

Songs for Discussion

The D-Day Dodgers

(Words: Anonymous; compiled and edited by Hamish Henderson.

Tune: Lili Marlene. Recorded: Ewan MacColl, Folkways (British Army Songs)

We're the D-Day Dodgers, way off in Italy
Always on the vino, always on the spree;
Eighth Army scroungers and their tanks,
We live in Rome, among the Yanks.
We are the D-Day Dodgers, way out in Italy. (Repeat)

We landed in Salerno, a holiday with pay,
The Jerries brought the bands out to greet us on the way.
Showed us the sights and gave us tea,
We all sang songs, the beer was free
To welcome D-Day Dodgers to sunny Italy.

Naples and Casino were taken in our stride,
We didn't go to fight there, we went just for the ride.
Anzio and Sangro were just names,
We only went to look for dames
The artful D-Day Dodgers, way out in Italy.

Dear Lady Astor, you think you're mighty hot,
Standing on the platform, talking tommyrot.
You're England's sweetheart and her pride
We think your mouth's too bleeding wide.
That's from the D-Day Dodgers, in sunny Italy.

Look around the mountains, in the mud and rain,
You'll find the scattered crosses, some that have no name.
Heartbreak and toil and suffering gone,
The boys beneath them (linger) slumber on.
They are the D-Day Dodgers who stayed in Italy.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4hny_XRaw4

Suggested questions:

What is the meaning of the expression 'D-Day Dodgers'; why were they sometimes called that?
Is there an "us" and a "them"? How would they be constructed?
Check out the place names and find out why they are relevant.
Who is Lady Astor? Why were the singers against her?

The Foggy Dew

(Words and music: Anonymous)

'Twas down the glen one Easter morn
To a city fair rode I.
When Ireland's line of marching men
In squadrons passed me by.
 No pipe did hum, no battle drum
 Did sound its dread tattoo
 But the Angelus bell o'er the Liffey's swell
 Rang out in the foggy dew.

Right proudly high over Dublin town
They hung out a flag of war.
'Twas better to die 'neath an Irish sky
Than at Suvla or Sud el Bar.
 And from the plains of Royal Meath
 Strong men came hurrying through;
 While Britannia's sons with their long-range guns
 Sailed in from the foggy dew.

'Twas England bade our wild geese go
That small nations might be free.
Their lonely graves are by Suvla's waves
On the fringe of the grey North Sea.
 But had they died by Pearse's side
 Or fought with Valera true,
 Their graves we'd keep where the Fenians sleep
 'Neath the hills of the foggy dew.

The bravest fell, and the solemn bell
Rang mournfully and clear
For those who died that Eastertide
In the springing of the year.
 And the world did gaze in deep amaze
 At those fearless men and true
 Who bore the fight that freedom's light
 Might shine through the foggy dew.

Suggested questions:

- What is the reference to Easter? (Why was Easter significant for the symbolic value of the event?)
- Why would Suvla and Sud el Bar be mentioned?
- Who are the 'wild geese'?
- Who are Pearse and Valera?
- What are the Fenians and what is the reference for sleeping under a hill? (Why are they significant or symbolic?)

Ludlow Massacre

(Words and Music: Woody Guthrie)

It was early springtime that the strike was on
They moved us miners out of doors
Out from the houses that the company owned
We moved into tents at old Ludlow

I was worried bad about my children
Soldiers guarding the railroad bridge
Every once in a while a bullet would fly
Kick up gravel under my feet

We were so afraid they would kill our children
We dug us a cave that was seven foot deep
Carried our young ones and a pregnant woman
Down inside the cave to sleep

That very night you soldier waited
Until us miners were asleep
You snuck around our little tent town
Soaked our tents with your kerosene

You struck a match and the blaze it started
You pulled the triggers of your Gatling guns
I made a run for the children but the fire wall stopped me
Thirteen children died from your guns

I carried my blanket to a wire fence corner
Watched the fire till the blaze died down
I helped some people grab their belongings
While your bullets killed us all around

I will never forget the looks on the faces
Of the men and women that awful day
When we stood around to preach their funerals
And lay the corpses of the dead away

We told the Colorado governor to call the President
Tell him to call off his National Guard
But the National Guard belong to the governor
So he didn't try so very hard

Our women from Trinidad they hauled some potatoes
Up to Walsenburg in a little cart
They sold their potatoes and brought some guns back
And put a gun in every hand

The state soldiers jumped us in a wire fence corner
They did not know that we had these guns
And the red neck miners mowed down them troopers
You should have seen those poor boys run

We took some cement and walled that cave up
Where you killed those thirteen children inside
I said, "God bless the Mine Workers' Union"
And then I hung my head and cried

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDd64suDz1A>

Suggested questions:

Find out what the story is.

Where did the events take place?

