
Defining Home in America in the 19th Century

High (9th – 12th grade)

Time required: 20-30 minutes

Specific recommendation: 11th grade A.P. U.S. History

Goals/Objectives:

- Identify causes for widespread homesickness in nineteenth-century United States as a result of geographical relocation
- Analyze the texts of “Old Folks at Home” and “My Old Kentucky Home” with homesickness, as well as the connection that “My Old Kentucky Home” and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* have with slave emancipation

Common Core Standards:

- RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole
- WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events

Materials:

- **Song of America Links**

To reference:

Song of America online timeline: <http://songofamerica.net/timeline/>

Song of America Stephen Foster page: <http://songofamerica.net/composer/foster-stephen>

To print:

Song of America “Old Folks at Home” song page: <http://songofamerica.net/song/old-folks-at-home>

Song of America “My Old Kentucky Home” song page:

<http://songofamerica.net/song/my-old-kentucky-home>

Song of America “The Albany Register, Sept. 1852 handout:

<http://songofamerica.net/for-educators/the-albany-register-sept-1852-handout>

To listen to:

Song of America Stephen Foster radio program: <https://songofamerica.net/program/stephen-foster/>

Song of America Places That Sing to Us radio program: <https://songofamerica.net/program/places-that-sing-to-us/>

- **PBS American Experience: Stephen Foster, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin Takes the Nation by Storm”**
http://www.shoppbs.pbs.org/wqbh/amex/foster/peoplevents/e_cabin.html

Instruction:

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Created for the Hampsong Foundation’s *Song of America* Curriculum Initiative (<http://songofamerica.net/for-educators>)

This lesson plan may be used free of charge for educational purposes.

Please reference the creators of the resource, the Hampsong Foundation and *Song of America* when necessary.

For more information, please visit <http://songofamerica.net/> & <http://hampsongfoundation.org/>

- The teacher introduces the question: “What was occurring in mid-nineteenth century America that would lead to feelings of homesickness?”
- The class brainstorms ideas that answer the question while the teacher writes responses on the board
- The teacher distributes copies of the *Song of America* timeline for 1800-1859, or students explore the timeline on their computers/tablets [<http://songofamerica.net/timeline/>]
- The teacher leads the students in highlighting events that occurred in the beginning of the nineteenth century that contributed to widespread homesickness [Timeline examples include: “First railway in America” (1830); “Trail of Tears” (1831); “Underground Railroad is organized” (1838); “Manifest Destiny” (1845); “Irish immigration to the U.S. begins” (1847)]
- The teacher introduces composer and poet Stephen Foster [<http://songofamerica.net/composer/foster-stephen>] and how his music sympathized with homesickness in the U.S.
 - Students could have listened to the *Song of America* Stephen Foster radio program [<https://songofamerica.net/program/stephen-foster/>] in advance of this lesson as a weekend homework assignment to further understand Foster, his era, and his life story
- *Guided Practice*
 - Students listen to “Old Folks at Home” [<https://songofamerica.net/program/stephen-foster/> at 35:58], and then “Old Kentucky Home, Good Night” [<https://songofamerica.net/program/places-that-sing-to-us/> at 16:21]
 - With a partner, students identify specific lines of text of both songs that demonstrate how the song speaks to a collective feeling of homesickness [ex.: “All the world is sad and dreary/Everywhere I roam”]
 - The class shares their lines of text while the teacher underlines them on the board
 - The teacher shares the Albany State Register article about “Old Folks at Home” [<https://songofamerica.net/downloads/the-albany-register-sept-1852-handout/>] and asks students to identify the variety of Americans who loved Foster’s song. Why do students think this song was so popular? They should consider both text and music.
 - Students listen to “Swanee River Rock” [<https://songofamerica.net/program/stephen-foster/> at 40:19] and discuss how Foster’s song has been translated into 20th century music.
- *Independent Practice/Assessment*
 - The teacher tells the students that “My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night” was originally titled “Poor Uncle Tom, Good Night!,” referencing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.
 - To further explore this topic, visit:
http://www.shoppbs.pbs.org/wqbh/amex/foster/peoplevents/e_cabin.html
 - Students write a 1-2 paragraph response (in class or as a homework assignment) answering the question, “How did music during the nineteenth-century express the plight of the slaves and contribute to their eventual emancipation?” Students must include at least two textual examples from “My Old Kentucky Home, Good Night” and one other song example from the *Song of America* website [<http://songofamerica.net/>]