**Writing Activity: My Country Tis of Thee**

*By Claire Rudolf Murphy*

My book, *My Country Tis of Thee: How One Song Revels 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](http://www.clairerudolfmurphy.com/mctt-music-project/) 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! \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_!