

During Reading

Imagine what it would be like to be invited to go on tour with your favourite musician or group. There would be musicians, roadies, sound people, and managers, all together in a bus travelling from city to city. There would be a new city with new fans every night.

In your notebook, write **three** paragraphs describing what a typical day on the road with your favourite group would be like.

Talkin' Road Trip Blues

SHORT STORY by Lois Beauchamp

After four weeks on the road, we had established an easy rhythm for arriving and setting up the band for the next gig. The excitement of the early days had worn thin and the routine of the road trip was now mind-numbing. This was the end of the fourth week of the Bobby Lavigne World Tour. The fans were still thrilled, but Bobby, his band, roadies, sound people, and management were starting to get on each other's nerves.

I entered the auditorium last, hauling my camera equipment. The seats were empty and the stage was dark except for the footlights like teeth grinning over the lip of the stage. Bobby paced restlessly back and forth, back and forth, across the stage. From time to time, he would yell something to one of the roadies with just a hint of anxiety in the command. Bobby grabbed his guitar and strummed quietly so the sound techs could check the levels.

With Bobby on an empty stage in an empty auditorium, it seemed a perfect opportunity for some unstaged shots. I dumped my gear in a front row seat and pulled out my digital camera to take a few photos of the artist before the show. Caption to read: "The intense Bobby Lavigne leaves no concert detail to chance."

GOALS AT A GLANCE

making connections • analysing ellipses

still couldn't believe I was a part of this. I was a serious photographer, but too young, at twenty, to be taken seriously. Some major miracle, I had been invited to go on the road to take candid shots of Bobby and his band. The first night, in the mellowness of the green room, I knew that this was the greatest event of my life. Not that my life was so full of moments, but if I never did another thing again it would be okay.

The past month had sped by and I was completely absorbed with my subject. From behind the camera lens, I watched Bobby and felt like I got to know him. Backstage, Bobby was rarely without an instrument. He seemed to be able to play anything and he was fearless.

As a kid, I'd studied piano and guitar, but I'd had no confidence in my musical talent. Bobby, though, pounded the piano keys and picked out blues riffs on his Gibson guitar, totally confident that what he was playing was great. His short brown spikes hung over his eyes, blue like the glacier lakes of the Canadian Rockies. These piercing eyes scanned every inch of the room without missing a thing. Except, it seemed, for me. He never saw me.

That night, at the fifteen minutes before-the-show mark, Bobby cleared his dressing room except for the band members. Michelle on bass, Joe on drums, Jan on the B3 organ, that monster from the sixties, and Bobby's old pal Kerry on guitar. My invisibility worked for me as I hung back and watched the preparations.

They discussed the play list which changed from night to night, as did how Bobby sang each song. Some of his fans didn't like Bobby's vocal stylings, but it was the only way for him to perform. No song should be sung the same way twice, he'd say.

The show went well. There were only a couple of mistakes, mostly around the lyrics. Who could remember all those words, anyway? Of course, there were ten thousand people in the audience (all with their own Bobby Lavigne song book at home) to note each mistake and high point. A lot of them would post their own reviews on the Internet the day after a concert, complaining about this and praising that.

Two encores later and the band left the stage, the audience cheering itself hoarse. Bobby knew he had to get out quickly. He'd tried waiting around for the crowds at the stage door to thin out, but the wait was too long. Bobby was always eager to get to his motel room or out on the town. We were in Vancouver this time and Bobby and the band headed to the club district.

I spent the night in my room poring over my shots. There were some pretty good ones. I was lucky to be allowed on the stage during the concerts to get those great crowd shots. I could capture the delight on the faces of the fans as they watched their idol perform their favourite songs.

The next morning the bus started loading at ten. I was sitting in my usual seat halfway down the driver's side, reading the local newspaper's review of the concert. The harsh music critic stated, "Watching Bobby Lavigne in concert is a glorious reminder of how looks without talent can only carry a musician so far." I wondered how Bobby's manager would cut that statement to make it sound positive: "...Bobby Lavigne in concert is a glorious...talent..."

It was a totally unfair review for such a popular and talented musician, but this particular music critic had never been a Bobby fan (not since Bobby had publicly mocked one of her reviews). I had a terrific shot of her glaring at Bobby during the concert last night. Caption to read: "Spiteful music critic plots her revenge."

