

Suggested responses: 'Glad To Be Gay'

1. Do some research: What was Tom Robinson referring to here? What does this reveal about official attitudes towards homosexuality after the 1967 Sexual Offences Act?

This dedication was a reference to the fact that the World Health Organisation had officially declared homosexuality to be a disease. Homosexuality was further dehumanised as it was classified as a number, rather than a description: 302.0. This number referred to 'sexual and gender identity disorders'. This reveals that homosexuality was still considered to be inherently deviant, even nine years after it was decriminalised in England and Wales.

2. Highlight all lyrics that describe how homosexuals were treated by the police, public or press.

'Raiding our pubs for no reason at all' / 'Lining the customers up by the wall' / 'Knocking them down' / 'Kicked on the ground' / 'Searching their houses' / 'Calling them queer' / 'Molesters of children, corruptors of youth, it's there in the paper' / 'Beaten unconscious and left in the dark' / 'Queerbashers caught him, kicked in his teeth' / 'Close down our pubs'

3. Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, is this song reflective of the wider attitudes towards homosexuality at the time? Why/not?

The song reveals many aspects of discrimination faced by the homosexual community in the 1960s – for example, the fact that gay clubs continued to be raided by the police after the Sexual Offences Act was passed (verse one). It also highlights the hypocrisy of the censorship of *Gay News*, a publication that was prosecuted for obscenity, while others, like *Playboy* and the *Sun* continued to publish female nudes without backlash. Therefore, the song reports on familiar attitudes towards homosexuality.

4. This song was written 19 years after the Wolfenden Report and nine years after the Sexual Offences Act. What does this suggest about the rate of change in society's attitudes towards homosexuality?

The fact that this poor treatment was still happening suggests that change was extremely slow after the Wolfenden Report and the Sexual Offences Act.

5. This song was originally written by Tom Robinson for the 1976 London Gay Pride Parade. How does this suggest that musicians saw their role in changing/commentating on societal attitudes?

This suggests that some musicians saw it as their role to reveal problems in society and campaign for change through their music. In verse three, Robinson gives some ironic advice to homosexual people to avoid getting caught. This is likely a sarcastic comment, criticising the lack of action for homosexual rights. This implies that he sees his role as important for shedding light on the treatment of and attitudes towards homosexuality in order to encourage change.

6. When the song was officially released on an EP in 1978, it reached no. 18 in the UK Charts. However, BBC Radio 1 refused to broadcast it on their Top 40 Charts Show. What does this suggest about attitudes towards homosexuality?

That the BBC refused to play the song suggests that it did not agree with presenting these challenging lyrics to 'Glad To Be Gay' and the critical nature of the lyrics in describing police and public treatment of homosexuals. This implies that attitudes towards homosexuality had not progressed far enough to oppose the dangerous way in which homosexuals were treated.

7. This song has been rereleased and rewritten many times since 1976. Explore some of the alternative lyrics. What does this suggest about the role of music in shaping attitudes?

The fact that the song was rewritten many times to reflect growing problems facing homosexual people in Britain shows that there was a very slow and limited change in the way in which people viewed homosexuals in Britain. It suggests that music played a big role in highlighting these social problems and challenging them, in order to influence the wider public's opinions to make positive change.

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a pop song affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?

The song is useful as it reveals many of the issues facing homosexuals in Britain at the time, both through the lyrics and in the fact that it was not allowed to be played on the BBC Charts Show. Furthermore, the fact that so many versions exist is useful for revealing the role and impact of music for highlighting and influencing social attitudes. The song is limited, as it is the opinion of one activist who tried to change attitudes towards homosexuality for good.