

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

www.traditionalmusic.co.uk

The Heart of the Appaloosa

The Heart of the Appaloosa
(Fred Small)

From the land of shooting waters to the peaks of the Coeur d'Alene,
Thimbleberries in the forest, elk grazing on the plain,
The People of the Coyote made their camp along the streams
Of the green Wallowa Valley when fences had no name.
And they bred a strain of horses, the treasure of the tribe,
Who could toe dance on a ridge or gallop up a mountainside,
Who could haul the hunter's burden, turn a buffalo stampede --
The horse that wore the spotted coat was born with matchless speed.

CHO: Thunder Rolling in the Mountains,
Lead the People across the Great Divide.
There's blood on the snow in the hills of Idaho,
But the heart of the Appaloosa never died.

In the winter came the crowned ones near frozen in the cold,
Bringing firearms and spyglasses and a book that saves the soul.
The people gave them welcome, nursed them till their strength returned,
And studied the talking paper, its mysteries to learn.
In the shadow of the mission sprang up farms and squatter towns.
The plain was lined with fences. The plow blade split the ground.
In the shallows of the Clearwater, gold glittered in the pan,
And the word would come from Washington: remove the Indian.

The chief spoke to the People in his anger and his pain:
"I am no more Chief Joseph. Rolling Thunder is my name.
They condemn us to a wasteland of barren soil and stone.
We shall fight them if we must, but we will find another home."
They fled into the Bitterroot, an army at their heels.
They fought at White Bird Canyon. They fought at Misery Hill,
Till the colonel saw his strategy and sent the order down,
To kill the Appaloosa wherever it be found.

Twelve hundred miles retreating, three times over the Divide,
The horse their only safety, their only ally,
Three thousand Appaloosas perished with the tribe,
The people and the horses dying side by side.
Thunder Rolling in the Mountains said, "My heart is si
Our children now are freezing. The old chiefs are dead.
The hunger takes our spirit. Our wounds are deep and sore.
From where the sun now stands, I shall fight no more."

They were sent to Oklahoma. Malaria ran rife,
But more died of broken hearts far from the land that gave them life.
And the man once called Joseph at death was heard to say,
"We have given up our horses. They have gone away."
But sometimes without warning from a dull domestic herd,
A spotted horse of spirit wondrous will emerge.
Strong it is, and fearless, and nimble on a hill.
Listening for thunder, the Appaloosa's living still.

XX