What is the role of the "singer" (I-narrator)?

Who are "us", who are "them" and where is the I-narrator?

What effects are created by the use of "you"?

Which Side are You On

(Words: Florence Reece Music: Traditional)

Come all of you good workers,
Good news to you I'll tell
of how the good old Union
has come here to dwell.
 Which side are you on boys,
 which side are you on?

Don't scab for the bosses,
Don't listen to their lies.
Us poor folks haven't got a chance
Unless we organize.

They say in Harlan County
There are no neutrals there.
You'll either be a union man
Or a thug for J. H. Blair.

Oh, workers can you stand it?
Oh, tell me how you can.
Will you be a lousy scab,
Or will you be a man?

My Daddy was a miner
And I'm a miner's son;
And I'll stick with the union
Till every battle's won.

My daddy is a miner,
He's in the air and sun,
But he'll stick with the union
Till every battle's won.

Dropkick Murphys <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKWfnO7fhQM>

Ani di Franco in a 2013 rewrite (Obama's 2nd Term)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDd64suDz1A>

Suggested questions:

Who are the sides in the struggle?
Find out about the author of the words, Florence Reece.
In the last verse, how do we need to understand the words, which were sung by the daughters of Florence Reece?
What more recent versions are there and how do they adapt to song to which events? (Billy Bragg – check him out -- / Ani di Franco, etc.)

Skye Boat Song

Speed, bonnie boat, like a bird on the wing
"Onward," the sailors cry.
Carry the lad that's born to be king
Over the sea to Skye.

Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar
Thunder claps rend the air
Baffled our foes stand on the shore
Follow they will not dare.

Though the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep
Ocean's a royal bed
Rocked in the deep, Flora will keep
Watch by your weary head.

Many's the lad fought on that day
Well the claymore could wield
When the night came, silently lay
Dead on Culloden's field.

Burned are our homes, exile and death
Scattered the loyal men.
Yet, e'er the sword cool in the sheath
Charlie will come again

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1CTxa-FuKc>

Suggested questions:

What does the song refer to?
Who is "us" and who is "them"?
Why the escape to Skye?
Who is Charlie, who is Flora?
What are the references to claymore and to Culloden?
What happened before the events described?

Shame Shame Shame (Steve Zahn and Friends)

Look up in the sky
Its a bird, its a plane
Its, o hell yeah I'm watching New Orleans
Bring this bird down 8000 feet
Lets have a little see
O no, o no that's not good at all
This city wet, really wet
It must be twice as bad on the ground
Twice as bad, twice as bad, ya think?
Shame shame shame on you now W
Shame shame shame on you now W
Shame shame shame what you done
We was on the ropes, we were down and out
You flew on over, never did come down
Shame shame shame on you now W
Shame shame shame on you now W
Shame shame shame what you done
Now, Georgie I think its all well and good
For you to do what you can
For those wet colored folks
I know you mean well
But I was just over at the Astrodome
Now Maw, you know the Stros
Don't play there no more
It ain't like we don't have room in Houston
Yes, but its still a lovely place and
Practically part of the neighborhood
And most people are camped out
Like they are on the 50 yard line
And its way nicer,
Than where they were before the storm,
So they're doing very well for themselves
Ok, yeah that's kind of a cheap shot
Except we didn't make most of that up
Barbara Bush actually said some of that sh*t
Now people can't get home, to go to and from
But you thinking we can find
On the Astrodome floor
Shame shame shame on you there Barbara
Shame shame shame on you now Barbara
Shame shame shame bout what you done
So dig it,
Now we got the people of New Orleans
Living on Air Force bases
And in raggedy ass motels from Utah to Georgia
And people in Washington talking about
Keeping the housing projects closed
Yeah, that's right
They don't want no more poor people
Coming back to New Orleans
But, I tell you what
New Orleans without poor people ain't New Orleans

Because its the people
Without a pot to p**s in
Who keep the beat and
Blow the horns and
Step in the streets and
Right now, y'all are stuck
Listening to this messed up white boy
Because whichever 14 year old
From Lafite projects is the next Smiley Lewis
He's stuck out there in east bum f**k Texas
He can't get home, to sing this f**king song
Shame shame shame on you now W
Shame shame shame on you now W
Shame shame shame bout what you done

(from Season 1 of HBO series "Treme";
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcKvCjO4JIM>)

Suggested questions:

What event(s) is this song about?
Identify some of the personal references?
How are "us" constructed? Who are "them"?
Which references are "public", i.e. accessible without much insider knowledge?
Which ones are "specific", i.e. familiar to locals or the in-group, which ones need research?

