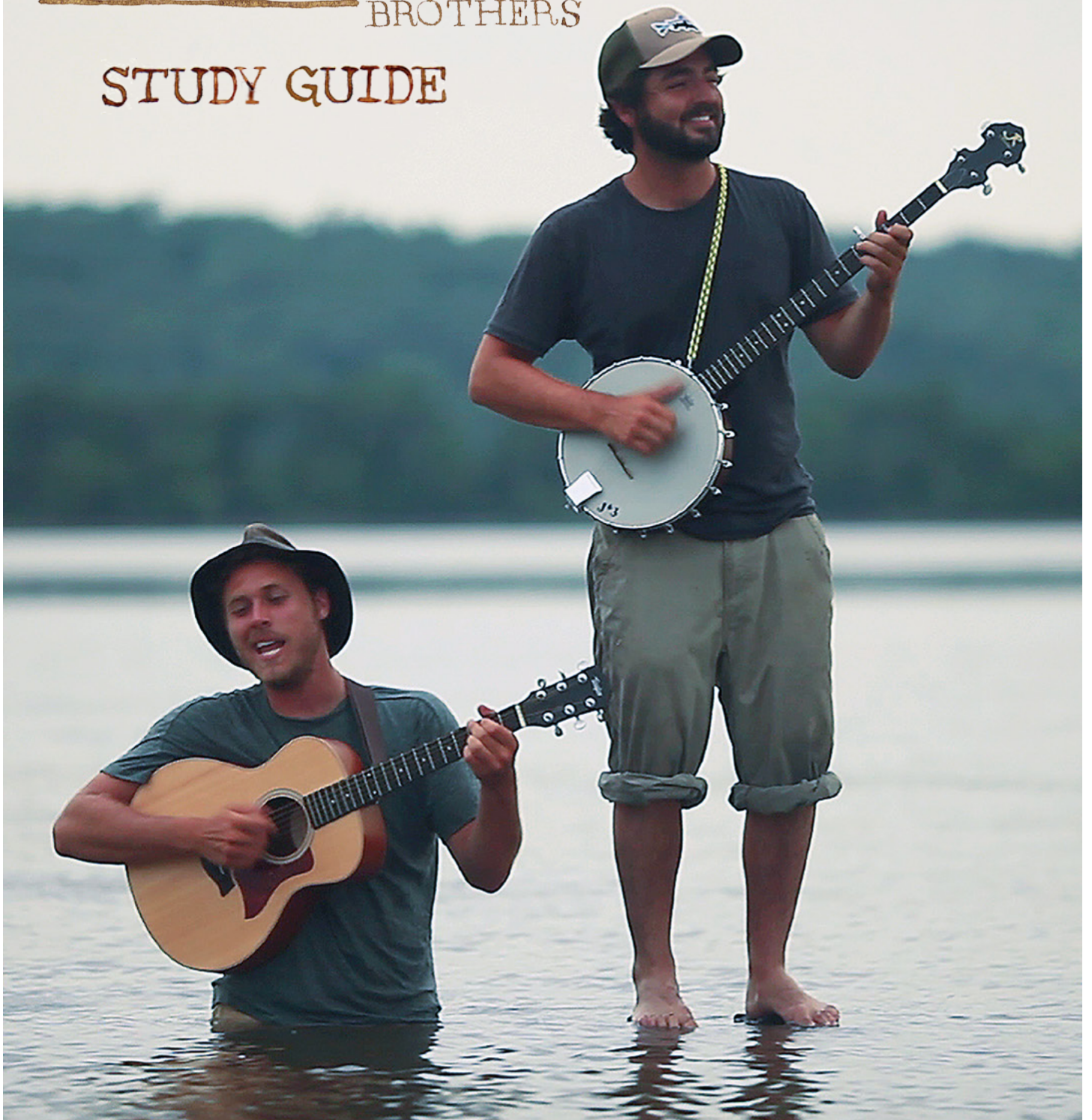


THE
OKEE
DOKEE

BROTHERS

STUDY GUIDE



THE OKEE DOKEE BROTHERS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who Are The Okee Dokee Brothers?.....	1
What Kind of Music Do They Play?.....	2
Down the Mississippi River.....	3
On the Appalachian Trail.....	4
Along the Great Divide.....	5
Instruments in the Show: Strings.....	6
Instruments in the Show: Percussion.....	7
Before the Performance.....	8
After the Performance.....	9
Okee Dokee Vocab.....	10
Activities.....	11
Links for Further Exploration.....	12

Who are The Okee Dokee Brothers?

