

Pessimist

A pessimist is a person who expects the worst outcome for any situation. If you tell the pessimist that the rains stopped about this time last year, and the fields dried out in time for a fine harvest, he will reply that a good year is always followed by a bad, success is always followed by a fall. If you tell him the corns on his toes are the kind that go away, he replies that he has never seen corns that didn't get progressively larger. Are you a pessimist?

Examples

1

The classic country singer Merle Haggard knows how to strike the pessimist tone. Take this from 'Are the Good Times Really Over?'

*I wish a buck was still silver and it was back when the country was strong.
Back before Elvis and before the Vietnam war came along.
Before the Beatles and yesterday when a man could still work and still would.
Is the best of the free life behind us now and are the good times really over for good?*

*Are we rollin' downhill like a snowball headed for hell?
With no kind of chance for the flag or the liberty bell?
I wish a Ford or a Chevy would still last ten years like they should.
Is the best of the free life behind us now and are the good times really over for good?*

*I wish Coke was still cola and a joint was a bad place to be.
It was back before Nixon lied to us all on TV.
Before Microwave ovens when a girl could still cook, and still would.
Is the best of the free life behind us now and are the good times really over for good?*

It is true that the last line of each quatrain raises a question about the premise that the world is going to hell. But what sticks from the music, especially as it is tooled up into Merle's cranky drawl, is the sense that all is going downhill in the culture and society of his time.

2

The afternoon that I write this, the Pope has appealed to the world to avoid falling into a morass of piecemeal wars that will lead into WW III. I must agree that I see the danger, and feel, through the news, that mankind has a lasting ability to do harm to himself. I wonder if being human and in a human society means sacrificing so much, repressing so much savage material, that the fury of repression demands exits in the violence of mutual destruction? Are we doomed by our natures to destroy ourselves with the weapons it has taken us millennia of evolution to create?