





Unpacking 'The Night We Met' How the Song Evokes Varied Emotional Responses from Listeners

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how the song *The Night We Met* by Lord Huron evokes varied emotional responses from listeners through the lens of Saussure's semiotics. By analyzing the lyrics as signs composed of signifiers (words) and signified (emotional meanings), this study reveals the song's ability to resonate universally across themes of love, memory, and loss. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, gathering data from listener responses on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The findings indicate that the song elicits diverse emotions, such as nostalgia, longing, and regret, depending on individual interpretations. Through its poignant lyrics and symbolic depth, *The Night We Met* demonstrates music's capacity to connect deeply with human experiences, making it a powerful medium for emotional expression and reflection.



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INTRODUCTION

Music has long been a powerful medium for conveying complex emotions, particularly regarding themes of love, loss, and memory. As humans, we are deeply connected to the emotions that music evokes, especially through song lyrics that resonate with our personal experiences. Love, in particular, is an emotion that defies simple definition due to its complexity. In relationships, love manifests in various forms: joy, sorrow, longing, and heartbreak. These multifaceted emotions make love a complicated experience, often leaving individuals feeling vulnerable and sensitive to relationship-related events. Songs that explore these emotional dimensions can speak to listeners on multiple levels, providing a space for reflection on their own experiences with love.

Music videos and lyrics serve as mediums for visual and emotional storytelling. According to Syamsurrijal et al. (2024), video clips convey "moral, religious, social criticism, and propaganda messages," illustrating how visual and lyrical narratives can amplify the emotional impact of music. Similarly, the song *The Night We Met* by Lord Huron exemplifies how music can encapsulate emotions of both nostalgia and regret. Released in 2015, the song gained widespread recognition after being featured in the popular Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*, where its haunting melody and poignant

lyrics resonated deeply with viewers. The lyrics reflect a profound yearning to return to a moment in the past when everything seemed perfect, yet they also carry a deep sorrow for what has been lost. The refrain "take me back to the night we met" captures the essence of this longing, evoking feelings of wanting to relive a moment of love before it slipped away. This desire is rooted in the painful realization that cherished memories can never be fully reclaimed. However, the ambiguity of the lyrics allows for multiple interpretations, as different listeners may connect with the song in diverse ways depending on their personal experiences.

The emotional depth of *The Night We Met* lies in its ability to evoke a wide range of responses from listeners. For some, the song serves as a nostalgic reflection on a perfect moment in a relationship that they wish they could revisit. The poignant lyrics "I had all and then most of you, some and now none of you" illustrate the painful shift from having a partner's love and presence to losing them entirely. This stark contrast between the fullness of a past relationship and the emptiness left behind resonates deeply with those who have experienced heartbreak and loss, encapsulating the feeling of longing for a love that was once whole.

Conversely, other listeners interpret the song as a desire to undo the past and prevent the heartbreak altogether. The line "so I can tell myself what I'm supposed to do" suggests a wish to return to that pivotal night to change the course of events, perhaps to avoid the relationship entirely if it means sidestepping subsequent pain. This duality in interpretation highlights the song's emotional complexity: it speaks both to the beauty of a cherished love and the overwhelming pain of losing it. It captures a powerful emotional paradox: standing at a crossroads where love meets loss, unsure if you're walking away from the best or worst thing that ever happened to you.

Song lyrics, much like poetry, serve as a reflection of the human experience. The language used in *The Night We Met* is rich with emotional connotations, creating vivid imagery that resonates deeply with listeners (Sitorus and Herman 2019). They argue that song lyrics are a means of communicating thoughts and emotions, providing listeners with a way to process their feelings through music. The lyrics of *The Night We Met* serve as a bridge between the composer's emotions and the listener's personal interpretation, allowing for a shared emotional journey.

In analyzing the lyrics of "*The Night We Met*", it becomes evident that they function as a form of literature, employing metaphor and symbolism to convey complex emotional states. The recurring refrain "take me back to the night we met" serves as a powerful symbol of nostalgia and longing, while other lines, such as "I had all and then most of you," depict the progression of loss and the resulting emotional void. As literature allows for multiple interpretations, so too do song lyrics like these invite listeners to project their own emotions and experiences onto the words, creating a deeply personal connection to the music. The song embodies an emotional struggle where the desire to hold onto the past clashes with the painful reality of moving forward. This article aims to explore how the lyrics of *The Night We Met* evoke varied emotional responses from listeners, revealing the song's emotional depth and its capacity to resonate on a universal level.

