

A summary of Richard Brassey's "The Beatles"
(Revision of the simple past.)

All four of the Beatles **were** born in Liverpool in WW2 (1939-45) and **grew** up and went to school in and around the city.

John Lennon's parents **split** up when he was 5, so he **went** to live with his aunt Mimi. At school John **clowned** around and **didn't work** hard. All he **wanted** to do was play his guitar that his mother **gave** him. Paul McCartney, on the other hand, **did** well at school. He **enjoyed** singing, but surprisingly was **turned down** when he **applied** to join the cathedral choir.

John and Paul **had** certain things in common:

- Both their mothers **died** when they were teenagers.
- Both **enjoyed** playing the guitar.
- They **were** both influenced by skiffle music,
- and they **loved** American rock'n'roll singers (like Elvis and Buddy Holly)

They **met** at a church fete in 1956 where John's skiffle group "The Quarrymen" were playing. Paul was impressed by John's ability to make up words to songs, and John was impressed Paul could play the guitar upside down. So John **invited** Paul to join his group. A year later, George Harrison (one of Paul's friends) **joined** the group. He **played** the guitar very well, and **knew** more chords than them!

In 1960 the Beatles **went** to Hamburg in Germany. The group was now made up of 5 members. Besides John, Paul and George (who all played the guitar) there was also Stu and Pete. Pete was the drummer, and Stu was the bass guitarist, but he **couldn't play** very well. He used to play with his back to the audience so nobody could see he **didn't know** how to play it!

In Hamburg, they **played** in lots of concerts, and **practised** hard together. It was in Hamburg they **adopted** their famous mop top hairstyle, (on the advice of Astrid, who was Stu's girlfriend) and they **recorded** "My Bonnie". When they **returned** to Liverpool, they **started** to play in the Cavern club where they **began** to get very popular. Stu had decided to stay in Hamburg, so now the Beatles **were** only four.

It was at this time, Brian Epstein (a record shop manager) **heard** of them because customers **kept** coming into his shop asking to buy "My Bonnie". He **didn't know** who they were, so **went** to see them play at the Cavern. He **thought** the Beatles were fantastic, but **looked** scruffy!

A few weeks later, Epstein **met** the Beatles in his office and **offered** to become their manager. Thanks to him, they **went** to London to play for George Martin at the Abbey Road Studios. George was impressed, but **wanted** them to change the drummer because he **didn't think** he was good enough. So Ringo **joined** the group. His real name was Richard Starkey, but his nickname **came** from all the rings he **wore**!

The Beatles **started** recording and their 1st song **was** "Love Me do" which **reached** n°17 in the charts. They **went** on tour with Helen Shapiro as the supporting act, but gradually they were getting more popular than her, and getting more applause!

This **was** the beginning of "Beatlemania". They were invited onto famous TV shows like the Royal Variety Show in front of the Queen Mother, and the Ed Sullivan show in the USA. Everyone **wanted** a Beatle souvenir, fans **screamed** when they **saw** them, and all their records **went** straight to n°1. At concerts, the crowds **screamed** so loudly they **could** hardly be heard. When George **said** he **liked** Jelly Babies audiences **threw** them onto the stage!

The Beatles **felt** trapped. So in 1966 they **gave up** performing and **spent** their time composing, and recording new songs. They **experimented** with new sounds (like tapes played backwards) and **used** different instruments (like Indian ones). They **made** anti-war messages (like “All You Need Is Love”) because American Soldiers were fighting the Vietnam war. At that time, they also **began** learning to meditate from an Indian guru.

John and Paul **wrote** hundreds of songs and were quickly recognised as exceptional songwriters. Many of the Beatles’ songs are about their childhood memories of Liverpool :

- Penny Lane : a Liverpool shopping street
- Strawberry Field : the orphanage near aunt Mimi’s house where John used to play
- Eleanor Rigby : a name on a gravestone in a Liverpool churchyard

In 1967 Epstein **died** of an accidental overdose of sleeping tablets. Their latest film “Magical Mystery Tour” **was** a flop. The Beatles **started** to drift apart. They **were** now all married and beginning to have their own interests. But they still **made** 2 more very successful albums before they **split up** in 1970.

After the Beatles **separated**:

- John **wrote** more songs and **campaigned** for world peace with his wife Yoko Ono. He was murdered in 1980 in New York.
- Paul **started** a new band, Wings, and **wrote** lots more songs. The Queen **knighted** him in 1997
- George also **proved** he could write more songs as a solo artist. He **died** in 2002 from cancer.
- Ringo also **made** several records, and **became** the voice of “Thomas the Tank Engine”, a children’s TV series.

Today, 50 years later, the Beatles' songs are still sung and played today, and they have become one of the world's most famous pop groups. 😊