

Why Did Everyone Watch the Halftime Show?



Built from *The Halftime Show Is the Main Event* by Patrick Kim, Culture Editor

Grades 4–8 · About 45 minutes · ★ everyone · ★★ older readers

Name _____

Date _____

1. Before You Read

★ Have you ever watched a big game or show mostly for something besides the main event, like the commercials, the snacks, or the halftime show? What was it?

★ Do you know any songs in a language other than English? Where did you first hear them?

2. The Short Version

Read this first. Older readers: read the full article too.

In February 2026, the Seattle Seahawks beat the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl, America's biggest football game. The game was decided early. Patrick Kim says the most important part of the night was not the football. It was the **halftime show**, the fourteen-minute concert in the middle of the game.

The star was Bad Bunny. One week earlier, he had won Album of the Year at the Grammys. His album was the first in Spanish ever to win that top prize. At halftime, he sang mostly in Spanish and filled the stage with Puerto Rican flags and culture. Lady Gaga and Ricky Martin joined him.

Patrick explains that halftime used to be a bathroom break. That started to change with Michael Jackson's show in 1993. Now millions of people who don't care about football tune in just for the show. Patrick says the Super Bowl is the last night of the year when about a hundred million Americans watch the same thing at once.

Some people were unhappy with the choice of singer and argued about it for months. Patrick says all that arguing gave every side attention, so everyone got something out of it.

Finally, Patrick says the show worked like a **census**. Lots of Americans already listen to music in Spanish. The show did not change American culture. It showed what American culture already looks like.

3. Word Bank

Word	What it means
halftime	the break in the middle of a game, between the first half and the second half
spectacle	a big, exciting show that lots of people want to see
controversy	a big argument where people strongly disagree about something
census	an official count of the people who live in a place
ritual	something people do the same way again and again, like a tradition

★ Use **spectacle** in a sentence of your own.

4. Check Your Understanding

★ 1. What did Bad Bunny win one week before the Super Bowl?

- A football trophy ○ Album of the Year at the Grammys ○ A Super Bowl ring

★ 2. Why was Bad Bunny's Album of the Year win a first?

★ 3. What was halftime like for most of Super Bowl history? Whose show in 1993 is usually said to have changed it?

★ 4. Patrick says the halftime performer plays for free. What does the performer get instead?

★★ 5. Patrick says that in the fight over the show, "every party to that fight got what it wanted." Name the three sides and what each one got.

5. Patrick's Attention Map

Patrick studies attention: how a crowd gets put together, who pays for it, and who profits from it. Most of the time, he says, everyone watches something different. The Super Bowl is one of the last nights when about a hundred million Americans face the same direction. Fill in the map for the halftime show. Then pick one thing your whole class or family watches together and map that too.

★ **Our shared thing:** What does your whole class or family watch together?

	The halftime show (from the article)	Our shared thing
Who is watching? Name the different groups of people.		
Who pays, and who makes money? Follow the money and the attention.		
What brings people together? Why do different people gather around it?		

★★ Which one gathers more different kinds of people: the halftime show or your shared thing? Why?

6. Think Deeper

★ Patrick says the Grammys and the NFL were the last to notice how popular Spanish-language music had become, like "your dad discovering a meme." What do you think he means? Why is that funny?

★★ Patrick says the halftime show is the main event because "it's the only mirror everyone still stands in front of at the same time." What does a mirror show you? What do you think a big shared show can tell a country about itself?

7. Write Your Report

Write a short report answering this question: **Is the halftime show really more important than the game?**

- **My answer:**
- **Reason 1 (from the article):**
- **Reason 2 (from the article):**
- **One thing the other side would say:**
- **My conclusion:**

For Teachers and Parents: Answer Key

Word bank sentence: Answers vary; check that the student uses spectacle to mean a big, exciting show that draws a crowd.

1. Album of the Year at the Grammys.
2. It was the first Spanish-language album ever to win Album of the Year, the top prize in the history of the Grammys.
3. It was treated like a bathroom break: marching bands, an aging star, filler between the two halves of the game. The change is usually dated to Michael Jackson's show in 1993.
4. Attention. Patrick says the reward comes afterward: more people streaming the performer's music, tour announcements, and a whole week of people talking about the show.
5. The league (the NFL) got weeks of free excitement and buzz before the game. The performer got higher stakes, so the concert became a statement and simply singing in Spanish felt meaningful. The people who objected got something to keep complaining about. Patrick's point is that the argument itself turned into attention, and everyone gained from it.

Attention map (sample answers): Halftime show, who is watching: tens of millions of Americans; football fans; people who don't care about football but come for the show; fans of Bad Bunny; people who had argued against the choice of singer. Who pays and who profits: the performer plays for free but is paid back in attention (streams, tour announcements, a week of talk); the league gets weeks of free buzz; commercials had been building up the show for weeks. What brings people together: a huge shared national event, the last night of the year when about a hundred million Americans watch the same thing; the excitement and the arguments about the show; Bad Bunny's Grammy win the week before. Shared-thing column and comparison: answers vary; look for specific groups of watchers, a reasonable guess about who pays and who gains, and a clear reason people gather.

Think deeper: Open answers. For the first, strong answers explain that lots of listeners already loved music in Spanish, and the big award shows and the NFL only caught up at the end, the way a parent might find out about a meme after everyone else is done with it. For the second, strong answers explain that a mirror shows you what you really look like, and that the show reflected the country as it already is, including how many Americans listen to music in Spanish. Look for a clear idea with a reason.

Report: Look for a clear answer and two reasons from the article. Reasons for "yes": the game was decided early, the show was history, more people care about the show than about football, the Super Bowl is the last night everyone watches the same thing, and the show is the most valuable stage in entertainment. Reasons for "no": Patrick mentions a view that mourns the football, which says the country built a holiday where the game itself has become the interruption; the Super Bowl is still a football game. Check for a fair statement of the other side and a conclusion that matches the answer.