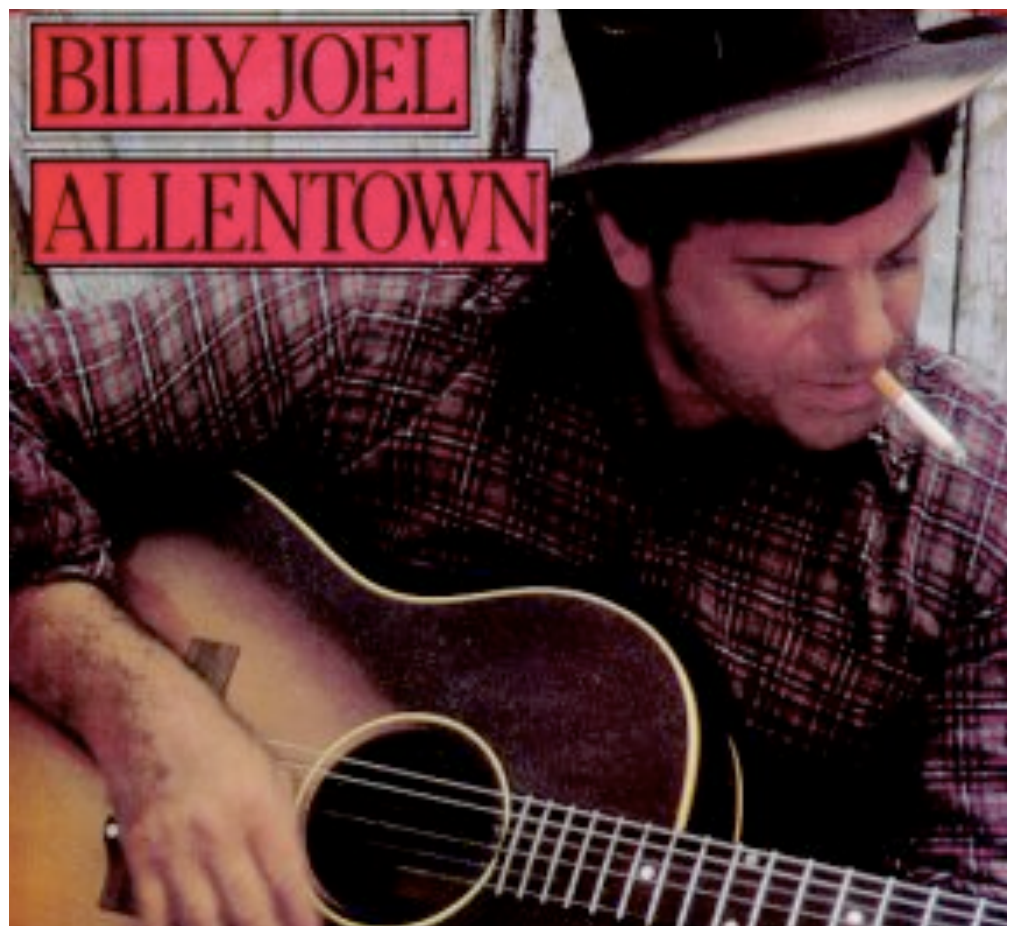


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Allentown

by Billy Joel



Allentown by Billy Joel

Allentown Lyrics

Well we're living here in Allentown
And they're closing all the factories
down, Out in Bethlehem they're
killing time, Filling out forms
Standing in line, Well our fathers
fought the Second World War
Spent their weekends on the Jersey
Shore, Met our mothers in the USO
Asked them to dance
Danced with them slow
And we're living here in Allentown

But the restlessness was handed
down And it's getting very hard to
stay

Well we're waiting here in Allentown
For the Pennsylvania we never found
For the promises our teachers gave
If we worked hard
If we behaved
So the graduations hang on the wall
But they never really helped us at all
No they never taught us what was
real, Iron and coke
And chromium steel
And we're waiting here in Allentown

But they've taken all the coal from
the ground And the union people
crawled away

Every child had a pretty good shot
To get at least as far as their old
man got, But something happened
on the way to that place, They threw
an American flag in our face

Well I'm living here in Allentown
And it's hard to keep a good man
down, But I won't be getting up
today

And it's getting very hard to stay
And we're living here in Allentown

So what's it all about?

This song is about industrial decline in Massachusetts in the USA. As in the UK, Japan and Australia the proximity of coal and iron ore led to profitable mining and steel making operations. This was especially so when European operations had been devastated by the Second World War. However, in the 1960s and 1970s these operations ceased to be profitable. In the US the steel industry did not modernise the way it made its steel and it gradually became more expensive than steel from other parts of the world. The coal and steel industry went into decline and thousands of people lost their jobs. Towns in the area, including Bethlehem, Levittown and Allentown fell heavily into recession. Families who had for generations depended on this local industry became destitute. It was a difficult time for the region.

Billy Joel originally wrote this

song about Levittown, but found the lyrics matched 'Allentown' better. Although the specifics might not be absolutely accurate, the song does paint a real and honest picture of the lives and feelings of people at the time. Many workers had fought for their country and as they were made redundant, they felt betrayed by the country that they had defended. This is what is meant when he sings, "they threw an American flag in our face." The song portrays the workers as honest and hard working and then having to suffer from the indignity of unemployment. The song also criticises the Unions who promised so much but delivered so little.

The song ends with despair about having to leave Allentown, and not even wanting to get out of bed.

There are some other related songs in GeoTunes from artists in other countries.