helps you build a better relationship with English, one real conversation at a time.

I'm Martin.

And I'm Julia.

And today, friends, we are doing something completely different and really exciting.

We are going to use a song to unlock a universe of vocabulary, emotion, and self-expression.

Not by studying grammar rules, but by feeling the words.

We're diving deep into Miley Cyrus' flowers.

And Julia, this isn't just a pop song,

is it?

Not at all.

It's an anthem of self-discovery, a master class in powerful, simple language.

Our goal today is for you to fully feel and understand this song, to make its vocabulary your own, and to see how English can be a tool for building yourself up.

By the end of this episode, you will listen to the song from beginning to end, and you won't just sing along.

You'll understand the profound shift from we to me.

You'll command a set of powerful verbs about growth and resilience.

And you'll feel the deep satisfaction of connecting with a global story in its original language.

We'll listen to each part of the song in three steps.

First, slower than normal.

Then, the lyrics spoken out loud like a poem.

And finally, at full speed.

This is our learning method applied to music.

Yes, a song played slowly can sound a bit strange.

But it helps you catch every

word clearly.

That way, when you hear it at full speed, it feels like a victory, not a puzzle.

Music is one of the most powerful emotional tools we have.

A song can express in three minutes what sometimes takes us years to articulate.

And flowers does exactly that.

We are going to learn English by going deep into this song.

Beside, there's a fascinating story behind how it was actually written.

Julia, do you know what this song originally

sounded like?

I love this story, Martin.

Miley herself revealed in an interview with British Vogue that flowers was born in a very different way.

The original chorus was not empowering at all.

It was actually the saddest song she had ever written.

Really?

What did the original lyrics say?

She said the chorus originally went, I can buy myself flowers, write my name in the sand, but I can't love me better than you can.

It was a 1950s

style ballad of defeat.

The message was essentially, Sure, I can be my own lover, but you're so much better.

Wow!

That is a completely different emotional universe.

So how did it transform into the anthem we know today?

She described it as a fake it till you make it mentality.

She made a conscious decision to flip the meaning.

Instead of surrendering to the sadness, she chose to declare victory even if she didn't fully feel it yet.

That

is such a powerful lesson for everyone.

Not just in music, but in language learning too.

Sometimes you have to tell yourself you can do it before you truly believe it.

Exactly.

And the song's connection to her personal life added another layer.

She released it on January 13th, 2023, which happens to be Liam Hemsworth's birthday.

The chorus also cleverly mirrors Bruno Mars' When I Was Your Man, a song reportedly dedicated to Miley during their relationship.

So she

took the words that represented a past love and reclaimed them for herself.

She literally rewrote her own story.

That's the beauty of it.

The song started as an expression of pain and evolved into a celebration of self-sufficiency.

She turned her heartbreak into something that has helped millions of people feel stronger.

Now it is time to deep dive into the first verse.

We were good.

We were gold.

Kind of dream that can't be sold.

We were right

till we weren't.

Built a home and watched it burn.

And now we step back to where the story actually begins.

This is verse one.

And the feeling here is a universe away from the chorus we just heard.

It really is, Martin.

If the chorus is standing in the sun, this verse is sifting through the ashes.

And it does something brilliant with grammar right from the first word.

The whole verse is built on we.

We were

good.

We were gold.

We were right.

It's the language of a shared identity, a joint past.

And all the verbs are in the past simple.

Were.

Built.

Watched.

This isn't just memory.

This is a door that has closed.

A reality that is finished, completed, unreachable.

That creates an immediate feeling of loss, doesn't it?

Even before we understand the details, the grammar tells us something beautiful existed and now it doesn't.

And then she gives us that first

image.

We were gold.

Gold.

Think about that word for a moment.

Gold is precious.

It's pure.

It doesn't rust or decay.

In poetry and in everyday language, a golden age means a time of perfect happiness.

She's saying this relationship felt incorruptible, invaluable.

It was the kind of connection people write stories about.

And then she adds.

Kind of dream that can't be sold.

This is a fascinating line.

A dream that can't be sold means it wasn't commercial,

it wasn't cheap.