On Morecambe Bay

(words and music Kevin Littlewood)

Out beyond the street lamp's empire
And the calliope's roar,
Beyond the thrift, the wrack, the samphire,
Where the sea betrays the shore,
I have seen them in the tide's wake,
As the rain cuts through the spray,
Figures on the edge of daybreak
Walking out on Morecambe Bay

Here's the very life to die for,
Here's a life not as it seems,
Sleeping on a foreign floor
Five to a room no space for dreams.
Tempted by the urge to travel,
Strangers in a stranger land,
Now they dig in sand and gravel,
Plastic bags gripped in their hands.

For the tide's the very devil,
It can run you out of breath,
It can race you on the level,
It can chase you to your death,
Yes the tide's the very devil
And the devil has his day
On the weary cockle grounds of Morecambe Bay

Letters home with money orders
See how much we earned today;
Tales of crossing Europe's borders,
So we came to Morecambe Bay;
This is where the cockles sleep
In their beds so soft and sound;
This is where our watch we keep
On these weary cockle grounds

I have met them in the markets,
Brushed their arms in grocery queues,
I should have grabbed them by the jacket,
Should have told them what I knew;
Told them what my mother told me
As we paddled in the waves
Never try and race the tide
Across the sands of Morecambe Bay

For the devil's in the tide's flood
He'll be weighing down your shoes
He'll be churning up the sea's mud
This is one race he won't lose
Yes the tide's the very devil
And the devil has his day

On the weary cockle grounds of Morecambe Bay

Now I see them in the distance
Laid out in the dawn's hard light,
Helpless in the sea's persistence,
Twenty-three drowned in one night.
Up above in skies so clear
Their phone calls half the world had crossed
'Between the rivers Kent and Keer
We have raced the tide and lost.'

In Fujian, Xelang, Baihu,
Where they mourn their kith and kin,
Where the men with snake tattoos,
Rack up the debts and call them in;
Parents stand, their arms flung wide
As their children walk away,
Heading out to race the tide
Across some foreign bay.

(Oh) the tide's the very devil,
It can run you out of breath,
It can race you on the level,
It can chase you to your death,
Yes the tide's the very devil
And the devil has his day
On the weary cockle grounds of Morecambe Bay
On the weary cockle grounds of Morecambe Bay.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSpLu6LPu4I> (Kevin Littlewood)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN8gAlhSMDA> (Christy Moore, shorter version)

On Morecambe Bay

Who are the "us" and who are "them"?
How are the various referents constructed?
Who feels solidarity with whom?
How does the appeal to listeners function?

Big Bill Broonzy Songs

I Wonder When I'll Get To Be Called A Man

When I was born into this world, this is what happened to me
I was never called a man, and now I'm fifty-three
I wonder when, I wonder when,
I wonder when will I get to be called a man
Do I have to wait till I get ninety-three?

When Uncle Sam called me, I know'd I'd be called a real McCoy
But I got none of this, they just called me soldier boy
I wonder when,...

When I got back from overseas, that night we had a ball
Next day I met the old boss, he said "Boy, get you some overalls"
I wonder when,...

I've worked on the levee camps, and axer gangs too
Black man's a boy, don't care what he can do
I wonder when,...

They said I was uneducated, my clothes were dirty and torn
Now I've got a little education, but I'm still a boy right on
I wonder when,...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvG_FvPbEhg (with some textual variations)

Black, Brown & White

This little song that I'm singin' about
People you know it's true
If you're black and gotta work for a living
This is what they will say to you
They says if you was white,
should be all right
If you was brown, stick around
But as you's black, m-mm brother,
git back git back git back

I was in a place one night
They was all having fun
They was all buyin' beer and wine
But they would not sell me none

Me and a man was workin' side by side
This is what it meant
They was paying him a dollar an hour
And they was paying me fifty cent

I went to an employment office
Got a number 'n' I got in line
They called everybody's number
But they never did call mine

I hope when sweet victory come
With my plough and hoe
Now I want you to tell me brother
What you gonna do about the old Jim
Crow?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0c1c0ZsTLA&list=PLozurY9ohykjnoEqLLn6XulTX3jRxqpgq> Big Bill Broonzy Original Recording

Big Bill Broonzy Songs

How do these songs construct “us” and “them”
What instances of racial discrimination are there in these songs?
Why is Broonzy wondering about when he would be called a man?
What does Uncle Sam call him for?
What is the reference to Jim Crow.

Deportees

(Words and Music: Woody Guthrie)

The crops are all in and the peaches are rotting
The oranges are piled in their creosote dumps
They're flying 'em back to the Mexico border
To take all their money to wade back again

Goodbye to my Juan, farewell Roselita
Adios mis amigos, Jesus y Maria
You won't have a name 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
It's six hundred miles to the Mexico border
And they chased them like rustlers, like outlaws, like thieves

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 skyplane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon
The great ball of fire it shook all our hills
Who are these dear friends who are falling like dry leaves?
Radio said, "They are just deportees"

Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?
Is this the best way we can raise our good crops?
To fall like dry leaves and rot on out topsoil
And be known by no names except "deportees".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jWFPLjYEaw> (Joan Baez)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtigp6DA314> (Arlo Guthrie, live at Farm Aid 2000)

Suggested questions:

Find out what you can about this plane crash.
How does Guthrie construct “communities” in this song?
What could the continuing appeal of this song be?

