

## Subterranean Homesick Alien

Radiohead

The title of this song is an allusion to the iconic song “Subterranean Homesick Blues” by Bob Dylan, which describes the growing sense of alienation felt by many young Americans in the 1960’s.

The breath of the morning I keep forgetting  
The smell of the warm summer air  
I live in a town where you can’t smell a thing  
You watch your feet for cracks in the pavement

5 High up above aliens hover  
Making home movies for the folks back home  
Of all these weird creatures who lock up their spirits  
Drill holes in themselves and live for their secrets

They’re all uptight, uptight

10 I wish that they’d swoop down in a country lane  
Late at night when I’m driving  
Take me on board their beautiful ship  
Show me the world as I’d love to see it

I’d tell all my friends but they’d never believe me  
15 They’d think that I’d finally lost it completely  
I’d show them the stars and the meaning of life  
They’d shut me away, but I’d be all right, all right

I’m just uptight, uptight

### Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Consider the speaker’s attitude toward and description of the place where he or she lives. What are the implications of living “in a town where you can’t smell a thing” (line 3), even the summer air? What meanings might the line “you watch your feet for cracks in the pavement” (line 4) have?
2. Who are the “weird creatures” referred to in line 7? In what ways do they “lock up their spirits,” “drill holes in themselves,” and “live for their secrets”? How is “uptight” an appropriate description for them?
3. What possible meanings does the title have? Consider factors such as the context given by the lyrics, metaphorical meanings of *subterranean*, and secondary meanings of *alien*. Who is the “subterranean homesick alien”?
4. From what point of view is the song written? What does the speaker tell us about himself or herself, and what else can we infer based on the rest of the lyrics? What is the speaker’s attitude toward the aliens, and why? Why do you think the speaker would be “all right” (line 17) even if he or she were locked away?
5. What relevance do you think this song has to life in modern society?