It was authentic.

You can't put a price on it.

Exactly.

And notice the word kind.

Kind of dream.

She doesn't say a dream.

Kind of softens it, makes it feel like she's grasping for words still in awe of what they had.

It's very conversational, very real.

And then friends comes the turning point.

A tiny phrase that carries enormous weight.

We were right till we weren't.

This line is devastating in its simplicity.

Three words

on each side of till.

Perfect balance, perfect symmetry, until it breaks.

We were right is confident, certain.

And then we weren't just collapses.

No explanation, no details.

Just the fact that something shifted.

It's so true to how relationships actually end, isn't it?

One moment you're sure, the next you're not.

And there's often no clear reason, just a feeling that the ground has changed beneath you.

And what I love about this line is that it mirrors how

our listeners might sometimes feel in English.

You're speaking, you're confident, you're in the flow, and then suddenly you're not.

The words disappear.

That feeling of I was right until I wasn't is deeply human.

That's a beautiful connection, Julia.

And then she delivers the final image of this verse, and it is cinematic.

Built a home and watched it burn.

This is where the vocabulary becomes so powerful and so painful.

The verb built is about effort, time, investment.

You don't build something quickly.

A home is not a house.

A house is bricks and wood.

A home is memories, safety, love.

The place where you are most yourself.

And she pairs built with watched.

Watched is a passive verb.

She didn't run, she didn't try to save it, she didn't scream.

She just watched.

That tells us the destruction was unstoppable.

She was a witness to her own loss.

The fire metaphor here is so rich.

Fire destroys

completely.

It reduces everything to ash.

But fire also purifies.

In many traditions, fire is the beginning of something new, not just the end.

And that's why this verse, as sad as it is, plants the seed for the chorus.

Because you can only watch something burn if you're standing outside it.

She's already separate.

She's already beginning to survive.

So this is a key vocabulary our friends can take from this.

It's the language of grief, but it's also

the language of clarity.

And that clarity is what will carry her and us into the rest of the song.

Let's move on.

I didn't want to leave you.

I didn't want to lie.

Started to cry, but then remembered I.

This is the pre-chorus.

It's the bridge between sadness and strength.

Notice the shift from we to I.

The collective story is over.

Now it's just one person speaking her truth.

I didn't want to leave you.

Tells us

this separation was hard.

She didn't walk away feeling strong.

And then the crucial line.

I didn't want to lie.

Staying would have meant lying to herself.

Leaving was painful.

But staying was false.

Started to cry, but then remembered I.

And she stops.

She doesn't finish the sentence.

This unfinished line is brilliant.

We lean in and ask, remembered what?

And the answer is the entire chorus.

That word but is the pivot of the whole song.

Sadness was

coming.

But something stronger interrupted it.

For our listeners, this is a useful structure.

I didn't want to, but then I remembered.

You can use it to tell your own stories of overcoming fear.

In just three lines, we move from reluctance to tears to the spark of strength.

And now that spark is about to catch fire.

The chorus is coming.

I can buy myself flowers.

Write my name in the sand.

Talk to myself for hours.

Say things

you don't understand.

I can take myself dancing.

And I can hold my own hand.

Yeah, I can love me better than you can.

Here it is, the heart of the song.

The chorus is a grammatical declaration of independence.

Every single line uses myself.

She is both the giver and the receiver of every action.

That's a reflexive pronoun.

And it means she is complete on her own.

I can is repeated like a heartbeat.

It's not I will

or I should.

It's I can, a statement of ability and power.

The actions she chooses are deeply personal.

She buys herself flowers, a symbol of love now self-given.

She writes her name in the sand, accepting that identity can be fluid.

She talks to herself for hours and says things you don't understand.

That line isn't an insult.

It's a boundary.

Her inner world is now hers alone.

Take myself dancing and hold my own hand are acts of

physical self-compassion.

She doesn't wait for someone else to lead or comfort her.

The image of holding your own hand is especially powerful.

It's a gesture usually shared between two people.

Now she provides it for herself.

It's the physical proof that she is enough.

The sand metaphor deserves a closer look.

