

# The Eurovision Song Contest!

A Reading A-Z Level W Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,125

## Connections

### Writing

Write an acrostic poem that describes important elements of the Eurovision Song Contest. Use the name "Eurovision" for the acrostic. Each letter in the name will begin a line of your poem.

### Social Studies

Listen to a recap of songs from one year's participants in the Eurovision Song Contest. Choose a favorite song. Research to learn more about the artist or artists. Create a poster using the information from your research.

LEVELED BOOK • W

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**Multi  
level  
Q•T•W**

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# The Eurovision Song Contest!



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## Focus Question

What is the Eurovision Song Contest, and according to the author, what impact has it had on Europe?

## Words to Know

audiences	experts
broadcast	inclusive
competition	international
contestants	lyrics
cultures	mock
diversity	trophy

Cover: All participants took the stage during the Grand Final of the 2015 Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna, Austria.

Title page: Ovi from Romania performs during the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest in Denmark.

Page 3: English group Bucks Fizz won the 1981 Eurovision Song Contest with the song "Making Your Mind Up."

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### Correlation

#### LEVEL W

Fountas & Pinnell	S
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



Dana won the 1970 Eurovision Song Contest with the song "All Kinds of Everything." This sweet ballad topped the charts in Europe.

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**In the Beginning**

The first time I watched the Eurovision Song Contest on television with my family, who are Irish, was in 1970. The songs were in languages I didn't understand. When all the **contestants** had sung, jurors from foreign lands voted for their favorite songs. The presenters chatted politely to the jurors in their native language as scores were revealed to the rest of Europe on television. We waited excitedly to see if Ireland's song would earn the most points and win the contest.

My earliest memory of this yearly TV gala has stayed with me. It was the first time I realized that I lived in a country that was part of the continent of Europe. I remember it well because that year, Ireland won the Eurovision Song Contest.



Fans pose at the 2010 Eurovision Song Contest in Norway.

### What Is Eurovision?

The Eurovision Song Contest is Europe’s largest and most spectacular song **competition**. People take pride in their country’s performance and promote themselves to their **international** neighbors. **Audiences** across the continent also join in the fun and judge the songs for themselves. Friends and family love to **mock** the sometimes-cheesy performances and argue about the votes.



The contestants of the 1963 Eurovision Song Contest pose in front of the song entry board. Prior to 2013, the order of performances was decided at random. Today, producers choose the order.

### When Did Eurovision Start?

The Eurovision Song Contest started in 1956 as a way to help bring together European countries after they were torn apart during the Second World War. The first Eurovision took place in Switzerland, and only seven European countries took part. The show lasted over an hour and a half. The seven participating countries each submitted two entries. Each country’s most famous performers sang with the backing of a live orchestra.

At first, the songs had to be sung in the national language of the country they represented. In order to get around this rule and appeal to the international judges, songs could use recognizable nonsense **lyrics**, such as in “Boom, Bang-a-Bang” (Lulu winning for England in 1969) and “La, La, La” (Massiel winning for Spain in 1968). ABBA, the Swedish pop group, won in 1974, singing “Waterloo” in English after the rule on national languages was relaxed.



ABBA performs “Waterloo” during the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest in England.

## How Does Eurovision Work?

There is no other contest in which countries vote on and judge each other's songwriting and performance skills. Selecting the song entries begins with a national competition in each country. Countries may either hold a televised competition or have a committee pick the entry. All songs must be sung live and must be three minutes or less.



### Zany Song Titles

Titles of songs that have won include "A-Ba-Ni-Bi" (Israel, 1978) and "Diggi-Loo Diggi-Ley" (Sweden, 1984). In 2014, the prize for the oddest title (and song) could have gone to France, whose song "Moustache" by Twin Twin was about a man who wants a moustache.



Wearing Michael Jackson tribute jackets, the stylish identical twins Jedward came in eighth in 2011 with their song "Lipstick."

During Eurovision week, performers travel to the country that is hosting the contest. They rehearse and then compete to reach the semifinals. These events take place over two days. The twenty-six highest scorers advance to the Grand Final, which is usually **broadcast** during prime time.

The voting is split equally between the audience and the jury. In addition, five music industry **experts** vote using a point system, and viewers at home can vote by telephone or text message or through the official app. To keep it fair, people can't vote for their own country.

