

Ms. Lauryn Hill

R&B/Hip-Hop

Ms. Williams

The Basics



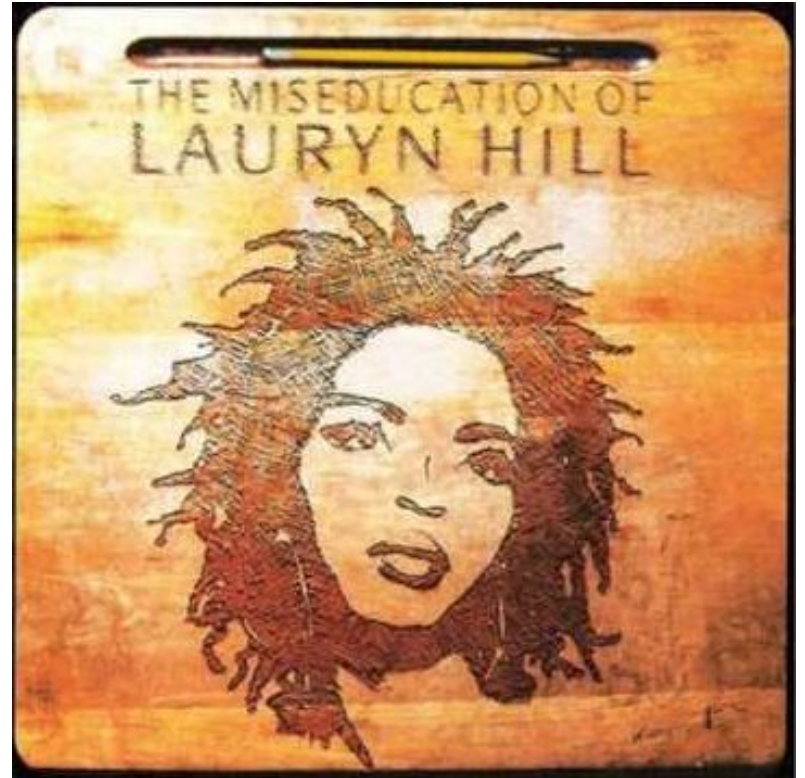
The first time I heard Lauryn Hill was when I saw the music video for “Doo Wop (That Thing)” with my sister. She knew all about Lauryn Hill and told me to pay attention, “this was a good song.”

I loved how she was both beautiful and tough in the video. She gave 9-year-old me the idea that girls can define themselves however they want.

The line “How you gonna win when you ain’t right within?” has always stuck with me.

— — —

THEMES
IN
THE
MISEDUCATION
OF LAURYN HILL



THEME #1

Happiness can only be found in defining your own values and remaining true to them, even when society or other people tell you otherwise.

Girlfriend, let me break it down for you again

You know I only say it 'cause I'm truly genuine

Don't be a hard rock when you really are a gem

--"Doo Wop (That Thing)"

THEME #1

Hill doesn't think happiness comes just from fleeting things, like being in a relationship or having money. On "Doo Wop (That Thing)" and many other songs, Hill sings about the importance of ignoring the ideas that society wants you to embrace--like materialism and casual sex--and finding your own self. When you know what you value, you can respect yourself enough to do what's right. When you do what's right by yourself, you can find happiness.

This same theme can be found in "Nothing Even Matters" when she sings "Now you won't find me at no store/ I have no time for manicures /With you it's never either or." She's found peace within herself, and doesn't need any material things.

THEME #1

— — —

I connected this theme to Conrad's struggle to escape the pressures he put on himself in order to please his mother, Beth. She only cares about the appearance of everything, so Conrad tries to appear to be a "good son": a star student, a star athlete, a star singer. He eventually realizes that doing things just so he can make others proud isn't making him happy. He quits the swim team, which just begins his journey to recreate his own set of values.

This theme resonates with me because I often find myself caught up in the trap of "appearing" to be the "perfect" everything. Not only is it impossible to be perfect according to the standards of others, trying to be perfect will never make you happy. It's almost like you have to redefine what "perfect" means to you.

THEME #2

— — —
Love is complicated: it can exist between two people, even when it's better that they be apart.

I keep letting you back in

How can I explain myself?

As painful as this thing has been

I just can't be with no one else

See I know what we've got to do

You let go, and I'll let go too

Cause no one's hurt me more than you

And no one ever will

--"Ex-Factor"

THEME #2

— — —

The song “Ex-Factor” is about two people that bring out the worst in each other. They love each other and try to make it work, but it’s just not happening. Ultimately, even though they love each other, they have to walk away. Even though their love is painful, there’s something to be learned from their relationship. She ends the song demanding that she be cared for, showing that this failed relationship has taught her what she needs in a partner.

She continues this theme on “I Used to Love Him,” when she sings about losing herself in a relationship (“He was the ocean / And I was the sand”), and “When It Hurts So Bad.” She realizes that she can’t find her identity only in a relationship: first she has to know who **she** is, then she can find someone who can truly love her for her.

THEME #2

— — —

Even though she sings about romantic love, Lauryn Hill's recognition of the pain that love can bring fits in perfectly with what we know about Conrad and Beth's relationship. In the epilogue, Conrad realizes that "she knows just as he does that it is love, imperfect and unordered, that keeps them apart, even as it holds them somehow together" (Guest 263). Beth and Conrad will always be bound together, even if it's better for them to be apart.

I appreciate this theme because it helps me understand relationships that have gone wrong. You're not obligated to keep anyone in your life that isn't good for you, whether it's your mother or a significant other. You can appreciate what you've learned from the experience and move on.

“Ex-Factor” or “Doo Wop (That Thing)”

REASONS

Why

I Love Lauryn Hill



1. She has **REAL talent**. She's an incredible singer, a gifted rapper, and even a good actress (check her out in *Sister Act 2!*).
2. Her songs are **always about empowerment**. She urges women to take control of their lives and respect themselves, when society tells them to just look pretty and please men. She broke the ground for future female artists, like Alicia Keys and Nicki Minaj.
3. She's **brave and authentic**. She refers to religion and God often in her lyrics, which is rare for someone who makes mainstream music. I admire her ability to make herself vulnerable and share her true self, even when it may not be popular.

Reflection

I love listening to Lauryn Hill because she acknowledges that pain and sadness are very real parts of life, but she always has an ultimate message of strength and positivity. She also continually reinforces the value of spiritual well-being over material things; in fact, she thinks that being strong on the inside is the only way to achieve true prosperity.

I also love her for the place she holds in the history of both R&B and hip-hop. *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* is often credited with bringing hip-hop to the mainstream. She was one of the first “woke” artists in hip-hop and R&B, becoming an inspiration to future hip-hop/R&B artists, like John Legend, Talib Kweli, and Kendrick Lamar, to use their music to speak about social problems.

THE END!

PSYCH! Here's a Surprise!

Before going solo, Lauryn Hill was a member of the music group the Fugees, with Wyclef Jean and Pras Michel. Their second album, *The Score*, won a Grammy for Best Rap Album for 1997 (even though it was up against 2Pac's *All Eyez on Me!!!*).

She is STILL the only female artist to have won Best Rap Album.

