



## Learning on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

*One of America's Byways*

### **Cultural Lesson #3**

**Subject: Local Music**

**Grade Level: 4 – 6**

**Irene F Sullivan**

#### **Anticipatory Set:**

Ask the students how music plays a part of history.

#### **New York State Standards:**

**The Arts:** Standard #3 – Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Standard #4 – Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts

**Language Arts:** Standards 1,2,3,4

**Social Studies:** Standard 1.1, 1.2 - History of the United States and New York

#### **Objective:**

Students will learn how music is one way to express and record a time period in history by learning about music in history. The students will write a sonnet or poem about a current event in their town, area, or in the world. They will pick out background music to play as they recite their work to the class.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this lesson is to help students connect music to different time periods throughout history.

#### **Summary:**

Music is one form of expression. For centuries people have written and performed music that relates to time periods in history. The “*Star Spangled Banner*” was written by a lawyer named Francis Scott Key after he witnessed the battle between the British and the Americans in the War of 1812. Songs about the Erie Canal gives us an idea what life was like on the canal. Pete Seeger was a folk singer and songwriter who captured, through his music, the social issues going on in the United States and the world during the 1950’s and 1960’s.

#### **Francis Scott Key:**

During the War of 1812, the British military had captured Washington D.C. and was heading for Baltimore. They attacked Fort Henry on the morning of September 13, 1814. Key was trying to secure the release of a Maryland doctor who had been abducted by the British after they left Washington. He could not escort the doctor until the battle was over. Key’s vessel was 8 miles from the battle. Throughout the night the battle went on. In the morning Key woke up and grabbed a telescope to see what was left of the fort. He saw the large American flag still flying high above Fort McHenry. He realized that the British did not take the fort. What he saw inspired him to write what we know today as our National Anthem the “*Star Spangled Banner*”.



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### **Pete Seeger:**

Pete Seeger's parents were faculty members of the Juilliard School in New York City. Seeger was not interested in classical music; at sixteen he played tenor banjo in the school jazz band. In 1936 Seeger attended Harvard studying languages, anthropology and geography, but he left college in the middle of his sophomore year. He swapped watercolor paintings for food and shelter and traveled around the United States to learn more about folk music. Seeger, Woody Guthrie and others formed a group called *Almanac Singers* in 1940. The group traveled all over the United States and Mexico as singer-activists confronting issues about the labor movements. In 1942 Seeger joined the Army and was discharged in 1945. Seeger founded the "*People's Songs Inc.*", which was a musicians' union.

In 1948 Seeger co-founded the "*Weavers*", a folksinging quartet and recorded songs like "If I Had a Hammer", and "Sweeter than Wine". He was blacklisted from the mainstream music because of his ties to the Communist Party. He continued to play regardless to the political controversy. His work has extended to environmentalism and folklorist studies of America's music. He organized the *Hudson River Sloop Restoration, Inc.* and raised \$60,000 to build a genuine Hudson River sloop called *Clearwater*. There are now "sloop festivals" where people address pollution in the river and elsewhere. Seeger has dedicated his life to music and to humanity.

### **Local Musicians: Past and Present:**

1. Michael M. Slattery, opera singer
2. Gibson Brothers, bluegrass band
3. Steve Adams, jazz drummer
4. David Belding, jazz bassist

### **Materials:**

1. CD's of different types of music like songs of the Erie Canal, World War 11, the 60's, etc. CD of Pete Seeger's music.
2. Copies of the Star Spangled Banner and the Erie Canal Song.
3. A selection of background music

### **Teach:**

1. Discuss how music was another way to record history. Play several types of music that are examples of the times for different time eras. Have the students analyze each song and see the connection to history.
2. Have the class brainstorm about the current issues that are going on in their area or in the world. Talk about war issues, environmental issues, etc.
3. Instruct the students to write a sonnet or a poem (lyrics) about the current times. Instruct the student to pick out some background music that goes with their poem.
4. Once the students have completed the assignment have the students practice several times reciting their work. Set up a day for a reciting party and invite another classroom to come and hear the students' work.



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### **Guided Practice:**

Assist the students on writing their sonnet or poem. Help the student find some kind of background music to use for the reciting party.

### **Independent Practice:**

The student needs to write a sonnet or poem and find some background music that relates to their poem.

### **Closure:**

Ask the students how music is another way to record history.

### **Extended Activities:**

1. Have a local musician come and play their music for the class.
2. Have the students create music instruments.

### **Web Sites:**

1. <http://www.150.si.edu/chap3/flag.htm>  
The web site gives a brief summary of the flag and the song Star Spangled Banner.
2. <http://www.bcpl.net/~etowner/anthem.html>  
The web site gives you a printed copy of the Star Spangled Banner and a brief history of Francis Scott Key.
3. <http://www.kididdles.com/mouseum/e014.html>  
The web site has a printed copy of the Erie Canal song.
4. <http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/seeger.html>  
The web site gives a great summary of the life of Pete Seeger.

### **Resources:**

1. "Pete Seeger's Storytelling Book", Pete Seeger, Paul DuBois Jacobs, Harcourt, Sept 2000, ISBN 015100370x
2. "Shake, Rattle, and Strum", Sara Corbett, Children's LB, 1995, ISBN 0515081942
3. "National Anthem", Stephanie St. Pierre, Millbrook LB, 1992, ISBN 1562941062
4. CD "Songs of the Erie Canal" The Dady Brothers
5. CD "Oh That Low Bridge" George Ward
6. CD "Songs from Canal Days" Bill Schilling, Linda Sigismondi