

## Protest Songs – A Great Way to Teach History By Claire Rudolf Murphy

**Yankee Doodle:** Since the French and Indian War this song has been used in patriotism and protest with hundreds of serious and comic verses. *(See Yankee Doodle writing activity)*

**Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"** This song was composed and sung in the cotton fields by slave Wallace Willis before the Civil War. After the war he worked at a school for young freed slaves and the schoolmaster loved this song and others. He passed the songs on to the famous Jubilee Singers who began singing it in their performances around the country.

**Suffrage Songs:** *The women fighting for the vote used many, many songs, including My Country 'Tis of Thee and Yankee Doodle. And this fun song that students love to sing.*

### **To the tune of "Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" by L. May Wheeler:**

Oh Dear, what can the matter be	Women have husbands, they are protected
Dear, dear what can the matter be?	Women have sons by whom they're directed
Oh dear, what can the matter be	Women have fathers, they're not neglected.
Women are wanting to vote.	Why are they wanting to vote?

**Oh! Susanna:** *Written by Stephen Foster, first published in 1848, and popularly associated with the California Gold Rush, was written in the minstrel/blackface tradition.*

I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee,  
I'm going to Louisiana, my true love for to see.  
It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry  
The sun so hot I froze to death, Susanna, don't you cry.

#### *Chorus*

Oh! Susanna, Oh, don't you cry for me,  
For I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.

I had a dream the other night, when everything was still;  
I thought I saw Susanna dear, a coming down the hill.  
A buckwheat cake was in her mouth, a tear was in her eye,  
Says I, I'm coming from the south, Susanna, don't you cry.

### **Gold Rush Version:**

I came from Salem City with my washpan on my knee, I'm going to California, the gold dust for to see.

It rained all night the day I left, the weather it was dry The sun so hot I froze to death, Oh, brothers, don't you cry.

Oh, Susannah, Oh, don't you cry for me, I'm going to California with my washpan on my knee.

I soon shall be in Frisco and there I'll look around. And when I see the gold lumps there, I'll pick them off the ground.

I'll scrape the mountains clean, my boys, I'll drain the rivers dry. A pocketful of rocks bring home, So, brothers don't you cry.

### **We Shall Overcome:**

The melody dates back to before the Civil War, from a song called "No More Auction Block For Me." Originally, the lyrics were "I'll overcome someday," which dates back to a turn-of-the-20th-century song by the Reverend Charles Tindley of Philadelphia. The song didn't appear on a large scale until 1946, during a labor strike at the American Tobacco Company. One of the women striking that day – Lucille Simmons – began singing slowly, "Deep in my heart I do believe we'll overcome some day." From there, Pete Seeger sang it at civil rights' rallies and the song took off.

1. We shall overcome  
We shall overcome  
We shall overcome some day.

CHORUS: Oh, deep in my heart,  
I do believe  
That we shall overcome some day.

2. We'll walk hand in hand
3. We shall all be free
4. We are not afraid
5. We are not alone

**Up to the Mountain:** *Tribute Song to MLK, written by Patricia Griffin*

Link to Recorded Performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WA6Q5-Ap3o8>

I went up to the mountain  
Because you asked me to:  
Up over the clouds  
To where the sky was blue

I could see all around me  
Everywhere  
I could see all around me  
Everywhere

For additional lyrics, see: [metrolyrics.com/up-to-the-mountains-mlk-song-lyrics-patty-griffin.html](http://metrolyrics.com/up-to-the-mountains-mlk-song-lyrics-patty-griffin.html)