Siren Song
BY MARGARET ATWOOD

This is the one song everyone would like to learn: the song that is irresistible:
the song that forces men to leap overboard in squadrons even though they see the beached skulls
the song nobody knows because anyone who has heard it is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret and if I do, will you get me out of this bird suit?
I don't enjoy it here squatting on this island looking picturesque and mythical
with these two feathery maniacs, I don't enjoy singing this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you, to you, only to you. Come closer. This song is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can, you are unique

at last. Alas it is a boring song but it works every time.


Source: Poetry (February 1974).

http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/21988
Answer the following questions using textual evidence from the poem.

1. In the first stanza, what song does the speaker say everyone wants to learn?

2. What does this song have the power to do?

3. Why do you think the speaker’s compliment in line 24 is so effective?

4. How does the speaker feel about her song and its secret? Which details in the poem support your answer?

5. What does the contemporary Siren say to flatter and lure the listener?

6. Who is the intended audience?

7. How does Atwood use events and ideas of The Odyssey in “Siren Song”?

8. How does the order of events in the poem develop surprise for the reader?