

# Young Paul

*When I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary comes to me*

*from Let it Be (Lennon & McCartney)*

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Paul McCartney was born on June 8, 1942 in Liverpool. His father, Jim, was a salesman and a part-time jazz trumpeter. His mother ('Mother Mary' in *Let it Be*) was a nurse. He has one younger brother.

The McCartneys lived in a council house. They were not wealthy but the family was close. This emotional stability was shattered by the death of Mary McCartney at the age of 47.

*My mum dying when I was fourteen was the big shock in my teenage years. She died of cancer, I learnt later. I didn't know then why she had died. It was a terrible blow to the family.*

John Lennon also lost his mother in his teens. This shared trauma was a key bond for the future bandmates:

*We both had this emotional turmoil which we had to deal with ... very quickly.*

## Skiffle

For his fourteenth birthday, Jim gave his son a trumpet. Paul began learning how to play the instrument but without enthusiasm. What excited him was the [Skiffle craze](#), introduced to Britain by Lonnie Donegan. Eighteen months later Paul exchanged the trumpet for a guitar.

## Left-handed



At first the left-handed Paul struggled with a traditional guitar. But a poster for a Slim Whitman concert alerted him to the possibility of reversing the strings. This adaptability was typical of his approach. Paul had few lessons, preferring to play 'by ear'. Like the other Beatles he did not read music. He has never learned to sight-read.

Paul was the most committed to improving the technical quality of Beatles records and performances. In the final years, this often annoyed the other Beatles. 'I'm not

rehearsing,' John said when asked to prepare for the Magical Mystery Tour TV special. 'I'm a grown man!'

## **Songwriter**

Paul was also a songwriter from an early age. He wrote *When I'm Sixty-Four* when he was sixteen. And *'Love of the Loved'*, the first single released by Cilla Black is another song from his teenage years.

Songwriting was another link to John Lennon. Both boys were surprised to find that the other wrote songs - not a common pursuit at that time. They started sharing their material. They also informally agreed - at 'fifteen or sixteen' according to Lennon - to share credit for everything they wrote together.

Their working method was to sit facing each other, playing guitars. It helped that Paul is left-handed. The 'mirror effect' meant that each could see the others chords and fingerings etc. Later they would write some of their most famous songs with this arrangement. *'She Loves You'*, for example, would be written on twin beds in a Newcastle hotel room.

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## **Quick Check**

*True or false?*

1. Paul's dad was a full-time musician.
  2. His mother's name was Mary.
  3. The McCartney family was poor but happy.
  4. Paul's first musical instrument was a guitar.
  5. Paul wrote songs from an early age.
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## **Vocabulary**

Find a word or phrase in the text that means to read a musical score.