

Your Shortcut to... Taylor Swift

EPIISODE TRANSCRIPT

She grew up on a Christmas tree farm in Pennsylvania, she signed her very first music deal at the age of 14, and she's the star of the highest earning music tour the world has ever seen. This isn't a fairy tale, this is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to Taylor Swift—the podcast where we dive into the who, what, when, where, why and how of the big news stories. I'm Christie Kijurina.

And I'm Bryce Corbett. And you're right, Christie. Unless you've been living in a cave with no Wi-Fi, you've probably caught on that Taylor Swift is kind of a big deal.

Absolutely, Bryce. I mean, try to do anything online and BAM! There's Taylor, winning another award, or there's a sea of Swifties dressed up just like their idol. She's like the superhero of the music world, soaring from one triumph to the next.

That's one way to put it, Christie. Taylor Swift isn't just a star; she's a supernova. But things weren't always this way, right? I mean, there was a time, BT... before Taylor?

"Oh, those dark ages? I vaguely remember, Bryce. But fear not! Today, we're hopping into our musical time machine, zooming back to 1989—the year Taylor Swift entered the world.

We're on a mission to uncover WHO Taylor Swift was before the fame, WHY she's become a beacon of hope and inspiration to millions, and HOW she became the dazzling, chart-topping, record-breaking superstar we know today. So, grab your glittery microphones, and let's get this show on the road!

Listen carefully - there's a Squiz at the end!

WHO

Bryce, let's travel back in time to December 13, 1989, when Taylor Alison Swift made her first grand entrance. As I mentioned earlier, Taylor's story began on a Christmas tree farm, owned by her parents Scott and Andrea.

That's right Christie! Imagine waking up every day surrounded by fields of Christmas trees. Her childhood sounds like it was plucked straight from the pages of a storybook, doesn't it?

Absolutely, Bryce. It's like she lived in a fairy tale! And then, a couple of years later, along came her sidekick, her younger brother, Austin. These two, unlike many siblings, were allies in adventure, and they're still great friends today,

And speaking of family, Taylor also shares a special bond with her mum and dad and has written numerous songs about them. Before they became the keepers of the Christmas tree kingdom, they had bustling careers in the big city, in finance and advertising. That doesn't sound very musical. So where did Taylor's love of music come from?

That's an easy one Bryce, Taylor's inspiration was none other than her grandmother, Marjorie. Marjorie was a star in her own right, and, as an opera singer had a huge influence on Taylor. She studied music at university in 1949 when it was still very much a man's domain, before winning a talent contest which gave her the opportunity to tour around the world. Sound familiar? She even had her own TV show wayyy back in the 1960s.

That's incredible! So, with her parents' support and her grandma's inspiration, by the tender age of 10, Taylor was sharing her voice with the world, singing at local fairs and in contests. And, at the age of 12, it just so happened that her local computer repairman taught her a few chords on a guitar. Equipped with this skill, Taylor started writing her own songs, beginning of her journey as the singer-songwriter we know today.

That's right Bryce, by the age of 14, Taylor was writing and performing her own style of country music and her mum and dad, seeing that she had talent and ambition, decided to pack up their dreams and set their sights on Nashville, Tennessee, the land where country music dreams come true

Well, that's all very interesting Christie, but why did a young girl from a Christmas tree farm grow into a global superstar adored by millions?

WHY

Bryce, I know all about Tay Tays influence because my daughter is a certified Swiftie! From T-shirts emblazoned with Taylor's face to posters that turn her room into a Swift sanctuary, the devotion her fans have is out of this world!

It sure is! It's like Taylor has cast a spell with her music, Christie. Each song she crafts is a little piece of her heart packed with personal experiences. She even put out an album called The Diary. It's this genuine, heartfelt connection that transforms her fans into Swifties. They don't just listen to her music; they live it.

And not only that, Bryce. Taylor has said that by sharing her own struggles and triumphs, she hopes to encourage others to persevere through their challenges.

Once Taylor switched from country to pop music, with her album 1989, her fan base broadened, and she found a whole new audience from toddlers to grandparents. And the Eras tour, which showcases her transition between different music styles shows just how broad her appeal is.

And, you know how I said earlier that Tay Tays parents were businesspeople? Well, because her Mum had worked in advertising, Taylor became a pioneer in the digital realm, connecting with fans through her website and Myspace since 2008, well before the widespread use of social media, making genuine connections with her fans early on in her career.

Beyond her music, Taylor has put her influence to use for greater causes. Advocating for artists' rights to fair pay from record labels and streaming services, Taylor has been a vocal advocate for fairness in the music business.

But her impact extends well beyond the music scene. She's actively supported various charities, from disaster relief efforts to education and healthcare. Her generosity and commitment to helping others were especially evident during the pandemic, when she provided financial support to many in need.

And, in recognition of her wide-reaching influence, Taylor Swift was named Time Person of the Year in 2023. This honour underscores her impact not just in entertainment, but as a positive force in the world. So, Christie, how did she do all of this?

HOW

How did she do it, Bryce? How did she transform herself from singing into a hairbrush to global superstar? Well, aside from her undeniable talent, it's down to three things... good management, relentless hard work and perseverance.

Taylor's journey has been supported by a strong foundation, her family. They've been her cheerleaders from the start. Imagine Taylor, just 11 years old, distributing her demo recordings to recording studios, with her mum, Andrea, faithfully waiting in the car. And then there's Taylor's dad, Scott, a figure so beloved in the Swift universe for his warmth and generosity, often spotted spreading joy among fans by handing out guitar picks at Taylor's concerts.

And Bryce, talking about hard work, Taylor is a force of nature. By the age of 34, she's graced the world with 234 songs across 14 albums. But her creativity doesn't stop at music; she's also shared her journey in the documentary 'Miss Americana,' lent her voice to beloved characters like Audrey in 'The Lorax,' and appeared in several films,

And over and above just writing songs, Tay Tay goes the extra mile, embedding clues and secret messages into songs for Swifties to discover.

Of course, Bryce, where there's light, shadows follow. Taylor has faced her share of naysayers and critics, who've misrepresented her intentions or challenged her talent. But like a true artist, Taylor transforms negativity into empowerment. Her anthem 'Shake It Off' is a testament to rising above and dancing out of the shadows of criticism.

Since the beginning of her career, Taylor Swift has been honoured with over 500 award nominations and has clinched 324 victories. Her voice now reaches more than the combined populations of Australia, New Zealand, and the UK on platforms like Spotify and Apple Music every, single, day. And as of October 2023, she's joined the ranks of billionaires.

And she's still only 34 years old!

So, there you have it folks, it's a story that inspires, a reminder that with a bit of magic, a lot of hard work, and an unwavering spirit, dreams can come true.

THE S'QUIZ

"This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening..."

1 Where did Taylor Swift grow up? On a Christmas Tree farm in Pennsylvania"

2 What is the name of Tay Tay's nanna who was such an inspiration to her?
Marjorie

3 What is the name of the album where Taylor switched genres from Country music to pop? 1989

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of Taylor Swift. Teachers, there are a whole heap of excellent classroom resources related to this topic on the Squiz Kids website and there's a link to them in the episode notes.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day!

Over and out.