Writing your name in the sand is traditionally a symbol of impermanence.

The waves come and erase it.

But here she doesn't need a permanent monument.

She is

content with the moment itself.

She doesn't need to be remembered by someone else to exist.

Compare this to the roses that you left in the second verse.

Traditional roses die in a vase.

But flowers that you buy yourself are an act of ongoing self-care.

The vocabulary shift from roses to flowers is intentional and beautiful.

Roses are a specific romantic gift.

Flowers are for anyone, anytime, including yourself.

Love me better than you can is the final strike.

The comparative form, better than, is direct and complete.

It's not as well as.

It's better than.

She has moved from comparison to victory.

For our listeners, this chorus is a vocabulary toolkit for self-sufficiency.

You can use I can plus any self-care action to express your own strength.

Try it yourself.

I can make myself proud.

I can give myself time.

I can build myself up.

That's the gift of this chorus.

It gives you the grammar of self-love.

We are almost there.

We only have left one piece of the puzzle to get the whole meaning of the song.

Paint my nails cherry red.

Match the roses that you left.

No remorse, no regret.

I forgive every word you said.

Ooh, I didn't want to leave you, baby.

I didn't want to fight.

Started to cry, but then remembered I.

Now we reach the final stage of the journey.

This is the moment of aesthetic reclamation.

The verbs

shift to the present tense.

Paint, match, forgive.

She is no longer remembering the past.

She is acting in the now.

Paint my nails cherry red is a bold image.

Cherry red is the color of passion, vitality, and life.

Remember the gold from verse one?

Gold was the precious past.

Cherry red is the powerful present.

She is wearing her strength visibly.

Match the roses that you left is a genius line.

She takes the symbol of the failed

relationship and reclaims it.

The roses he left are now just a color to coordinate with her nails.

She has stripped them of their emotional power.

No remorse, no regret is absolute.

These are strong vocabulary words of finality.

Remorse is deep guilt for a wrong committed.

Regret is sadness about a past decision.

She rejects both completely.

I forgive every word you said is the final act.

Forgive is a performative verb.

Saying it performs the action of closing

the chapter.

She doesn't need an apology from him.

She gives herself the gift of letting go.

The pre-chorus returns but it feels different now.

I didn't want to fight replaces I didn't want to lie.

The conflict is over.

The war is finished.

And she still remembers who she is.

This is total emotional sovereignty.

She has moved from we were gold to I am enough.

For our listeners the vocabulary here is about closure.

To forgive, to let

go, to have no regret.

These are powerful phrases for ending any difficult chapter.

The song has traveled from fire to flowers.

And now you have the language to describe that journey in English.

And now friends we have traveled together through every corner of this beautiful song.

We started in the ashes of watched it burn.

We felt the hesitation of I didn't want to leave you.

We rose with the power of I can buy myself flowers.

we ended in the triumph of paint my nails cherry red.

You have learned that vocabulary is not just words on a page.

It is feeling it is identity it is power.

Gold burn forgive myself hold my own hand.

These are not just lyrics anymore they are tools for your own expression.

You are not someone who just listens to English.

You are someone who understands English at a deeper level.

You are someone who feels the poetry inside

the language.

Thank you for staying with us until the very end.

Your commitment to learning through emotion and music is beautiful.

And now we have a gift for you.

We are going to play the whole song one last time.

But this time it will be different.

You will hear it with new ears.

You will feel every verb every pronoun every metaphor.

You will hear the journey from we to me in real time.

Close your eyes if

you can.

Let the words wash over you.

Notice what you now understand that you didn't before.

That feeling is growth.

That feeling is yours.

We loved creating this episode for you.

And we want to know what you thought.

Did you enjoy this new format of learning through music.

Was it helpful to hear the song slow, spoken, and then fast?

What song do you want us to analyze in a future episode?

Please let us know in the

comments.

Your voice matters in this community of friends learning together.

Now take a deep breath.

Here is Miley Cyrus with flowers.

One last time.

Listen like you have never listened before.

We are Martin and Julia.

Thank you for being here.

See you in the next episode.

Thank you for listening.