

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## Slave Ship

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The first grey dawn of the morning was beaming  
The bright rays shone forth the glad spirit of light  
The rising sun over the ocean was streaming  
And dispelled with his rays the dark shadows of night  
The air - oh, how pure, and the morning was mild  
And the waters lay hushed like a sleeping child  
What cheer, cried the mate, as he passed to and fro  
What cheer! Art thou watching? Is all right below?  
Alls right, cried a voice, the hatches are tight  
As the chains that are binding the slaves this night

Up, up, with the flag, then let us away  
Spread the sails, 'tis a favouring wind  
And long ere the break of the morning we'll leave  
The coast of old Afric behind  
The moonlight will follow our track o'er the deep  
As we start through the sparkling wave  
For our cargo of blacks are all hushed in sleep  
As though they were hushed in the grave  
Then up with the anchor and let us away  
We dare not - we must not, now longer delay

Gloomily still the captain with his arms upon his breast  
With his cold brow sternly knitted and iron lips compressed  
Are all well whipped below there? Ay! Ay! The seamen said  
Heave up the worthless lubbers - the dying and the dead

Help, oh! thou God of Christians! Save a mother from despair  
Cruel white man sold my children - Oh, God of Christians hear my prayer!  
I'm young and strong and hardy - he's a sick and feeble boy  
Take me, whip me, chain me, starve me! Oh, God, in mercy, save my boy!

The mother, my child - they've killed my child!  
They've killed shrieked - now all is o'er  
Down the savage captain struck her lifeless on the vessel's floor  
Shall outraged nature cease to feel? Shall mercy's tears no longer flow?  
Shall ruffians threat of cord and steed, the dungeon's gloom, the assasin's blow?

Shall tongues be mute when deeds are wrought? Shall freemen lock the midnight thought

Shall mercy's bosom cease to sigh, for women's shrieks - and slavery!

Shall honour bleed, shall truth succumb, shall pen, and press, and soul be dumb

?

Let every man arise to save from scourge and chain the Negro Slave

Old England, sweet land of the fair and the free  
Whose house is the waters, whose flag sweeps the sea!  
Still stretch out thy hand o'er the ocean's broad wave  
Protecting the helpless unfortunate slave  
And nations which call themselves free shall repent  
Of thousands in pain to eternity sent!  
Each who forward the cause, oh the very of the grave  
With gale strength - the prayer of the liberated slave

Source: Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads

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