In the Grand Final, the finalists perform once more. The juries and viewers from all the participating countries vote again. Once voting is finished, the presenters call upon a spokesperson from each country and have him or her reveal the country's jury points live on air.

Next, the total number of points for each country are added up and revealed from lowest to highest. In a thrilling climax, fans wait for the winner to be announced. The song is performed once again, and the winner is awarded an iconic glass microphone **trophy**. Finally, the winning country is granted the honor of hosting next year's Eurovision Song Contest.

### Facts and Figures

1. Ireland, which has won seven times, is the most successful country in the history of the contest. In 1996, staging the contest cost \$3.5 million, but it was estimated that it made over \$9 million for Ireland's overall economy!
2. Although Norway has lost the most, it has also won three times.
3. In 1969, four countries with an equal number of points had to be declared winners. Tie-breaker rules were introduced to stop this from happening again.
4. The year 2015 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Eurovision Song Contest—the longest-running annual TV music competition in history.

### Eurofever

The Eurovision is theatrical and flashy, and many viewers love the event. Television audiences are invited to enter special sweepstakes. Scorecards are offered for fans to download so they can join in the entertainment in the comfort of home.

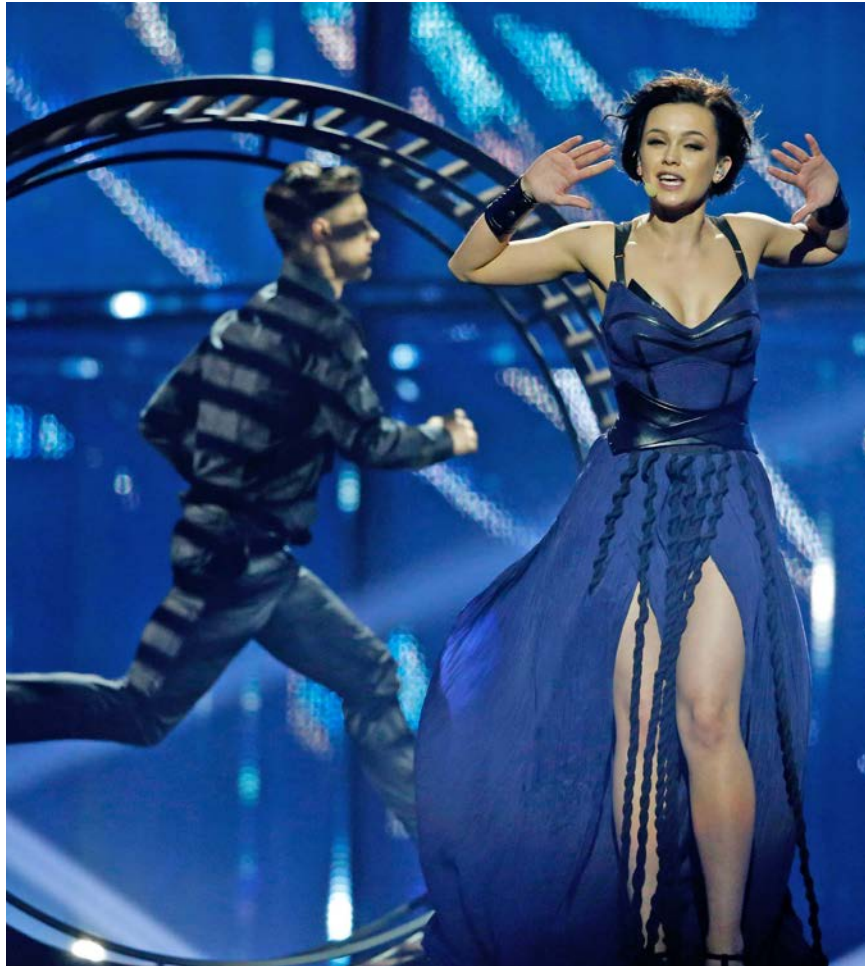
In its early days, the contest had a serious air. Women wore ball gowns, and all the performances were very formal. Lys Assia, a Swiss contestant, was the first winner of the Eurovision, in 1956. She was also the first to perform her song again



at the end of the show. Assia was so overcome with emotion that she forgot her lyrics and improvised the rest of the song.

