

LEARN ENGLISH WITH MUSIC

Zombie

The Cranberries

COMPLETE LEARNING WORKBOOK

Go beyond the song

Protest language, Irish vocal identity and historical memory.

17 verified learning cards / Level B2 / guided practice

SECTION 00

Your learning journey

Watch first, explore second, practise from memory and finish with the complete card library.

1 WATCH	Follow the official lyric video and synced cards.
2 EXPLORE	Study language, extended vocabulary, culture and sound.
3 PRACTISE	Complete the guided challenges without looking back.
4 REVIEW	Use the final 17-card library by category.

Three sources of value

Song language gives you patterns to reuse. **Extended vocabulary** helps you discuss the themes and music. **Context** helps you understand cultural references and form your own interpretation.

Lyrics on video

[Open the lyric video used for this lesson](#)

Listen, read and return to the workbook whenever you want to explore a language point in greater depth.

SECTION 01

Map the song

Connect grammar and metaphor to the ethical force of a protest song.

STAGE	LEARNING LENS
Opening	Identify the speaker, situation and first useful pattern.
Development	Track the main contrast, image or relationship problem.
Hook	Notice how repetition changes emphasis and memory.
Late return	Retrieve earlier language under new vocal or narrative pressure.

Listening challenge

For each stage, write one word for the sound and one for the speaker's emotional position. Then explain which language choice helped create that impression.

SECTION 02

Language Lab

Move beyond the quick cards: compare structures, notice register and learn how to avoid common mistakes.

LANGUAGE POINT	GO DEEPER	USE IT WELL
cause, lead to and result in	Cause takes a direct object; lead to and result in take a noun or -ing form.	Violence caused silence / led to silence / resulted in silence.
same, similar and identical	Same normally takes the; similar takes to; identical takes to. The same old adds frustration with repetition.	Their stories are similar, not the same.
passive voice and responsibility	A passive can foreground victims but hide agents. In political language, that choice can be ethically significant.	Ask who acted even when the grammar omits them.
protest, lament and anthem	A protest song challenges injustice; a lament expresses grief; an anthem becomes a shared public statement. One song may do all three.	Classify function from language, performance and audience use together.

SECTION 03

Extended vocabulary: go beyond the lyrics

This bonus language expands what you can say about the narrative, emotion, performance and production.

to haunt	verb	To keep coming back into someone's mind, especially a disturbing memory. <i>The image from the news report haunted her for weeks.</i>
numb	adjective	Unable to feel physical or emotional sensation, often after shock. <i>After the accident, he just felt numb for days.</i>
in vain	expression	Without success - despite effort, nothing was achieved. <i>The doctors fought in vain to save the building from collapse.</i>
innocent	adjective	Not guilty of wrongdoing; free from blame, especially describing victims who did nothing wrong. <i>The report said most of the casualties were innocent bystanders.</i>
to grieve	verb	To feel deep sorrow, especially after a loss or death. <i>The whole town grieved together after the tragedy.</i>
violence	noun	Physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill. <i>The report condemned the violence on both sides of the border.</i>
a ceasefire	noun	An agreement between opposing sides to stop fighting, temporarily or permanently. <i>Both sides agreed to a ceasefire after months of talks.</i>
to weep	verb	To cry, usually from deep sadness - more literary than 'cry'. <i>She wept quietly at the back of the memorial service.</i>
brutal	adjective	Extremely cruel or violent, without any mercy. <i>Historians described the campaign as brutal and merciless.</i>
relentless	adjective	Continuing without pause or weakening, often used for something harsh. <i>The relentless bombing forced thousands of families to flee.</i>
a vicious cycle	noun phrase	A repeating pattern where one problem causes another that makes the first one worse. <i>Revenge attacks kept the region trapped in a vicious cycle.</i>
a tank	noun	A heavy armoured military vehicle that moves on tracks and carries powerful weapons. <i>Footage showed a tank rolling slowly through the empty street.</i>

SECTION 04

Idioms and expressive English

Use these additional expressions to discuss the song's situations and themes in natural English.

