



This Land Is Your Land

CONNECTING YOUR CHOIR STUDENTS TO THEIR HISTORY THROUGH THE
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS ARCHIVES

Explore, Create, Recreate

- ▶ There is a wealth of Folkways recordings here: folkways.si.edu.
- ▶ Consider the makeup of your choir and choose relevant music.
- ▶ Have students explore selected songs, coming to an understanding of their history and meaning.
- ▶ Discuss the cultural significance of the music and its relevance to today's culture.
- ▶ Arrange a song for your choir. Allow your students to experiment and develop harmonies.
- ▶ Create a music video.
- ▶ See the following example of our project: a combined study of "This Land Is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie and "Hard Times Come Again No More" by Stephen Foster.

Our Project

- ▶ Our project was an analysis and performance of two songs that expressed the economic and cultural struggles of their day: “This Land Is Your Land” by Woody Guthrie and “Hard Times Come Again No More” by Stephen Foster.
- ▶ The culmination resulted in a combination of the two songs into a simple choral setting, which was made into a video by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.
- ▶ You are invited to make your own video and share it with the Center.

“This Land Is Your Land” - Woody Guthrie

Explore the first song
and follow with discussion questions

- ▶ [Woody Guthrie on Folkways](#) (explore his life and music)
- ▶ [Portrait of the Musician](#)
- ▶ [A Folkways Podcast](#)
- ▶ [Background of Song](#)
- ▶ [Additional History](#)
- ▶ [Arlo Guthrie: “Where Something Happened” video](#)

Discussion

Questions for student consideration: writing and discussing

- ▶ What was occurring in society when Woody Guthrie wrote this song?
- ▶ What was his initial intent for the song?
- ▶ How did this change and why?
- ▶ Do you agree or disagree with his reasoning?
- ▶ Why was this song considered “subversive”?
- ▶ Do you think it is subversive? Why or why not?
- ▶ Is this type of music important to our culture? Why or why not?
What do you see as the role of folk music?
- ▶ Is this song relevant today? Explain your reasoning.

“Hard Times Come Again No More” - Stephen Foster

Read the articles and discuss

- ▶ [Background of Song](#)
- ▶ [One of Many Biographies](#)
- ▶ [About Stephen Foster and Recordings of “Hard Times Come Again No More”](#) (Be sure to listen to Mavis Staples!)
- ▶ [Controversy: Smithsonian Article](#)
- ▶ [NPR Article](#)
- ▶ [Stephen Foster Statue Controversy](#)
- ▶ [Another Viewpoint](#)

Discussion

- ▶ Why is Stephen Foster's music controversial?
- ▶ Was this song in the same vein as his minstrel songs?
- ▶ What was Foster's thoughts/feelings about his music? Did his thinking change as he grew older and more experienced? In what ways?
- ▶ What is your feeling about "cancelling" an artist for their artistic choices that might reveal prejudices?
- ▶ How can we redeem each other?

Our Results

A Choral Reckoning with the Imperfect History of the United States

Many thanks to Charlie Weber, his crew, and the
Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
for trusting us with this project!
We were truly honored to participate!

Your turn!

- ▶ Find a song that you would like to learn about and create your own arrangement and video.
- ▶ Remember to obtain all necessary copyright permissions.
- ▶ I would enjoy seeing your results!