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, a foundational figure in this field, signs are fundamental components of social life, consisting of two parts: the signifier

and the signified. This duality allows us to understand how meaning is constructed and interpreted within language and communication. Although Saussure himself did not publish a formal book, his lectures were compiled by his students, outlining the key principles of his theories, which have become essential to understanding the relationship between language, meaning, and interpretation.

In semiotic terms, the signifier refers to the physical form of a sign, such as the words of a song, while the signified is the concept or meaning that those words evoke. This dyadic relationship is crucial for analyzing song lyrics, as it reveals how language can represent complex emotional states. In *The Night We Met*, the lyrics serve as signs that encapsulate emotions of longing and regret, allowing listeners to connect their personal experiences with the meanings conveyed through the song. The essence of semiotics lies in understanding how signs function within social contexts to create meaning. Semiotics can encompass various sign systems, including language, visual imagery, and sounds (Sitorus and Herman 2019). In this analysis, the song lyrics are viewed as indicators of deeper emotional truths, inviting listeners to interpret their meanings based on their individual perspectives. Assertion that semiotics extends to literary analysis, where language generates multiple meanings through the interplay of signs (Lestari 2023).

In exploring the lyrics of "*The Night We Met*", we observe a range of emotions embedded in the signifier, which includes the specific words and phrases used in the song. For instance, the repeated line "take me back to the night we met" functions as a poignant signifier of nostalgia and longing. The signified in this context reflects the desire to revisit a perfect moment in the past, highlighting the emotional complexity that accompanies memories of love and loss. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is intimate; one cannot exist without the other (Josephson, Kelly, and Smith 2020). The signifier represents the mental image of sound, while the signified embodies the mental comprehension of that significance (Farias, Blok, and Roberts 2019). This close relationship allows listeners to engage deeply with the lyrics, projecting their own feelings of love, heartbreak, and longing onto the music. This study aims to analyze how the lyrics of *The Night We Met* convey complex emotional responses from listeners. By examining the signifiers and signified present in the lyrics, we can uncover the underlying meanings of love, memory, and loss that resonate universally, illustrating the song's ability to evoke varied emotional interpretations.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method to analyze the lyrics of the song "*The Night We Met*" by Lord Huron through a semiotic lens. The qualitative descriptive research method is chosen because it focuses on analyzing textual data, aligning with (Silverman 2013) approach where the data appears in the form of words rather than numbers. The research data comprises listener responses to the song, gathered from social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These platforms were selected because they provide access to real-time public opinions, emotional reactions, and varied interpretations of the song. The data was systematically collected and categorized based on emotional responses expressed in comments, reviews, and posts. The process followed (Creswell 2018) recommendation for qualitative research, where data is analyzed without statistical measures but through thematic

interpretation. The researcher employed the following steps: (1) data collection, (2) categorization of lyrics, (3) interpretation of emotional responses, and (4) drawing conclusions.

A semiotic analysis, based on Saussure's theory of signifiers and signifieds, was applied to the lyrics. Specific lines of the song that were frequently referenced in social media discussions were selected for detailed analysis. These key lyrics were examined for their symbolic meaning (signifier) and their emotional significance (signified) as expressed by listeners. This approach allowed the researcher to interpret how different lyrics evoke varying emotional responses, such as sadness, nostalgia, and longing. The data was organized in a table, with the lyrics in one column and the associated emotional interpretations and listener comments in the other. The conclusions were drawn from this analysis, reflecting the diverse emotional impact of "The Night We Met" on its audience.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Signifier and Signified

In this analysis, the relationship between the signifier (the word or symbol used) and the signified (the concept or idea represented by the signifier) is explored through the song "The Night We Met." Using Saussure's semiotic theory, the lyrics are examined for their deeper meanings. The signifier is represented by the words and phrases in the song, while the signified is the emotional and mental image or concept that the words evoke.

