

Joni Mitchell



Canadian-born Joni Mitchell was one of the great female Singer-Songwriters of the early 1970s. If Carole King's *Tapestry* was the most commercially successful album produced by the new breed of female Singer-Songwriters, Mitchell's *Blue* (1971) was likely the one held in greatest esteem by critics and fellow musicians. Combining elements of Folk, Jazz, and Rock and Roll, Mitchell's songs weaved poetic lyrics with profound commentary on both personal and larger social issues. The music website Allmusic.com argues that "when the dust settles, Joni Mitchell may stand as the most important and influential female recording artist of the late 20th century."

Mitchell is also known for writing the song "Woodstock," about the 1969 music festival, which appeared on her 1970 album *Ladies of the Canyon*. The song went on to become a hit for the band Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young.

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

*Well maybe it is just the time of year
Or maybe it's the time of man
I don't know who I am
But you know life is for learning*

*We are stardust
We are golden
And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden*

Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe the music? What is the general tone of the song?
- What do you think the song is about? Can you tell from the lyrics?
- What do you think Mitchell means by the line “I don’t know who I am/But you know life is for learning”?
- What is your reaction to the song? Do you find it compelling? Does it draw you in?
- How does the sound compare to “My Guy”? The subject matter?
- Is Mitchell making a political statement, or simply telling a personal story with this song? Is it possible to do both?
- Is Mitchell a “girl” or a “woman” as she sings this song?
- Why do you think this song resonated with so many listeners in the early 1970s? Do you think it was only popular with female listeners? Why or why not?