

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Ol' Man River

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(Oscar Hammerstein II, Jerome Kern)

Dere's an ol' man called de Mississippi
Dat's de ol' man dat I'd like to be!
What does he care if de world's got troubles?
What does he care if de land ain't free?

Ol' man river,
Dat ol' man river
He mus'know sumpin'
But don't say nuthin',
He jes'keeps rollin'
He keeps on rollin' along.

He don' plant taters,
He don't plant cotton,
An' dem dat plants'em
is soon forgotten,
But ol'man river,
He jes keeps rollin'along.

You an'me, we sweat an' strain,
Body all achin' an' racket wid pain,
Tote dat barge!
Lif' dat bale!
Git a little drunk
An' you land in jail.

Ah gits weary
An' sick of tryin'
Ah'm tired of livin'
An' skeered of dyin',
But ol' man river,
He jes'keeps rolling' along.

Colored folks work on de Mississippi,
Colored folks work while de white folks play,
Pullin' dose boats from de dawn to sunset,
Gittin' no rest till de judgement day.

Don't look up

An' don't look down,

You don' dast make

De white boss frown.

Bend your knees

An'bow your head,

An' pull date rope

Until you' dead.

Let me go 'way from the Mississippi,
Let me go 'way from de white man boss;
Show me dat stream called de river Jordan,
Dat's de ol' stream dat I long to cross.

O' man river,

Dat ol' man river,

He mus'know sumpin'

But don't say nuthin'

He jes' keeps rollin'

He keeps on rollin' along.

Long ol' river forever keeps rollin' on...

He don' plant tater,

He don' plant cotton,

An' dem dat plants 'em

Is soon forgotten,

but ol' man river,

He jes' keeps rollin' along.

Long ol' river keeps hearing dat song.
You an' me, we sweat an' strain,

Body all achin an' racked wid pain.
Tote dat barge!
Lif' dat bale!
Git a little drunk
An' you land in jail.

Ah, gits weary
An' sick of tryin'
Ah'm tired of livin'
An' skeered of dyin',
But ol' man river,
He jes'keeps rollin' along!

from Showboat (1927)
Written in for Paul Robeson
RG
apr97