

Writing Activity: My Country 'Tis of Thee

By Claire Rudolf Murphy

My book, *My Country 'Tis of Thee: How One Song Reveals the History of Civil Rights*, features patriotic and protest verses from throughout the history of our country. As a follow-up activity students are encouraged to write a new verse to the song about a cause they believe in. Check out my web site, clairerudolfmurphy.com for musical renditions of the versions and other student samples.

WRITING ACTIVITIES:

- Write a new verse for a cause you believe in.
- Write a story in which characters from history or today sing a new version of *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, like Bessie and her friend Rita do in my book *Marching with Aunt Susan*. Or pick ones of the protest verses in my book, and feature it in a story during that period of history, like during the Revolutionary or Civil War.

Sample Student Verses by 5/6th grade class on bullying and poverty.

My country 'tis of thee
Let us be bully-free
No teasing found
We are not all the same
Stop causing all their pain
Differences are not to blame
Freedom all around

My country 'tis of thee
So sad the poverty
Homeless abound
God keep them in your sight
Help us relieve their plight
Shelter them for the night
New hope is found

STEPS IN THE PROCESS:

1. Pick a topic.
2. Write down five facts about it and words that relate to the topic.
3. Pick some rhyming words from the list above and add to the list.
4. Follow the rhyming pattern. Notice how sometimes words or phrases are repeated. Consider trying that in your version.

My country, 'tis of thee, ___ ___/___, ___ ___ ___

Sweet land of liberty, ___ ___ ___ ___/___/___,

Of thee I sing; ___ ___ ___ ___;

Land where my fathers died, ___ ___ ___ ___/___ ___

Land of the pilgrims' pride, ___ ___ ___ ___/___ ___

From every mountainside ___ ___/___ ___/___/___

Let freedom ring! ___ ___/___ ___!