Our real names are Joe and Justin. We're not really brothers, but we've known each other since we were three years old! We grew up together in Denver, Colorado, and we were always exploring the outdoors. Whether it was rafting down the neighborhood creek, taking long bike rides into the country, or discovering hiking trails through the Rocky Mountains, we loved taking **adventures**. Now, as The Okee Dokee Brothers, we're sharing our love of the outdoors through the music we make.



What's an Adventure Album?

So far, we have released three adventure albums: *Can You Canoe?: A Mississippi River Adventure*, *Through the Woods: An Appalachian Adventure*, and *Saddle Up: A Western Adventure*. An **Adventure Album** is a collection of songs that are directly inspired by a particular place or experience. There's an old saying that goes something like "write about what you know." We decided that the best way to write a collection of songs about an adventure is to actually have that adventure in real life! Of course, you don't have to canoe down a river or ride through the mountains to find **inspiration** for your own adventures. You can start by simply exploring the world around you; the world that you know. Go to a park or take a walk through your neighborhood, an adventure can be anywhere. What ways do you interact with nature?

What is Folk Music?

Folk music was traditionally known as the music of the working classes, usually passed down from generation to generation. Originally, folk songs weren't written down, but were shared by word of mouth. This means that the creators of many folk songs are unknown. It also means the songs have evolved over time, changing with each person who sings them in his or her own style.



Lead Belly is a famous folk and blues musician

Old-Time music is a style of music that was developed to accompany the folk dances of the Appalachian Mountains. It has mixed roots in African and European traditional music. Fiddle is usually the lead instrument, and you'll probably hear a banjo any time you're listening to old-time music.

The music we know as **Bluegrass** is actually relatively new. It appeared in the 1940s, when Bill Monroe started a band called the Bluegrass Boys. They combined elements of old-time music, folk, country, and blues to create a music that is still popular today.

Bluegrass is traditionally played with acoustic instruments like the guitar, the fiddle, the five-string banjo, the upright bass, and the mandolin.



Odetta is known as the "Queen of American Folk Music"



Bill Monroe and The Bluegrass Boys

Which Type do We play?

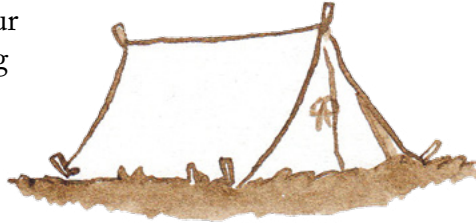
Technically, we aren't playing purely folk, old-time, or bluegrass music. We believe our songs are a mix of these styles, as well as other influences. A modern classification for our music would be Roots or Americana music. Just as American musicians have done for centuries, we use the many types of music that have come before us to find our own path and craft our own sound.



The Mississippi River

“The Father of Waters”

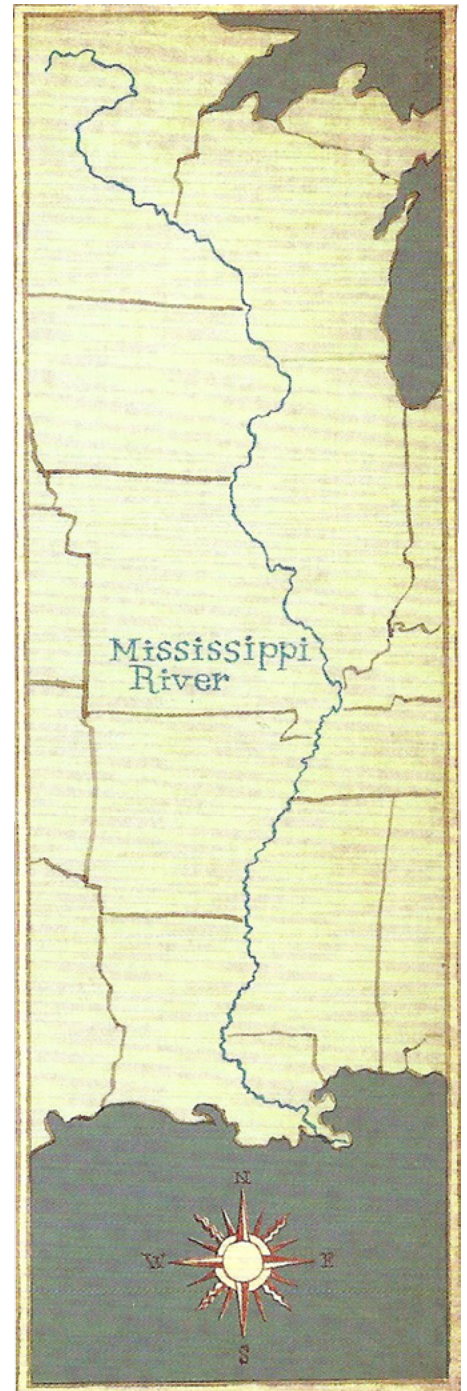
Our first adventure album, *Can You Canoe?*, was written on a 30-day **canoe** trip down the Mississippi River. The river starts at Lake Itasca, in Minnesota, and flows south into the Gulf of Mexico. Did you know it takes a drop of water around 90 days to travel the entire river? That’s an awfully long time to be in a canoe, so we decided we’d only canoe the Upper Mississippi River, which stretches from Lake Itasca to Saint Louis, Missouri. Our canoe trip lasted thirty days, during which time we camped along the river and wrote songs.

