

Carole King



Carole King began her career behind the scenes as a songwriter in the early 1960s. She and her husband, Gerry Goffin, whom she married when she was 17, had a long string of commercial successes throughout the decade, with songs such as “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” (recorded by the Shirelles), “The Loco-Motion” (Little Eva), “One Fine Day” (The Chiffons), and “Pleasant Valley Sunday” (The Monkees).

But it was not until three years after her divorce from Goffin that King began her highly successful career as a solo artist. In 1971, she released the solo album, *Tapestry*, which went on to become one of the best-selling albums of all time, and by far the most successful of any release by a singer-songwriter in the 1970s. She subsequently had two additional number one albums, and a total of six that made *Billboard*’s top ten.

The single “It’s Too Late” (with “I Feel The Earth Move” on the B-side), was the best-selling single from *Tapestry*. The album also featured King’s own versions of songs – such as “Will You Love Me Tomorrow” – that had previously been recorded by other artists. One of these was “(You Make Me Feel Like a) Natural Woman,” which she co-wrote with Goffin and had been a hit for Aretha Franklin in 1967.

Below is an excerpt from the lyrics to the song. Listen to King perform the song and then discuss the questions below.

Looking out on the morning rain I used to feel uninspired
And when I knew I'd have face another day.
Lord, it made me feel so tired.
Before the day I met you
Life was so unkind.
Your love was the key to my peace of mind
'Cause you make me feel, you make me feel,
You make me feel like a natural woman.



Discussion Questions:

- What is the overall tone and mood of the song? How does it make you feel?
- What is the song about? Who is singing? To whom is she singing?
- What do you think King means by a “natural woman”? How does that compare with the characterization portrayed by Mary Wells in “My Guy?”
- Does King have a polished voice that sounds professionally-trained? How would you describe her singing? How effective is it?
- Does this song seem to have a particularly “female” perspective? Why or why not? Would it work as well if a man were singing about being a “natural man?”
- Does the singer of the song seem to be a “girl” or a “woman”? How can you tell?
- Look at the two pictures of King, from the early ‘60s with her husband Gerry Goffin, and from the *Tapestry* cover. What messages does each of these pictures convey? How does King’s presentation of herself seem to have changed? What can you surmise about changes in American society over that time span from these pictures? (You might want to consider her hairstyle, clothing, and the nature of the pose in each picture.)
- Why do you think King wanted to come out from behind the scenes and perform the songs she wrote herself? Why might this have been easier to do in 1971 than in 1961?