

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Folk Singer's Blues

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(Shel Silverstein)

Well, I'd like to sing a song about the chain gang (Whap!)
And swingin' twelve pound hammers all the day, (Whap!)
And how a I'd like to kill my captain (Whap!)
And how a black man works his life away, but...
What do you do if you're young and white and Jewish?
And you've never swung a hammer against a spike?
And you've never called a water boy
Early in the morning
And your only chain is the chain that's on your bike? Yes,
Your only chain is the chain on your bike.

Now I'd like to be a-walkin up the highway
Feelin' cold and wet and hungry all night long,
Doin' some hard ramblin', hard gamblin', hard smamblin', hard blamblin'
But always takin' time to write a song. But...
What do you do if you're young and white and Jewish?
And you never heard an old freight whistle blow?
And you've never slept the night
In a cold and empty box car
And you take a subway everywhere you go? Oh, oh
You take the subway everywhere you go.

Now I'd like to sing a song about the coal mine
A-chippin' away in tunnel 22
And when I hear that timber crack, why I support it with my back
Until my comrades all crawl safely through, but...
What do you do if you're young and white and Jewish?
And you've got to be in class at half-past nine
And in spite of all your urgin', and your pleadin' and your cryin'
Your mother says it's too dirty down in a mine, That what she says,
Your mother says it's too dirty down in a mine.

Well now, I'd like to sing about the Mississippi,
Workin' on the levee all the day
And when them cotton bolls get rotten
You got a lotta rotten cotton
And on Saturday you go and spend your pay, but
What do you do if you're young and white and Jewish?
And you've never loaded cotton on the dock?
And you've never worked a day
Or drunk up all your pay

And the only levee you know is the Levy who lives on the block, Yes
The only levee you know is the Levy who lives on the block.

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