In this context, the signifier and signified are intricately linked, as the words in the song (the signifiers) trigger emotional responses and memories, which in turn represent the signified – the longing, pain, and nostalgia that arise from the narrator's desire to return to a pivotal moment in the past.

Stanza 1:

I am not the only traveler

Who has not repaid his debt

I've been searching for a trail to follow again

Take me back to the night we met

Table 1. Lyrics and Interpretation Stanza 1

Lyrics (Signifier)	Interpretation (Signified)
"Take me back to the night we met"	<p>Represents a longing for simplicity and innocence, as described by @hurrikane, highlighting the protagonist's desire to relive a time untouched by heartbreak.</p> <p>The phrase also symbolizes regret – a wish to undo the relationship, reflecting the pain that love and loss have brought (general listener interpretation).</p> <p>Suggests nostalgia for the first moments of connection, where everything felt perfect, embodying the bittersweet tension between joy and sorrow.</p> <p>Expresses the universal human desire to return to pivotal moments in the past, whether to cherish them again or to change the outcome</p>

This stanza portrays the feeling of longing and regret that accompanies lost love. The line "Take me back to the night we met" symbolizes a desire to return to a time of innocence and simplicity, before the complexities of the relationship emerged. The protagonist wishes to go back to a moment that felt pure and untainted by the heartache that followed. This longing represents the universal desire to relive pivotal moments in the past, where everything seemed perfect, reflecting both joy and sorrow. In this stanza, the repeated plea to "take me back" highlights the protagonist's yearning for a time when love was untainted and uncomplicated. The phrase "searching for a trail to follow again" implies a sense of directionlessness and confusion in the present, a feeling often felt after a loss.

Stanza 2.

*And then I can tell myself
 What the hell I'm supposed to do
 And then I can tell myself
 Not to ride along with you*

Table 2. Lyrics and Interpretation Stanza 2

Lyrics (Signifier)	Interpretation (Signified)
"When you had not touched me yet, oh take me back to the night we met"	<p>Implies a wish to reverse the emotional closeness that led to heartbreak, as noted by @maddie_haigh, reflecting vulnerability and emotional self-preservation.</p> <p>"Untouch me" symbolizes the deep pain of intimacy that ultimately ended in loss, suggesting a wish to remain distant to avoid emotional suffering.</p> <p>This lyric can also be interpreted as an exploration of innocence lost—how relationships, while beautiful, can leave scars that make one long for the time before they began.</p> <p>Highlights the internal conflict of desiring love but fearing the inevitable pain that may follow, a theme that resonates universally.</p>

This stanza reflects the internal conflict and confusion the protagonist experiences after heartbreak. The line "And then I can tell myself / What the hell I'm supposed to do" illustrates the protagonist's struggle to move forward or even understand what to do with the emotions lingering after the relationship ends. The first-person perspective in this stanza emphasizes the internal dialogue and the emotional battle between wanting to move on and clinging to the past. The phrase "Not to ride along with you" suggests that the protagonist is trying to convince themselves not to return to the relationship, despite the intense emotional pull. The contradiction between the desire to move on and the temptation to stay connected shows the difficulty of breaking free from the hold of love.

Stanza 3.

*I had all and then most of you, some and now none of you
 Take me back to the night we met
 I don't know what I'm supposed to do
 Haunted by the ghost of you*

In this stanza, the lyrics "I had all and then most of you, some and now none of you" symbolize the gradual fading of love and emotional connection. The line reflects the emotional journey of the relationship, from full affection to eventual emptiness and loss. It represents how feelings evolve and diminish over time, leaving a void where once there was love. The line "Haunted by the ghost of you" reveals that even after the relationship ends, the memories of the lost connection continue to haunt the protagonist. The "ghost" here represents the lingering presence of the past, making it difficult for the protagonist to move on. This haunting metaphor captures the emotional struggle of being unable to fully let go of someone who once held such significance.