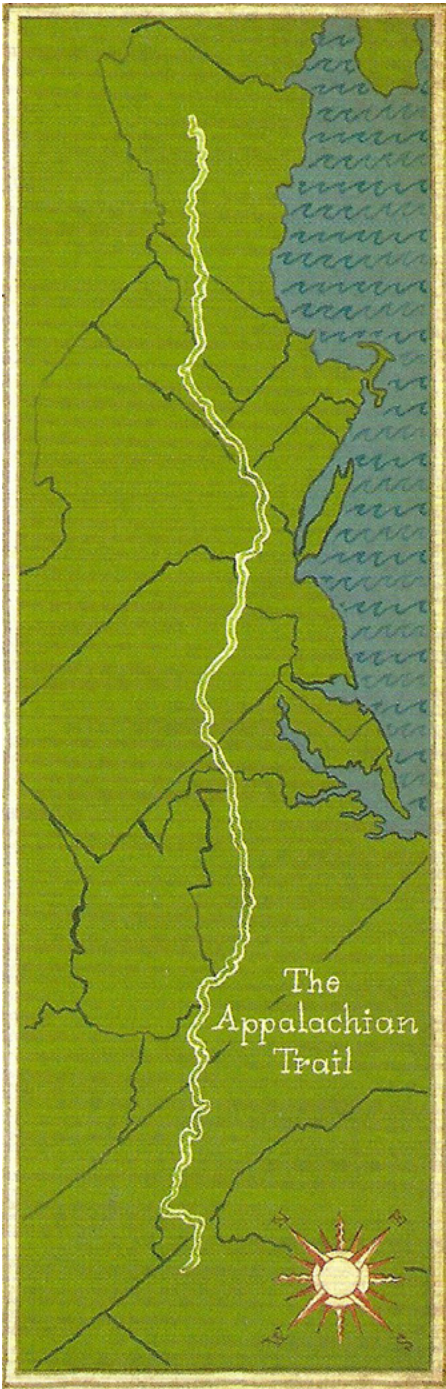


Even though it’s made of water, the Mississippi often functions like a highway! Large boats, known as barges, transport goods from destination to destination. And since so many other rivers flow into the Mississippi (these are called tributaries), the barges can travel a very long distance. Our canoes were very small compared to those large barges, so we stayed well out of their way.

The Mississippi River is the 4th longest river in the world. It’s 2552 miles long! The River runs through, or borders, ten states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Canoeing the Upper Mississippi meant we traveled through Minnesota, along Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri.

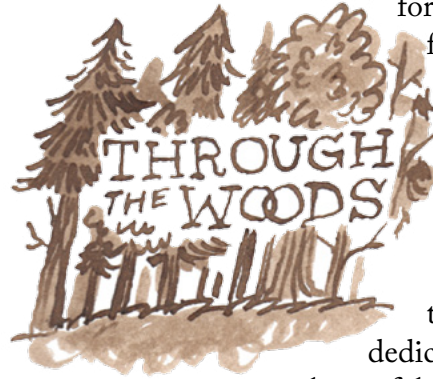
Canoeing is quite a workout! Not only are you using **paddles** to propel the canoe forward in the water, but the paddles also steer the craft left and right. That can be trickier than it sounds when the river’s current is strong. We kept all of our **gear** in the canoes, too, so everything was packed in waterproof bags just in case we tipped.





The Appalachian Trail

For our second adventure album, *Through the Woods*, we turned our attention to the Appalachian Mountains. We wanted to **hike** and explore the wilderness and cultures along the Appalachian Trail. Like the Mississippi, the Appalachian Trail (or the AT) is very long: It stretches through 14 different states, and is about 2,180 miles from start to finish. Also, the total elevation gain from Georgia to Maine is the same as climbing Mount Everest 16 times! Walking the full trail usually takes anywhere from five to seven months.



