

Apocalyptic Playlist

1. Nevermind by Leonard Cohen
2. A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall by Bob Dylan
3. Brother Lee by Citizen Cope
4. Every Time the Sun Comes Up by Sharon Van Etten
5. Fast As You Can by Fiona Apple

The song Nevermind originally appeared as a poem before Leonard Cohen recorded it. He talks of war and peace in the lyrics, but it's performed with a removed, existentialist voice. In the beginning of the second verse, Cohen sings "I had to leave my life behind." This directly correlates to the main character in *The Road*, who left his life behind and is now traveling towards an unknown destination with his son. At one point in the book, while they are traveling, the boy asks the man, "Did you have any friends?" The man affirms that he did, and the boy says, "What happened to them?" The man responds with, "They died... All of them. (59)" The chorus of the song, which starts with the words "Never mind," repeated and separated unlike the title, is of the same mentality that the man encompasses. It does not do the boy any good to hear a lot about the world of before the apocalypse, that he has never experienced. Being a young child, the boy would only get upset, knowing that he might never encounter the old world. The man speaks very little of his life before traveling on the roads, dismissing anything that might guarantee questions, in order to protect the boy.

When A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall by Bob Dylan first came out, the general public assumed it was in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis, and therefore a song about impending nuclear war. Dylan, however, had written the song a month before the missile crisis, and had intended for it to paint a perspective about the world despairing. The first verse of the song starts with a theoretical parent asking "Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?" and each verse after that also begins with a question to the "blue-eyed son."

The only two prevalent characters in *The Road* are the man and the boy. Their bond is indescribable, a connection they gained by being with each other while both of their lives are constantly in danger, and even more heightened because they are father and son. A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall continues with the "blue-eyed son" describing his travels, and how he's seen tragedy all over the world.

The boy in *The Road* has had a similar experience. The man has tried his best to shield the boy from horrors, but there are only so many steps he can take to protect his son in a cannibalistic apocalypse. What the “blue-eyed son” experiences in A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall parallels what the son in *The Road* experiences. Both have seen the worse parts of the world.

Brother Lee by Citizen Cope is a song about a man with many different identities. He describes how all throughout the U.S. he is recognized because he looks like this so-called “brother lee,” who is most likely an alter ego that has not left a good impression. In the chorus he sings “I got a brother named Lee, Look just like me, He gotta lotta enemies.” At one point during the man and boy’s travels, they have to hide from a group of people wearing red scarves going down the road. After they pass, the boy asks, “Were they the bad guys? (92)” The man affirms that they were. The distinction is important to the boy. Knowing that he and his father are good keeps him hopeful. Brother Lee also deals with good vs. bad, and how people change. How one is raised affects how they see the world, and in an apocalyptic scenario, it’s likely that people would be less forgiving than in Brother Lee.

Part of the reason I chose Every Time the Sun Comes Up by Sharon Van Etten for this playlist is self explanatory once it’s understood that the chorus for this song is, “Every time the sun comes up, I’m in trouble.” It’s repeated frequently throughout the song, and I felt it perfectly fit the man’s emotions about the journey that he and the boy are going on. Sleep is the only escape from reality he gets. “Rich dreams now which he was loathe to wake from. Things no longer known to the world. (131)” When the sun comes up, the man has to face reality.

Fast As You Can by Fiona Apple is about her own mental illness and how it affects her relationships with men. She describes how she sucks people in and gives a warning in the chorus, telling them to literally run away from her: “Fast as you can, baby. Run, free yourself of me.” Interpreting this in terms of *The Road*, the man and boy are moving as fast as they can in order to be in a safer place. They are trying to outrun death. Prone to bouts of craziness caused by their surroundings and mental state, both Fiona Apple and the man are clinging to their humanity.