Swiss singer Lys Assia won the first Eurovision Song Contest in 1956 with her song "Refrain."

Decades later, Eurovision became a showcase for national talent in a shimmering kaleidoscope of color and style. Now, performers wear dazzling sequined and bejeweled costumes. The set designs and performances can be very imaginative and sometimes surprising.



Mariya Yaremchuk of Ukraine wowed audiences in 2014 with the song "Tick-Tock." It featured a man running behind her in a giant wheel.



In 2012, the Buranovskiye Babushki (Grannies from Buranovo) proved that cute lyrics could get attention.

In popular TV talent shows, contestants with their own unusual styles may not make it to the final round. However, Eurovision embraces everyone. Most Eurovision winners don't go on to achieve successful pop music careers, but there are exceptions. ABBA won the 1974 contest, and Celine Dion competed for Switzerland in 1988. More often than not, though, the winners are not even the most interesting entries.

The Russian entry in 2012, Buranovskiye Babushki (bu-RAH-nuhv-skee-ye BAH-bush-kee), was the runner-up with the song "Party for Everybody." The Grannies amused audiences with cute lyrics about how everyone, including dogs and cats, is filled with happiness and joy.

## National Pride and Unity

The contest's mission is to celebrate **diversity** and act as a showcase for the broad range of **cultures** across Europe. From the seven countries that initially took part in the competition, Eurovision has now grown to include more than forty countries and an audience of over two hundred million people worldwide.

The voting gives Europeans the opportunity to support their favorite pop alliances. A 2006 study by two London colleges found that neighboring countries tend to vote for each other as a bloc. You can count on Scandinavians to support each other, and no one is surprised when Eastern Europeans vote for each other. The United Kingdom and Ireland always keep track of how many points they give each other.

### Do Voting Blocs Help?

Being part of a group of countries, or bloc, doesn't always mean a win. Norway is in the Scandinavian bloc. Yet it is still the unluckiest country in Eurovision history. Norway has come in last a record eleven times and earned "nul (no) points" four times.

Some voting patterns might result in bad feelings between countries. In 2014, Armenia was ranked last by its neighbor, Azerbaijan. The Armenian voters and jury also gave Azerbaijan the lowest scores. The reason behind this negative voting was thought to be resentment from a military conflict between them that ended in 1994. In 2015, both countries continued to rank each other last.



The Eurovision Song Contest has been won by twenty-seven countries since 1956. Some have won more than once.

Eurovision is run by a large group of public broadcasters—the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Member countries of the EBU can enter the contest. Countries such as Israel and Armenia are members of the EBU, even though they are not in Europe.

After the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, Eurovision welcomed the new Eastern European countries. Some countries not in the EBU, such as Morocco and Australia, have also been invited.



## The Future Looks Bright

In 2017, Portugal's Salvador Sobral won. The winning song was a sweet, old-fashioned tune that could have been written in any era. This simple tune beat a rap act from Romania and a dancing gorilla from Italy for the win!

Can the Eurovision Song Contest offer hope for a more united and **inclusive** Europe? The contest is all about joyful celebration and tolerance of different values and customs. Every year its popularity grows. Friends and families unite to watch the extravaganza and cheer on their favorites. This fun and exciting tradition has no end in sight.



A dancing gorilla accompanied Italy's Francesco Gabbani in 2017.

## Glossary

<b>audiences</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	groups of people gathered to see and hear a performance or presentation (p. 5)
<b>broadcast</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	sent radio or television signals or programs (p. 8)
<b>competition</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a rivalry between businesses, teams, or individuals for something desired (p. 5)
<b>contestants</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who are part of a competition (p. 4)
<b>cultures</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the ideas and customs of certain groups of people; particular societies with their own ideas and customs (p. 13)
<b>diversity</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the quality or state of including many different cultures or types of people (p. 13)
<b>experts</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who have a lot of knowledge about a subject (p. 8)
<b>inclusive</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	available or open to anyone (p. 15)
<b>international</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	concerning two or more nations, or countries (p. 5)
<b>lyrics</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the words to a song (p. 6)
<b>mock</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to make fun of, often by imitating (p. 5)
<b>trophy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an object that is given as a prize for winning a competition (p. 9)