Bob Dylan wins Nobel prize in literature

For more than six decades he has remained a mythical force in music, his **gravelly** voice and poetic lyrics **musing over** war, heartbreak, betrayal, death and moral faithlessness in songs that brought beauty to life's greatest tragedies.

But Bob Dylan's place as one of the world's greatest artistic figures was elevated further on Thursday when he was named the surprise winner of the Nobel Price in literature "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition".

After the announcement, the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, Sara Danius, said it had "not been a difficult decision" and she hoped the academy would not be criticised for its choice.

"We hoped the news would be received with joy, but you never know," she said, comparing the songs of the American songwriter to the works of Homer and Sappho.

"We're really giving it to Bob Dylan as a great poet – that's the reason we awarded him the prize. He's a great poet in the great English tradition, stretching from Milton and Blake onwards. And he's a very interesting traditionalist, in a highly original way. Not just the written tradition, but also the **oral** one; not just high literature, but also low literature."

Though Dylan is considered by many to be a musician, not a writer, Danius said the artistic reach of his lyrics and poetry could not be put in a single box. "I came to realise that we still read Homer and Sappho from ancient Greece, and they were writing 2,500 years ago," she said. "They were meant to be performed, often together with instruments, but they have survived, and survived incredibly well, on the book page. We enjoy [their] poetry, and I think Bob Dylan deserves to be read as a poet."

His own response to receiving the prize is unknown. He rarely gives interviews, and has a troubled relationship with the fame attached to his decades of popularity. However, he has **toured** almost non-stop since 1988 and last weekend he played the inaugural Desert Trip festival in California, alongside other giants of the 1960s, the Rolling Stones, the Who, Paul McCartney and Neil Young.

Among the musical, literary and even academic communities, respected figures expressed their delight at Dylan's Nobel prize. The author Salman Rushdie told the Guardian he was delighted with Dylan's win and said his lyrics had been "an inspiration to me all my life ever since I first heard a Dylan album at school".

Not everyone was **overjoyed** by the announcement, however. Irvine Welsh, the author of Trainspotting, said that although he was a Dylan fan "this is an **ill-conceived** nostalgia award wrenched from the **rancid** prostates of **senile**, **gibbering** hippies".

Dylan is the first American to win the Nobel prize for literature since Toni Morrison in 1993. His triumph follows comments in 2008 from Horace Engdahl, the then permanent secretary of the Nobel prize jury, that "the US is too isolated, too **insular.** They don't translate enough and don't really participate in the big dialogue of literature ... That ignorance is restraining."

Adapted from The Guardian
(www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/13/bob-dylan-wins-2016-nobel-prize-in-literature)

Pre- reading

Brainstorming

1. What do you know about Bob Dylan?
2. Watch a short biography of Bob Dylan and discuss his life and career
   www.youtube.com/watch?v=wueasc28nO0

Vocabulary Preview

3. Match the words in bold to their meaning

a. of or belonging to old age or aged persons; gerontological; geriatric
b. reflecting or meditating on someone or something
c. interested only in your own country or group and not willing to accept different or foreign ideas.
d. has gone on a tour somewhere
e. extremely happy
f. speaking inarticulately or meaninglessly
g. badly planned and unwise
h. spoken and not written
i. low and rough (especially a man's voice)
j. not working properly or smelling unpleasant as a result of being old