I looked up from the review and noticed the band standing on the pavement outside the bus. Bobby was there too, with a few fans looking for autographs.

I snuck a few shots from the bus, trying not to focus on the tired, drawn face of the musician. Suddenly, he was looking right at me. A smile spread slowly over his face, cracking the weariness. I put the camera down and grabbed the newspaper, trying to cover up my intrusion.

As I read, I felt the bus rock when Bobby and the band climbed aboard. I expected them to move to the back of the bus, as usual. I buried my head further in the newspaper. Someone sat beside me. I looked up and it was Bobby. Right next to me. I nodded hello.

"Is that a digital camera?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "a Nikon blah blah blah with seven megapixels and a large format, high performance sensor blah blah blah..." I responded nerdishly. What a dope, I thought.

"Can I look at some of your shots?"

How could I say no? I handed him the camera, showing him which button to press to flip through the pictures. He hunched forward, his face a quiet blank except for those brooding eyes. He smiled at one or two and said, "Hey! These are good!"

The city passed by us as we headed down the highway. I was on a road trip with the awesome Bobby Lavigne, making musical history.... I couldn't help thinking of Jack Kerouac and his "on the road" buddies, or Bob Dylan and his Rolling Thunder Review.

I knew I had to capture the moment, and asked if I could take a picture of the two of us. I held the camera at arm's length and we put our heads together. I took the shot. I could see this photo becoming famous years from now, caption to read: "Celebrated Canadian photographer poses with once-famous rock star, Bobby Lavigne."



A

CRITICAL THINKING *Making Connections*

The answers to the following questions may not be found in the short story. Think about what you know about road trips and what you know about the main character in the story. There may be more than one correct answer to these questions.

1. What do you think the main character learned from her time on the road with the band?

2. What do you think she would consider the **pros** and **cons** of life on the road?

| Pros | Cons |
|------|------|
| | |

3. If you got the chance to tour with a band, what would you hope to learn?

4. What would you consider the pros and cons of life on the road?

| Pros | Cons |
|------|------|
| | |



5. Once you have completed questions 3 and 4, review your answers for questions 1 and 2. Would you change your answers for questions 1 and 2? Explain.

B**VOCABULARY** *Defining Jargon and Idiom*

- Choose **one** of the following activities to complete. To help you complete the activity, review the definitions for **jargon** and **idiom** on pages 9 and 21 (also see the glossary on page 153).
 - The story uses several words connected with cameras or music, such as **gig**, **roadies**, **green room**, and **blues riffs**. Reread the story and underline the jargon. List the words on another piece of paper. Find out the meaning of these words by checking a dictionary or asking an expert.
 - The story uses several idioms, such as **worn thin**, **hung back**, and **thin out**. Reread the story and underline the idioms. List the idioms on another piece of paper. Find out the meaning of these idioms by checking a dictionary.
- Find a partner who completed the other activity. Share your answers with your partner and listen while your partner shares his or her answers with you.

C**LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS** *Analysing Ellipses*

- An **ellipsis (...)** is three periods in a row. In nonfiction, this punctuation mark is often used within a quotation to show that words have been left out.
EXAMPLE: The newspaper reported that "...Bobby Lavigne in concert is a glorious...talent..."
- Fiction authors sometimes use **ellipses** (the plural form of **ellipsis**) to show a pause, interruption, or incomplete thought.
EXAMPLE: "A Nikon blah blah blah with seven megapixels and a large format, high performance sensor blah blah blah..." I responded nerdishly.
- Remember to add an extra period if the ellipsis appears at the end of a statement.
EXAMPLE: I was on a road trip with the awesome Bobby Lavigne, making musical history.... I couldn't help thinking of Jack Kerouac.

- Look through your local newspaper for movie ads. Circle any ellipses you find in the ads. With a partner, discuss what the missing words might have said about the movie. Do you think that words are always removed just to shorten a quotation? Or do you think that sometimes advertisers remove words that are negative? Support your response.

- Look through several short stories to see how fiction writers use ellipses. Think about how replacing the ellipses with a period would change the meaning or mood of the line or story.
