

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

Michael Jackson's Thriller

Tralasciando le polemiche sulla sua persona, l'arte di Michael Jackson tinge tutte le espressioni della musica popolare e questa canzone, che a ogni Halloween riappare nelle classifiche mondiali, segnò una svolta nell'ambito dei videoclip musicali.

LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

ON CD 5

GLOSSARY

- 1 **biggest-selling:** più venduto
- 2 **release:** pubblicazione
- 3 **eponym:** eponimo
- 4 **to date:** ad ora
- 5 **throughout:** dappertutto
- 6 **to place:** posizionare
- 7 **ominous:** infausta
- 8 **trapped:** intrappolato
- 9 **scary:** spaventoso
- 10 **to come closer:** avvicinarsi
- 11 **to shift:** cambiare
- 12 **chilling:** agghiacciante
- 13 **urge:** desiderio, urgenza
- 14 **foolishly:** stupidamente
- 15 **to come up with:** venire fuori con
- 16 **to lurk:** stare in agguato
- 17 **sight:** visione, vista
- 18 **to slam the door:** sbattere la porta
- 19 **to wonder:** chiedersi
- 20 **to creep up:** avvicinarsi silenziosamente
- 21 **to cuddle:** coccolare
- 22 **to crawl:** strisciare

Thriller is Michael Jackson's **biggest-selling**¹ single, the seventh and final **release**² from the 1982 eponymous³ biggest-selling album ever, and accompanied by a fourteen-minute video by iconic horror-director John Landis. This is, **to date**⁴, the only music video included in the US National Film Registry.

The song is in the form of a ghost story, with Jackson using the present simple and second person **throughout**⁵, **placing**⁶ the listener directly in the moment. The first verse sets the scene, late at night, an **ominous**⁷ presence, and the protagonist frozen with fear. The next verse takes the listener inside a house, **trapped**⁸ and with something **scary**⁹ **coming closer**¹⁰. The tone **shifts**¹¹ in the third verse, with Jackson revealing that the listener is his girl-friend and

they are at the cinema, with "the terror on the screen." The song ends with a **chilling**¹² monologue and laugh from legendary horror actor Vincent Price, revealing that the thriller is in fact the **urge**¹³ to dance. Price **foolishly**¹⁴ accepted \$20,000 payment for his work instead of royalties, not expecting the song to be a hit. After all, as Jackson's record company asked, "Who wants a single about monsters?"

Written by Rod Temperton, the original title was *Starlight* but producer Quincy Jones asked him to rewrite it more like Edgar Allan Poe. He **came up with**¹⁵ *Thriller* and used numerous horror motifs (midnight, evil, terror, etc.) to write a song forever associated with Halloween— despite the single being released in November. ☺



cold hand: this refers to the Grim Reaper³⁷, the symbol of death.

change that number on your dial: in the 1950s, before remote controls, televisions had dials to change channels, and some radio announcers still say "Don't touch that dial." Here it means to stop being a **sinner**³⁸.

y'all: a contraction of 'you' and 'all'.

hounds³⁹ of hell: this refers to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the most famous Sherlock Holmes novel.

foulest⁴⁰ stench⁴¹: this refers to the smell of **rotting**⁴² bodies.

funk: although it can refer to a musical genre characterized by its danceable rhythms, in this context it means a 'strong and unpleasant smell'.

thriller: this can also be interpreted as a play on words or **double-entendre**⁴³, meaning 'thrill her'.

gonna: this is an informal contraction of 'going to' and often used in songs. This is the only tense used in the song that is not the present simple.

It's close to midnight
something evil's lurking¹⁶ in the dark
Under the moonlight
You see a sight¹⁷ that almost stops your heart
You try to scream
But terror takes the sound before you make it
You start to freeze
as horror looks you right between the eyes
You're paralyzed
You hear the door slam¹⁸
and realize there's nowhere left to run
You feel the **cold hand**
and wonder¹⁹ if you'll ever see the sun
You close your eyes
and hope that this is just imagination, girl
But all the while you hear a creature **creepin'**
up²⁰ behind
You're out of time
They're out to get you
There's demons closing in on every side
They will possess you
unless you **change that number on your dial**
Now is the time for you and I to **cuddle**²¹ close together, yeah
All through the night I'll save you from the terror on the screen
I'll make you see

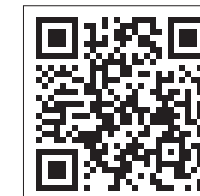
Darkness falls across the land
The midnight hour is close at hand
Creatures **crawl**²² in search of blood
To terrorize **y'all's** neighbourhood
And **whosoever**²³ shall be found
Without the soul for getting down
Must stand and face the **hounds of hell**
And **rot**²⁴ inside a corpse's shell²⁵
The **foulest stench** is in the air
The **funk** of forty thousand years
And **grisly**²⁶ **ghouls**²⁷ from every tomb
Are closing²⁸ in to seal²⁹ your doom³⁰
And though you fight to stay alive
Your body starts to shiver³¹
For no mere mortal can resist
The evil of the thriller

'Cause this is **thriller**
Thriller night
And no one's **gonna** save you from the beast about to strike³²
You know it's thriller, thriller night
You're fighting for your life inside a killer, thriller

'Cause I can **thrill**³³ you more than any ghoul would ever dare³⁴ try
So let me hold you tight and share a **killer-diller**³⁵ **chiller**³⁶



SCAN & WATCH



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the original song on YouTube while reading the lyrics. Please bear in mind that the lyrics of the music video are a bit different than those from the album version of the song.

GLOSSARY

- 23 **whosoever:** chiunque
- 24 **to rot:** marcire
- 25 **shell:** guscio
- 26 **grisly:** repellenti
- 27 **ghouls:** gul (demoni)
- 28 **to close in on:** accerchiare
- 29 **to seal:** sigillare
- 30 **doom:** tragico destino
- 31 **to shiver:** tremare
- 32 **to strike:** attaccare
- 33 **to thrill:** eccitare
- 34 **to dare:** osare
- 35 **killer-diller:** sensazionale
- 36 **chiller:** storia paurosa
- 37 **the Grim Reaper:** la Grande Falciatrice
- 38 **sinner:** peccatore
- 39 **hounds:** segugi
- 40 **foulest:** il più nauseante
- 41 **stench:** fetore
- 42 **rotting:** putrefatti
- 43 **double entendre:** doppio senso

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Fergal Kavanagh runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com, the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.