

# If You Could Read My Mind

Words and music by Gordon Lightfoot



In 1970, Warner/Reprise's release of Gordon Lightfoot's sixth album, *Sit Down Young Stranger*, catapulted the folky Canadian singer-songwriter to the status of an internationally renowned folk-pop star. The label originally issued Lightfoot's version of Kris Kristofferson's song "Me and Bobby McGee" (featured in this issue's Acoustic Classic) as the album's lead-off single, but it

barely dented the Top-40 barrier. However, Lightfoot's gentle folk ballad "If You Could Read My Mind" shot to the top of the charts, and Warner/Reprise quickly renamed the album after the song that earned it such enormous sales.

The track featured the beautifully intertwined guitar work of Lightfoot and his long-time accompanist Red Shea, one of the great unsung heroes of folk guitar. In the intro and coda of my arrangement of "If You Could Read My Mind," I've approximated the guitar figure that kicks off the original piece. Instead of underpinning the song's melody with an arpeggio pattern, as Lightfoot and Shea do, I've either harmonized it with sixths over a simple bass line (bars 5-16) to better replicate the rhythmic nuances of Lightfoot's vocal phrasing, or placed it atop three-note chords (bars 17-22)

to emphasize the interesting harmonic progression in these bars and create a stronger dynamic feel.

Use the fretting-hand fingerings I've indicated in this arrangement, particularly the half-barre chords. You may find it a bit tricky initially to switch easily between some of these half-barre positions, but once you get the hang of them you should find that they greatly simplify the fretting-hand fingering.

The original song has a coda that paraphrases a portion of the melody. In this arrangement, I've fashioned the coda out of the guitar figure that precedes the fourth verse, which is similar to the figure in the introduction. Again, pay attention to the half-barre A chord on the G, B, and E strings. You'll have to quickly lift and then replace this barre to play the required open E string.

I've based this arrangement on Lightfoot's first verse of "If You Could Read My Mind." In subsequent verses, Lightfoot repeats the pre-chorus and chorus phrases found in bars 13-23, so follow the form on page 107 if you want to perform the tune exactly as Lightfoot sings it.

—RON FORBES-ROBERTS

## Intro

Tempo: ♩ = 124

Chord: Aadd9

## Verse

Chords: A, 1/2 B IV, G, 1/2 B II, A

## PreChorus

Chords: G, A, A7, Dmaj7

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E F#m7 D A/c# A

<sup>2/3</sup> B II <sup>1/2</sup> B II

Chorus

Dmaj7 A/c# Bm7 E

<sup>1/2</sup> B II B II

play four times

A Aadd9 A Aadd9

<sup>1/2</sup> B X <sup>1/2</sup> B X

Chords:

<b>A</b> x01230	<b>G</b> 320004	<b>A7</b> x01030	<b>Dmaj7</b> xx0111	<b>E</b> 023100	<b>F#m7</b> 2x3333	<b>D</b> 000132	<b>A/c#</b> x3111x	<b>Bm7</b> x13121	<b>Aadd9</b> x01420
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Verse

A G A

1. If you could read \_\_\_ my mind \_\_\_ love What a tale my thoughts \_\_\_ could tell \_\_\_ Just like an old-  
2-4. See additional lyrics.

PreChorus

G A A7 Dmaj7

6 - time mo-vie About a ghost from a wish-ing well \_\_\_ In a cast-le dark \_\_\_ or a fort - res strong With chains

E F#m7 D A/c# A Dmaj7

12 \_\_\_ up-on \_\_\_ my feet \_\_\_ You know \_\_\_ that ghost \_\_\_ is me \_\_\_ And I will ne - ver be

A/C# Bm7 E Aadd9 \*(F#m7) (D) (A/C#) (A)

17 — set free — As long as I'm — a ghost — you can't see —

\*Play chords in parentheses on third and sixth choruses only.

1. **A** **G**  
If you could read my mind, love, what a tale my thoughts could tell  
**A** **G**  
Just like an old-time movie about a ghost from a wishing well

*PreChorus*

**A** **A7** **Dmaj7**  
In a castle dark or a fortress strong  
**E** **F#m7** **D** **A/C#** **A**  
With chains upon my feet, you know that ghost is me

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
And I will never be set free  
**Bm7** **E** **Aadd9**  
As long as I'm a ghost you can't see

2. **A** **G**  
If I could read your mind, love, what a tale your thoughts could tell  
**A** **G**  
Just like a paperback novel, the kind the drugstores sell

*PreChorus*

**A** **A7** **Dmaj7**  
When you reach the part where the heartaches come  
**E** **F#m7** **D** **A/C#** **A**  
The hero would be me, heroes often fail

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
And you won't read that book again  
**Bm7** **E** **Aadd9**  
Because the ending's just too hard to take

*PreChorus*

**A** **A7** **Dmaj7**  
I'd walk away like a movie star  
**E** **F#m7** **D** **A/C#** **A**  
Who gets burned in a three-way script, enter number two

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
A movie queen to play the scene  
**Bm7** **E** **F#m7**  
Of bringing all the good things out in me  
**D** **A/C#** **A**  
But for now, love, let's be real

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
I never thought I could act this way  
**Bm7** **E**  
And I've got to say that I just don't get it

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
I don't know where we went wrong  
**Bm7** **E** **Aadd9**  
But the feeling's gone and I just can't get it back

*Repeat Verse 1*

*PreChorus*

**A** **A7** **Dmaj7**  
In a castle dark or a fortress strong  
**E** **F#m7**  
With chains upon my feet  
**D** **A/C#** **A**  
But stories always end

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
If you read between the lines  
**Bm7** **E** **F#m7**  
You'll know that I'm just trying to understand  
**D** **A/C#** **A**  
The feelings that you lack

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
I never thought I could feel this way  
**Bm7** **E**  
And I've got to say that I just don't get it

*Chorus*

**Dmaj7** **A/C#**  
I don't know where we went wrong  
**Bm7** **E** **Aadd9**  
But the feeling's gone and I just can't get it back