

"Radioactive" — Imagine Dragons

Extended analysis · vocabulary, idioms & pronunciation · Level B1 · American accent

How to use this PDF: play the song on the website, then study these notes. Every example sentence here is our own — for the real thing, listen to the track.

1 · Extended vocabulary

radioactive	<i>adjective</i>	Emitting dangerous radiation — in the song, a metaphor for waking up transformed and powerful. <i>The lab handles radioactive material under strict controls.</i>
apocalypse	<i>noun</i>	The end of the world; total destruction. <i>The film imagines life ten years after the apocalypse.</i>
ashes	<i>noun</i>	What is left after fire — the classic image of starting again. <i>The city was rebuilt from the ashes after the war.</i>
dust	<i>noun</i>	Dry fine powder; 'to shake the dust off' means to restart. <i>He shook the dust off his old guitar and started playing again.</i>
revolution	<i>noun</i>	A complete, often sudden change — political or personal. <i>The smartphone caused a revolution in how we learn languages.</i>
to wake (up)	<i>verb</i>	To stop sleeping — figuratively, to become aware. <i>The scandal woke the country up to the problem.</i>
bones	<i>noun</i>	The skeleton; 'to feel it in your bones' = to sense something deeply. <i>I feel it in my bones — this project is going to work.</i>
system	<i>noun</i>	An organised set of things; 'the system' often means the established order. <i>You can't change the system from the outside, she said.</i>
checkout	<i>noun / verb</i>	'To check out' can mean to leave — or to stop participating mentally. <i>By the last meeting of the day, half the team had checked out.</i>
prison bus	<i>noun</i>	A vehicle transporting prisoners — in the video's imagery, captivity before liberation. <i>The documentary opens with a prison bus crossing the desert.</i>
to breathe in	<i>phrasal verb</i>	To inhale — often used for absorbing an atmosphere. <i>She stood on the cliff and breathed in the sea air.</i>
anthem	<i>noun</i>	A song a generation adopts as its own battle cry. <i>That chorus became the anthem of every stadium that summer.</i>

2 · Idioms & expressions

● to wake up to something

To finally realise or accept a reality.

Example: Companies are waking up to the cost of ignoring climate risk.

● welcome to the new age

A greeting into a changed world — use 'welcome to X' ironically or dramatically.

Example: No cash, no keys, no paper — welcome to the new age.

● all systems go

Everything is ready to start (borrowed from rocket launches).

Example: Visas approved, bags packed — all systems go for the move.

● straight from the inside

Coming directly from one's core, unfiltered.

Example: Her speech wasn't polished, but it came straight from the inside.

● enough to make my systems blow

Hyperbole pattern 'enough to make X + verb': so intense that something breaks.

Example: The plot twist was enough to make your head spin.

● to rise from the ashes

To come back stronger after destruction (the phoenix image behind the song).

Example: The club rose from the ashes of bankruptcy to win the league.

3 - Pronunciation & connected speech

◆ RA-di-o-AC-tive — five syllables, two peaks

The title word carries two stresses: RA-dio-AC-tive. Long English words usually keep one main and one secondary stress — find them and the word stops being scary.

◆ The American flap T under distortion

Even through heavy production you can hear American Ts soften between vowels. Training your ear on processed vocals like these prepares you for phone calls and podcasts with imperfect audio.

◆ Dropped G in -ing

'Waking', 'breathing' — in rock delivery the final g-sound disappears: 'wakin', 'breathin'. Standard in casual American speech too.

◆ Whoa — the sung vowel

The long 'whoa' sections are pure vowel training: American O glides from 'w' into 'oh-uh'. Singing along is legitimate pronunciation practice.

4 - Keep going

Cards, synced video and games for this song live at

yourenglishtoolbox.com/learn-english-with-music/learn-english-with-radioactive-imagine-dragons/. Lyrics are not reproduced in this document — enjoy them inside the official video.