Took the Children Away

(Words and Music: Archie Roach)

This story's right, this story's true
I would not tell lies to you
Like the promises they did not keep
And how they fenced us in like sheep.
Said to us come take our hand
Sent us off to mission land.
Taught us to read, to write and pray
Then they took the children away,
 Took the children away,
 The children away.
 Snatched from their mother's breast
 Said this is for the best
 Took them away.

The welfare and the policeman
Said you've got to understand
We'll give them what you can't give
Teach them how to really live.
Teach them how to live they said
Humiliated them instead
Taught them that and taught them this
And others taught them prejudice.
 You took the children away
 The children away
 Breaking their mothers heart
 Tearing us all apart
 Took them away

One dark day on Framingham
Come and didn't give a damn
My mother cried go get their dad
He came running, fighting mad
Mother's tears were falling down
Dad shaped up and stood his ground.
He said 'You touch my kids and you fight me'
And they took us from our family.
 Took us away
 They took us away
 Snatched from our mother's breast
 Said this was for the best
 Took us away.

Told us what to do and say
Told us all the white man's ways
Then they split us up again

And gave us gifts to ease the pain
Sent us off to foster homes
As we grew up we felt alone
Cause we were acting white
Yet feeling black
One sweet day all the children came back
 The children come back
 The children come back
 Back where their hearts grow strong
 Back where they all belong
 The children came back

 Said the children come back
 The children come back
 Back where they understand
 Back to their mother's land
 The children come back

Back to their mother
Back to their father
Back to their sister
Back to their brother
Back to their people
Back to their land
 All the children come back
 The children come back
 The children come back
 Yes I came back.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=br83o_JpIFw (studio recording with lyrics)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TC-I0vQHIWs> (live with actors)

Suggested questions:

Where is this song set?
What does it refer to?
Can you find other, similar stories in other settings?
Who are “us”, who are “them”?

Hero of War

Rise Against

He said 'Son
Have you seen the world?
Well what would you say
If I said that you could?
Just carry this gun
You'll even get paid'
I said, 'That sounds pretty good'
Black leather boots
Spit-shined so bright
They cut off my hair
But it looks alright
We marched and we sang
We all became friends
As we learned how to fight

A hero of war
Yeah, that's what I'll be
And when I come home
They'll be damn proud of me
I'll carry this flag
To the grave if I must
Cause it's a flag that I love
And a flag that I trust

I kicked in the door
I yelled my commands
The children, they cried
But I got my man
We took him away
A bag over his face
From his family and his friends
They took off his clothes
They pissed in his hands
I told them to stop
But then I joined in
We beat him with guns
And batons not just once
But again and again

A hero of war
Yeah, that's what I'll be
And when I come home
They'll be damn proud of me
I'll carry this flag
To the grave if I must
Cause it's a flag that I love
And a flag that I trust

She walked
Through bullets and haze
I asked her to stop
I begged her to stay
But she pressed on
So I lifted my gun
And I fired away
And the shells
jumped through the smoke
And into the sand
That the blood now had soaked
She collapsed with a flag in her hand
A flag white as snow

A hero of war
Is that what they see?
Just medals and scars
So damn proud of me
And I brought home that flag
Now it gathers dust
But it's a flag that I love
It's the only flag I trust

He said 'Son
Have you seen the world?
Well what would you say
If I said that you could?'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= DboMAghWcA>

Suggested Questions

What do the opening lines tell us about recruitment?
In the second verse, is there a reference to particular place?

What is the role of the flag?

What is the likely consequence for the returning hero of war?

Hush here comes...

Popular Song 1911

Hush! here comes the Dream man.
Hush! here comes the Dream man.
Now, you children, run up the stairs,
Put on your nighties and say your
prayers;

Ride with Mister Dream man,
Till daylight comes again,
And see all the wonders of
wonderland
On the Dream man's train.

WW1 Soldiers' Song 1914-1918 (whizzbangs are grenades)

Hush, here comes a Whizzbang.
Hush, here comes a Whizzbang.
Now you soldiermen get down those
stairs,
Down in your dugouts and say your
prayers.

Hush, here comes a Whizzbang,
And it's making right for you.
And you'll see all the wonders of No-
Man's-Land,
If a Whizzbang [BANG!], hits you.

Suggested Questions:

How do the soldiers reconstruct the original song?

What is the effect?

Can we say that there is an "us-and-them" construction here? If so, how does it work?