



## Word game: Mondegreens

Another green thing for March or anytime: The American writer Sylvia Wright coined the term “**mondegreen**” for misunderstood lines of poetry and song in a 1954 essay for Harper's Magazine. She explained that as a child, her mother read old poetry to her, and one of her favorite ballads was the 17<sup>th</sup> century “Bonnie Earl O' Murray.” The first four lines as *she* heard them were:

Ye Highlands and ye Lowlands,  
Oh, where hae ye been?  
They hae slain the Earl Amurray, [sic]  
And Lady Mondegreen.

The actual fourth line is "And laid him on the green," but even when she learned the truth, Ms. Wright felt her interpretation was better.

Here are some other misunderstood lines from songs. Can you figure out what the original line was?

1. Jose, can you see? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Through the night, with the light from a bulb \_\_\_\_\_
3. Oh my darling lemon pie \_\_\_\_\_
4. You have lost your gum forever, dreadful sorry, Clementine \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_



5. The ants are my friends; they're blowing in the wind \_\_\_\_\_

6. The girl with colitis goes by \_\_\_\_\_

7. Then I saw her face, now I'm gonna leave her \_\_\_\_\_

8. You made the rice, I made the gravy \_\_\_\_\_

9. All my luggage, I will send to you \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you going to starve an old friend? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Bringing in the sheets \_\_\_\_\_

12. Donuts make my brown eyes blue  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Goin' to the Jack-O-Lantern, gonna get married \_\_\_\_\_





14. Got a lot of lucky peanuts \_\_\_\_\_

15. I'll never leave your pizza burning \_\_\_\_\_

16. I'm 264 my shirt, 264 my shirt \_\_\_\_\_

17. Looks like tomatoes \_\_\_\_\_

18. She's got a chicken to ride or She's got a tick in her eye. \_\_\_\_\_

In a similar vein was the favorite children's song, which was actually written like this:

Maerzee dotes and dozee dotes and  
little lamsee divey  
a kiddie ee iveetoo, wouldn't you?

It translates as "Mares eat oats and does (female deer) eat oats and little lambs eat ivy, A kid'll eat ivy too, wouldn't you?" It was meant to teach children to enunciate clearly. Do you remember it?



#### Answers:

1. O, Say can you see? ("The Star Spangled Banner")
2. Through the night, with the light from above ("God Bless America")
3. Oh my darling, Clementine (traditional song)
4. You are lost and gone forever, dreadful sorry, Clementine
5. The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind (Bob Dylan)
6. The girl with kaleidoscope eyes (Beatles)
7. Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer (The Monkees)
8. You may be right, I may be crazy (Billy Joel)
9. All my loving, I will send to you (Beatles)
10. Are you going to Scarborough Fair? (Simon & Garfunkel)
11. Bringing in the sheaves (Hymn)
12. Don't it make my brown eyes blue? (Crystal Gale)
13. Goin' to the chapel and we're gonna get married (Dixie Cups, "Chapel of Love")
14. Got a lot of love between us (Frankie Vallee and the Four Seasons)
15. I'll never be your beast of burden (Rolling Stones)
16. I'm too sexy for my shirt too sexy for my shirt (Right Said Fred "I'm Too Sexy")
17. Looks like we made it (Barry Mannilow)
18. She's got a ticket to ride (Beatles)

And to misquote Psalm 23, *May Good Mrs. Murphy* (goodness and mercy) *follow you all the days of your life!*

Major source for this exercise: <http://www.corsinet.com/braincandy/wrlyric.html>