to add fuel to the fire	extension	To make an already bad or tense situation even worse. <i>Blaming one side publicly only added fuel to the fire.</i>
there's no end in sight	extension	Used when a difficult situation shows no sign of finishing soon. <i>After three years of talks, there's still no end in sight.</i>
to turn a blind eye	extension	To deliberately ignore something wrong instead of dealing with it. <i>For too long, officials turned a blind eye to the warning signs.</i>
history repeats itself	extension	Said when the same negative events happen again, as if nothing was learned. <i>Every generation says 'never again', yet history repeats itself.</i>
to pay the price	extension	To suffer the negative consequences of an action, often one you didn't choose. <i>Ordinary families paid the price for a conflict they had no part in.</i>

Make the language yours

Complete the exercises later in the workbook to check meaning, structure and register.

SECTION 05

Pronunciation as performance

A sung voice is not a neutral accent sample. Listen for concrete features, then compare theatrical delivery with everyday speech.

The Limerick 'yodel' break	Dolores O'Riordan snaps between her chest voice and a high, cracked head-voice on stressed syllables - most famously on the word 'zombie' itself. This ornamental break echoes the melismatic turns of Irish sean-nós singing and isn't something you'll hear in British or American pop vocals.
Rhotic R, fully pronounced	Irish English is rhotic, so O'Riordan sounds every R clearly - in 'world', 'war', 'their' - with a real tongue-curl. Compare this to the R-dropping you hear in Perfect (British) or Total Eclipse of the Heart (Welsh) in this catalogue.
Crisp, forward T and D	Irish English keeps consonants clipped and close to the front of the mouth rather than softened. Listen for how 't' in words like 'that' and 'violent' lands sharp and percussive, almost tapped, instead of the flatter British 't'.
Wide, open vowels	Munster-accent vowels are notably open and forward - 'head' and 'dead' come out broader and flatter than in standard English. That rawness is part of what gives the chorus its unpolished, urgent power.

Three-pass shadowing

1. Tap only the stressed beats.
2. Reproduce the phrase slowly and clearly.
3. Contrast a natural spoken version with the musical performance.

SECTION 06

Context and creative choices

Discover the cultural and creative decisions that shaped the song, then listen again with this context in mind.

Dolores O'Riordan wrote 'Zombie' after the IRA bombing in Warrington, England, on 20 March 1993, when two explosive devices hidden in litter bins on a shopping street killed two children, three-year-old Jonathan Ball and twelve-year-old Tim Parry, and injured dozens of others. O'Riordan was travelling near the area on tour and was reportedly devastated by the news; she channelled her anger and grief into a protest song about the wider Northern Ireland conflict known as the Troubles, rather than about one single event.

The song was released on 19 September 1994 through Island Records as the lead single from the Cranberries' second studio album, *No Need to Argue*, which followed on 3 October that year. It marked a sharp turn from the band's gentler early sound toward something heavier and angrier, driven by Noel Hogan's grinding guitar riff and O'Riordan's raw, unfiltered vocal.

'Zombie' became the Cranberries' biggest international hit, topping the charts in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and Iceland, and spending six weeks at number one on the US Billboard Alternative Airplay chart from late October 1994, even though the song's release format made it ineligible for the Hot 100 at the time.

The stark black-and-white music video was directed by Samuel Bayer, who had shot Nirvana's 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' three years earlier, and mixes imagery of British soldiers with children painted gold, standing in for hope amid violence. The song won Best Song at the 1995 MTV Europe Music Awards and was also nominated for Best Alternative Video.

The story gained a heartbreaking coda in January 2018: O'Riordan had agreed to guest on a cover of 'Zombie' by the American rock band Bad Wolves and was due in the studio on 15 January, the same day she died unexpectedly in London at the age of 46. Bad Wolves released their version in tribute soon after and presented her family with a donation reported at £250,000.

On 18 April 2020, the official video passed one billion views on YouTube, making the Cranberries the first Irish act ever to reach that milestone and 'Zombie' only the sixth video from the twentieth century to do so. In this catalogue it stands apart as the one true protest song - Irish alternative rock with a political weight that contrasts sharply with the love songs and dance-pop around it.

SECTION 07

Practice zone

Complete every activity without looking back, then use the answer key to correct your work independently.

