

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES

**“Don’t Start Me Talking:
Lyrics- 1984-2004”**

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CONTENTS

Areas of Study	Chapter	Topics Covered
Area of study 1 – Reading and Responding	Chapter 1- Genre	-
	Chapter 2- Structure	-
	Chapter 3- Historical Issues	3.1 Australian Ballads 3.2 Australian Life
	Chapter 4- Style	-
	Chapter 5- Background Notes	-
	Chapter 6- Song Summaries	6.1 Post (1985) 6.2 Gossip (1986) 6.3 Under the Sun (1987) 6.4 So Much Water So Close to Home (1989) 6.5 Comedy (1990) 6.6 Funerals and Circuses (1992) 6.7 Wanted Man (1994) 6.8 Deeper Water (1996) 6.9 Words and Music (1998) 6.10 Professor Ratbaggy (1999) 6.11 Smoke (1999) 6.12 One Night the Moon (2001) 6.13 Nothing But a Dream (2001) 6.14 Ways and Means (2004)
	Chapter 7- Character Profiles	7.1 Male Characters 7.2 Female Characters
	Chapter 8- Themes and Issues	8.1 Love 8.2 Death and Mortality 8.3 Memory and Reflection 8.4 Travelling
	Chapter 9- Sample Essay Topics	-
	Chapter 10- Final Examination Tips	-

AREA 1:
READING & RESPONDING:
DON'T START ME TALKING:
LYRICS 1984-2004

Chapter 1
GENRE

Paul Kelly's work as a contemporary Australian songwriter and poet has elevated him to the status of a key figure in popular music and literature. Kelly's lyrics are not autobiographical, thus he creates fictional characters that present messages about the minutia of ordinary life, thus Kelly's lyrics are exemplary ballads. His songs are of literary value as they embody themes regarding the human condition and contain layers of depth when interpreted on different levels. Though Kelly classifies himself as a pop artist, his music spans a range of genres including rock, gospel, bluegrass and soul.

Chapter 2
STRUCTURE

Paul Kelly's lyrics ordinarily follow the standard form with the inclusion of a chorus or refrain, which is repeated, and song verses that rhyme. Kelly has demonstrated versatility in his choice of instruments that produce different musical flavours. His album, *Professor Ratbaggy*, shows technological influence and differs greatly to *Smoke*, which was also produced in 1999 but is in bluegrass style with country music elements.

Paul Kelly's collaboration with various artists has created opportunities for experimentation with songwriting style and structure. Aboriginal influences have included Archie Roach and Yothu Yindi. He has explored different perspectives by writing songs for artists such as Deborah Conway, Renee Gayer, Jenny Morris and Joe Camilleri.

Chapter 3

HISTORICAL ISSUES

3.1 Australian Ballads

A ballad is a simple song or poem of several verses that presents a sentimental or romantic story. Australian poetry and music has traditionally been characterised by the ballad form. Paul Kelly's lyrics differ in emphasis from the traditional Australian ballads of Banjo Paterson, who described rural dwellers in the setting of the Australian bush. Kelly varies his choice of setting and demonstrates a greater focus on urban settings and people. Nonetheless, Kelly shares the exploration of characters, who are 'Aussie battlers', working-class people or members of marginalised social groups, with traditional ballad poets from Australia and Ireland.

3.2 Australian Life

Many of Paul Kelly's songs depict elements of life in Australia. He addresses the major Australian cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and refers to well-known landmarks, such as Sydney Harbour and the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). He refers to great Australian traditions such as the Boxing Day Test Match at the MCG. He also makes frequent reference to the beach, which is an iconic element of Australian life.

Paul Kelly celebrates noted Australian historical figures including Ned Kelly, an outlaw, Don Bradman, a great cricketer, Dean Lukin, an Olympic weightlifting champion, and Vincent Lingiari, an Aboriginal activist. The author reveals his admiration for these male heroes in his songs which pay tribute to them.

Chapter 4

STYLE

Paul Kelly's songs include a range of narrative points of view. His songs often employ a first person narrator so that they are presented from the perspective of one character. He achieves greater objectivity with the use of an omniscient narrator in some songs. Paul Kelly experiments with the technique of dialogic narration, which layers the voices of multiple characters in conversational style.

Paul Kelly has worked collaboratively with female musicians and songwriters including Renee Geyer, Deborah Conway, Deborah Byrne, Kate Cebrano, Vika and Linda Bull. These collaborative works have elevated the authenticity of female narrative viewpoints and experiences in Kelly's repertoire of songs.

Paul Kelly derives inspiration from issues in the media and addresses both political and personal perspectives on the subjects of Aboriginal land rights and dispossession as well as mandatory detention of refugees. He also makes reference to classic literary authors such as William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe and Ernest Hemmingway.