

SONG ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Song Title Magdalene Laundries Artist: Joni Mitchell

Songwriter(s) Joni Mitchell Genre: Folk/Pop/Americana

STRUCTURE: Intro Verse Verse Pre -Chorus Bridge V V CH PR BRDG CH V CH 2 X

POINT OF VIEW: First person 2nd Person/Direct Address 3rd Person/Omniscient

STRUCTURE	RHYME SCHEME	LYRIC	CHORDS / ACCOMPANIMENT	MELODY / TIME SIG / RHYTHM
Verse	twenty-seven (A) me (B) heaven (A) laundries (B) shame / Magdalene	B rhyme connects the entire song – except the last verse Verse ends with couplet & internal rhyme	Fretless bass adds ambiance to the melody line G G Em C Em C D G	Even vocal has a “fact” feel to it, not a story, but recanting a personal history
Verse	fathers (C) priest (B) daughters (C) laundries (B) stain / Magdalene	B rhyme used to connect the verses first line in ea. 2 short phrases 7 one long		
Bridge	me (B) drudgery (B) charity (B) charity (B)	Not really a chorus, but acts like a bridge All B rhyme – ties to first verse & next framed w/4 syllable phrases	[C Em :] C Em C	
Verse	groom (D) rosaries (B) room (D) laundries (B) drain / Magdalene	Syllable count similar to other verses: approx 30 approx 16 - 19 approx 14 - 16		
Verse	flirt (E) ring (F) dirt (E) spring (F) no Magdalene rhyme	No B rhyme and no internal rhyme leaves the song unresolved – which emulates the historic situation		

NOTES:

- No chorus!! Uses the couplet and an internal rhyme to solidify the title.
- Uses the B rhyme to connect pieces of the story
- After Verse 3 expect to hear a chorus but there isn't one, goes to last verse which has no B rhyme or internal rhyme in last line. Serves to leave the song unresolved.

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LYRICS

VERSE

I was an unmarried girl, I'd just turned twenty-seven
When they sent me to the sisters for the way men looked at me.
Branded as a jezebel, I knew I was not bound for Heaven:
I'd be cast in shame into the Magdalene laundries.

VERSE

Most girls come here pregnant, some by their own fathers.
Bridget got that belly by her parish priest.
We're trying to get things white as snow all of us woe-begotten-daughters
In the steaming stains of the Magdalene laundries.

BRIDGE

Prostitutes and destitutes - and temptresses like me:
Fallen women sentenced into dreamless drudgery.
Why do they call this heartless place Our Lady of Charity?
Oh charity!

VERSE

These bloodless brides of Jesus if they had just once glimpsed their groom
Then they'd know, and they'd drop the stones concealed behind their rosaries.
They wilt the grass they walk upon, they leech the light out of a room.
They'd like to drive us down the drain at the Magdalene laundries.

VERSE

Peg O'Connell died today - she was a cheeky girl, a flirt
They just stuffed her in a hole! Surely to God you'd think at least some bells should ring!
One day I'm going to die here too, and they'll plant me in the dirt -
Like some lame bulb that never blooms come any spring.
Not any spring
No, not any spring
Not any spring

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