Table 3. Lyrics and Interpretation Stanza 3

Lyrics (Signifier)	Interpretation (Signified)
"I had all and then most of you, some and now none of you. Oh take me back to the night we met"	<p>According to @acsjosef0729, this lyric reflects the gradual fading of love, from abundance to complete absence, symbolizing the emptiness left behind.</p> <p>The contrasting stages of "all," "most," "some," and "none" mirror the emotional journey of a relationship's rise and fall, evoking feelings of longing and grief.</p> <p>@maddie_haigh interprets this line as expressing regret for ever meeting the person, as the pain of losing them overshadows the joy of loving them.</p> <p>The lyric could also symbolize the protagonist's desire to reclaim a time when their connection was whole and fulfilling, before it fractured into pieces</p>
"I don't know what I'm supposed to do, haunted by the ghost of you"	<p>The "ghost" metaphor symbolizes how the memories of a lost relationship linger, acting as a constant reminder of what was once deeply meaningful.</p> <p>This lyric reflects the paralysis and confusion that often follow heartbreak, as the protagonist struggles to find direction without the person they loved.</p> <p>The line also underscores the pain of unresolved emotions, as the "ghost" represents not only memories but also the absence of closure. For many listeners, this lyric captures the universal struggle of moving on while being weighed down by the emotional residue of the past.</p>

Stanza 4.

*Oh, take me back to the night we met
 When the night was full of terror
 And your eyes were filled with tears
 When you had not touched me yet
 Oh, take me back to the night we met*

Table 4. Lyrics and Interpretation Stanza 4

Lyrics (Signifier)	Interpretation (Signified)
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<p>"When the night was full of terror and your eyes were filled with tears, take me back to the night we met"</p>	<p>As @User127895670 noted, this lyric juxtaposes the pain of heartbreak ("night full of terror") with the joy of falling in love ("the night we met"), emphasizing the emotional highs and lows of the relationship.</p> <p>The "tears" suggest a moment of vulnerability and finality, while the longing to go back highlights the protagonist's struggle to reconcile their love with its painful ending.</p> <p>This lyric also reflects the theme of duality – how moments of love and sorrow are often intertwined, creating a complex emotional tapestry.</p> <p>It resonates with listeners who have experienced heartbreak, as it captures the tension between cherishing the good memories and wishing to avoid the pain entirely.</p>
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This stanza reflects the duality of love and pain. The line "When the night was full of terror and your eyes were filled with tears" juxtaposes love's emotional highs and lows. The "night full of terror" could symbolize the heartbreak and the fear that accompanied the relationship's end, while the "eyes filled with tears" suggest moments of vulnerability and sadness during the relationship.

Table 5. Extended: Take me back to the night we met

Lyrics (Signifier)	Interpretation (Signified)
<p>"Take me back to the night we met" (Extended)</p>	<p>According to @abby carberry, the lyric reflects a longing to undo the relationship while simultaneously doubting whether the outcome could ever change, adding a layer of helplessness.</p> <p>Suggests an emotional conflict: the protagonist cherishes the memory of love but struggles with the pain of its loss, unsure whether they would make the same choice again.</p> <p>Highlights the theme of inevitability – how love, no matter how beautiful, often comes with pain, leaving one to question whether it was worth it.</p> <p>Resonate universally as it explores the cyclical nature of love and regret, where joy and sorrow are inseparable</p>

"Take me back to the night we met" reiterates the protagonist's desire to return to a time before all the emotional turmoil, to relive the innocence of the early stages of love. The reference to "tears" indicates that even in those moments, there was emotional intensity, but the protagonist wishes to reclaim the time before the relationship became complicated by sorrow.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *The Night We Met* by Lord Huron reveals the profound emotional impact of its lyrics, as understood through Saussure's semiotics. The study shows that the song's signifiers—its haunting words and phrases—evoke complex emotional responses by engaging with listeners' personal experiences of love, loss, and longing. The recurring refrain, "Take me back to the night we met," serves as a symbol of nostalgia, representing the universal human desire to revisit cherished moments. Listener responses on social media platforms highlight the song's duality: for some, it is a poignant reflection on the beauty of love lost, while for others, it represents a wish

to undo the pain of heartbreak. This diversity in interpretation underscores the emotional depth of the song and its ability to resonate across different perspectives.

Ultimately, *The Night We Met* exemplifies how music serves as both a personal and universal medium for emotional connection. The study concludes that the interplay between the song's signifiers and signified creates a shared emotional journey, allowing listeners to find their own meanings within the lyrics. This underscores the enduring power of music to bridge individual and collective experiences, making it a unique form of artistic expression.

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