A. Extended vocabulary in context

1. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To keep coming back into someone's mind, especially a disturbing memory.*
to haunt / numb
2. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Unable to feel physical or emotional sensation, often after shock.*
numb / in vain
3. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Without success - despite effort, nothing was achieved.*
in vain / innocent
4. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Not guilty of wrongdoing; free from blame, especially describing victims who did nothing wrong.*
innocent / to grieve
5. Choose the best term for this meaning: *To feel deep sorrow, especially after a loss or death.*
to grieve / violence
6. Choose the best term for this meaning: *Physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill.*
violence / to haunt

B. Retrieve the expression

7. Which expression matches this meaning: *To make an already bad or tense situation even worse.?*
8. Which expression matches this meaning: *Used when a difficult situation shows no sign of finishing soon.?*
9. Which expression matches this meaning: *To deliberately ignore something wrong instead of dealing with it.?*
10. Which expression matches this meaning: *Said when the same negative events happen again, as if nothing was learned.?*

C. Accuracy check

11. Correct the form: **I listened the song carefully.**
12. Choose the careful form: **The contrast lead to a new meaning / leads to a new meaning.**

SECTION 08

Answer key

Check each answer and return to the Language Lab when a form or distinction is still unclear.

1. to haunt
2. numb
3. in vain
4. innocent
5. to grieve
6. violence
7. to add fuel to the fire
8. there's no end in sight
9. to turn a blind eye
10. history repeats itself
11. I listened to the song carefully
12. The contrast leads to a new meaning

Review again

Cover the answers and repeat the activities after a few days. A delayed second attempt is a better test of learning than immediate rereading.

SECTION 09

Complete 17-card library

Use this compact summary for quick revision or return to the video cue when you want to hear a point again.

Vocabulary / 2 cards

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:21

in your head

In your head locates memory, belief or obsession mentally rather than physically. Repetition turns it into an accusation.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 3:03

same old theme

Same old describes something tediously familiar and unchanged. Theme points to a recurring pattern, not just a musical melody.

Grammar / 6 cards

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:42

another head hangs lowly

Another takes a singular countable noun. Hangs describes posture; lowly is an unusual poetic adverb choice.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:51

a child is slowly taken

The passive be + past participle focuses on the child affected, leaving the agent unmentioned.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:03

the violence caused such silence

Simple past presents a completed causal event. Such + noun intensifies the resulting silence.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:12

who are we mistaken?

The lyric's compressed question is deliberately non-standard or elliptical, contributing to its confrontational tone.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:15

what is in your head?

What asks for the content of thought. Inversion with be gives what is, not what in your head is.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:48

when the violence causes silence

When + present simple frames a repeated relationship. Causes agrees with the singular subject violence.

Culture / 6 cards

CULTURE / VIDEO 1:30

tanks and bombs and guns

The concrete list replaces abstract discussion with instruments of war. Repeated and gives the inventory relentless weight.

CULTURE / VIDEO 1:42

zombie as metaphor

Zombie symbolises dehumanisation, numb repetition and the persistence of inherited violence rather than a literal creature.

CULTURE / VIDEO 2:33

Warrington and protest

O'Riordan wrote the song after the 1993 Warrington bombing killed two children. The song condemns cycles of violence rather than narrating one battle.

CULTURE / VIDEO 3:15

1916

The reference reaches back to the 1916 Easter Rising, connecting current violence with a longer contested history.

CULTURE / VIDEO 3:51

chorus through archival imagery

The video layers performance and historical images, asking viewers to connect the repeated words with real political memory.

CULTURE / VIDEO 4:51

final visual coda

The closing images continue after the main lyric. Ending the cards here respects the video's reflective coda while sustaining attention near the finish.

Pronunciation / 3 cards

PHONETICS / VIDEO 1:57

zombie: Irish vocal break

Dolores O'Riordan uses a distinctive break and ornament on the word, drawing on features associated with Irish vocal traditions.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 3:33

Irish rhoticity and vowel colour

O'Riordan's Irish accent and stylised singing preserve consonants and vowel qualities differently from standard British pop models.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 4:18

instrumental space as processing time

The long late instrumental section contains no new lyric cue. Its pedagogical value is reflection and recall, not forcing extra language cards.

Keep learning

[Return to the synced learning experience.](#)