

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

# The Cranberries' Zombie

Il gruppo irlandese ha raggiunto il suo massimo successo trent'anni fa, scostandosi dal pop intimista e affrontando il doloroso conflitto che ancora opprime l'Irlanda del Nord.

A radical change of direction for The Cranberries, *Zombie* was the lead single<sup>1</sup> from the group's second album, *No Need to Argue*, released in 1994. A protest song defined by vocalist Dolores O'Riordan's emotive voice and its use of distorted grunge guitar, it has been described as "a masterpiece of alternative rock." The band, from Limerick in western Ireland, was already world-famous for their dreamy indie-pop introspective sound. O'Riordan attributed the change in musical direction to the experience of touring, explaining that "on the road we started to rock out a bit more." In 1993, paramilitary republican group the Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombed Warrington, England, killing two children. This caused international outrage<sup>2</sup> and inspired The

Cranberries to write a "song for peace, peace among England and Ireland." The song begins in the present simple with an image of someone mourning<sup>3</sup> for a dead child, continuing with the declaration that this and other heinous<sup>4</sup> acts are not supported by the people they are supposed to defend or benefit. The original title was "In Your Head", a reference to how ideological war consumes everyone, but the band decided "Zombie" was a better metaphor to describe how violence begins with dehumanisation. When their record company heard the demo<sup>5</sup> they were concerned the lyrics were too political and offered the band \$1million to work on another track. The band's refusal<sup>6</sup> gave them their most successful single, with Irish rugby fans adopting it as a stadium anthem<sup>7</sup>. ☒



SCAN, READ & LISTEN  
05

LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

GLOSSARY

- 1 **lead single:** primo singolo
- 2 **outrage:** indignazione
- 3 **to mourn:** pingere, essere in lutto
- 4 **heinous:** efferati, atroci
- 5 **demo:** campione dimostrativo della produzione di musicisti
- 6 **refusal:** rifiuto
- 7 **anthem:** inno
- 8 **allies:** alleati
- 9 **Easter Rising:** Rivolta di Pasqua
- 10 **struggle:** lotta
- 11 **ultimate aim:** obiettivo finale
- 12 **ceasefire:** cessate il fuoco



Dolores O'Riordan (1971-2018) and her band The Cranberries perform in Prague, Czech Republic in 2012.

**head hangs lowly:** the correct adjective here is 'low', but 'lowly' rhymes with 'slowly' in the next line.

**with their tanks and their bombs and their guns:** this may be a reference to all factions involved in the conflict, the British Army (tanks), the Ulster Loyalist Paramilitaries (bombs), the IRA (bombs), and their allies<sup>8</sup> (guns).

**it's the same old theme since 1916:** the 1916 Easter Rising<sup>9</sup> in Dublin, a failed attempt to proclaim an Irish Republic, was the catalyst for part of the independence of Ireland. The struggle<sup>10</sup>, with the ultimate aim<sup>11</sup> of uniting Ireland as one state continued until the IRA declared a ceasefire<sup>12</sup> a few weeks after *Zombie* was released.

SCAN & WATCH



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

Another head hangs lowly  
Child is slowly taken  
And the violence caused such silence  
Who are we, mistaken?  
But you see, it's not me, it's not my family  
In your head, in your head,  
they are fightin'  
With their tanks and their bombs and their bombs and their guns  
In your head, in your head, they are cryin'

In your head, in your head  
Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie  
What's in your head, in your head?  
Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie-oh

Du, du, du, du  
Du, du, du, du  
Du, du, du, du  
Du, du, du, du

Another mother's breakin'  
Heart is takin' over  
When the violence causes silence  
We must be mistaken  
It's the same old theme, since 1916  
In your head, in your head, they're still fightin'  
With their tanks and their bombs and their bombs and their guns  
In your head, in your head, they are dyin'

In your head, in your head  
Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie  
What's in your head, in your head?  
Zombie, zombie, zombie-ie-ie-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh, eh-eh-oh, ra-ra

**who are we, mistaken?:** the meaning here is unclear. With a comma it could be two questions (are we mistaken?). Without a comma it needs the preposition 'for' after 'mistaken', meaning "Who do people think we (Irish) are?"

**family:** this is pronounced incorrectly, with the stress on the final syllable (instead of the first) to make it rhyme with 'see' and 'me' in the same line.

**cryin':** songs and spoken English often leave out the final g in gerunds, to make it flow better.

Fergal Kavanagh runs the website [www.tuneintoenglish.com](http://www.tuneintoenglish.com), the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.

