



Cultural Tapestry Arts Lesson: Woody Guthrie

Deportee (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)

The crops are all in and the peaches are rott'ning,
The oranges piled in their creosote dumps;
They're flying 'em back to the Mexican border
To pay all their money to wade back again

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride
the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

My father's own father, he waded that river,
They took all the money he made in his life;
My brothers and sisters come working
the fruit trees,
And they rode the truck till they took down and
died.

Some of us are illegal, and some are not wanted,
Our work contract's out and we have to move on;
Six hundred miles to that Mexican border,
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like
thieves.

We died in your hills, we died in your deserts,
We died in your valleys and died on your plains.
We died 'neath your trees and we died in your
bushes,

Both sides of the river, we died just the same.

The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos
Canyon,
A fireball of lightning, and shook all our hills,
Who are all these friends, all scattered like
dry leaves?

The radio says, "They are just deportees"

Is this the best way we can grow our
big orchards?

Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil
And be called by no name except "deportee"

Lyrics: Woody Guthrie (1948); Music: Martin Hoffman (1958) – Woody Guthrie, already well known for folk songs of social activism, wrote the lyrics (as a poem) after reading news reports of a plane crash that mentioned only the pilots and crew, but referred to the passengers only as 'deportees'. The music was added later by Hoffman, who was a schoolteacher. Famous folk-singer Pete Seeger made the song popular, and many versions have been recorded since then.

As performed by Bruce Springsteen - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAgRmr0DafA>

NOTES:

Let's Explore

Spend several minutes to read the lyrics a few times...

- *What do you notice?*
 - *Who or what is the subject(s) and why was the writer inspired to write about them?*
 - *What do you learn about the subject - where might this be taking place, and when?*
 - *What makes this subject different or special?*
- *What do you wonder?*
 - *What is going on? What surrounds the subject of the song?*
 - *What happened before the time of the song, and what might come next?*
 - *Are there different ways to see the situation, or is it clear what is happening?*
 - *Have you ever seen someone or something like the subject? If you have, where did you see them or it?*
- *How does it make you feel?*
 - *If the song describes an action, would you ever like to do something similar?*
 - *Do you see yourself in the song? In what way?*
 - *Do things or feelings in the song remind you of anything?*
 - *Does the title of the song affect how you feel about it?*

Write down your thoughts and share with family and friends...

The Four Artistic Processes



RESPOND: Explore and Understand

- What words have impact? Why do you think the author chose them?
- What do you notice about tone, rhythm, pattern and mood of the song?

CONNECT: Relate to the artwork

- How does the song make you feel? Why?
- If you could interview the author or the subject, what questions would you ask?
- What do you think the subject (person) in the song is doing? If there isn't a person, do you feel an emotion in what is written, such as affection, tension, or creativity?

CREATE: Make your own art

- Write a poem or short essay reflecting on the way the song makes you feel, or a subject similar to that of the song.
- Draw or paint an artwork or take a photograph that has a subject similar to that in the song.
- Imagine you are the artist who created the song. Write what they might say to describe their reason for writing the song, from their point of view.

PRESENT: Share your artwork

- Share your creation with family or friends.
- Take a moment to share what you have discovered.