Of course, the AT is also very accessible for **hikers** who don't want to hike the full trail. In fact, it's so easy to just hike sections of the trail that two to three million people hike a portion of it each year! The AT is over 80 years old (it was created in 1937)... so that's a lot of visitors. In addition to the millions of people who visit the trail, the AT is cared for by thousands of dedicated volunteers. They help keep the trail as beautiful as they found it, so that it can continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Aside from the elements, there are also a lot of animals along the trail. One of the largest is the black bear. Black bears will eat almost anything. They mostly eat grass, roots, berries, fish and insects, but can easily develop a taste for human foods and garbage left by campers. We didn't see any black bears, but we did encounter a herd of wild ponies. Ponies look like small horses who are in desperate need of a haircut! We also encountered some of the millions of hikers... (luckily not all at the same time). Most people who hike the trail wind up acquiring a trail nickname. These are usually descriptive and humorous nicknames, like "Slow and Steady," "Tumbleweed," and "Pack Rat". We gave ourselves nicknames too: Joe was "Flatfoot", on account of his clogging skills, and Justin was "Cricket."

We hiked for thirty days along parts of the trail in Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina. We carried everything we needed in our backpacks: tents, clothes, food, and cooking gear. Because the AT meanders through 14 different states, the natural surroundings vary greatly. Sometimes the weather was hot and humid, while other times the weather was very cold and rainy. All of these environmental changes meant we had to pack more gear. Hiking all day with a heavy backpack is hard work!



Continental Divide of the Americas

“The Great Divide”

Our third adventure album, *Saddle Up*, took place on a 30-day **horsepacking** trip in the Rocky Mountains. We focused on an area of the mountains known as the Continental Divide. The line you see on the map connects all the highest peaks along the Rocky Mountain range. It’s an important line. All of the water that falls on the east side flows to the the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, and all that falls on the west side flows to the Pacific Ocean. The entire Continental Divide extends all the way up to Alaska and all the way down into South America.

However, the map on this page only shows the section that runs through the Unites States from Canada to Mexico.



There are many continental divides in the world. Some are not well known or easy to see. The Great Divide is very prominent because the Rocky Mountains are so high in elevation, reaching heights of up to 14,440 ft. At that height the temperature is so cold that you can find snow in the middle of July!

With the help of horses, we were able to ride deep into the wilderness of the west. They carried us through rushing streams and up and down mountains. A few horses, called packhorses, didn’t carry any people. Instead, they carried all the food and equipment in giant bags called **panniers** (PAN-yers). Horses are very strong and can safely carry up to 20% of their bodyweight, which equals about 240 pounds on average. One of the biggest horses in the world, Big Jake, weighs 2,600 pounds and could safely carry 520 pounds!

Horses are super interesting. They drink at least 25 gallons of water every day and can sleep standing up. The average heart of a horse weighs 10 pounds. They have the largest eyes of any land mammal, and because their eyes are on the sides of their heads, they can see nearly 360 degrees!



There are many different words for horses, but each word means something specific. Here are a few horse words you may have heard before and what they mean:

- A stallion is a male horse.
- A mare is a female horse.
- A colt is a young male horse.
- A filly is a young female horse.
- A foal is a baby horse (under 1 year old).
- Ponies are small horses (not baby horses).

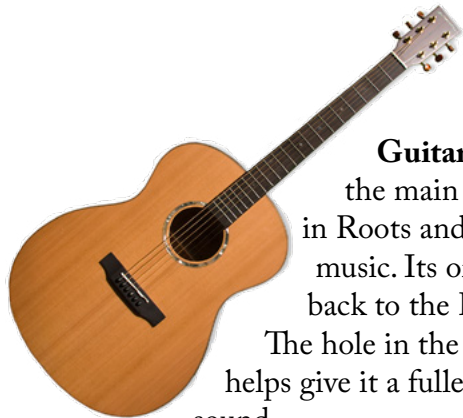


Instruments In The Show:

Strings

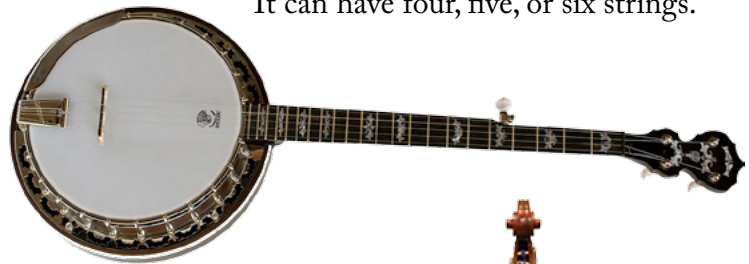


Fiddle - The smallest member of the orchestral string family, it is also used in jazz and traditional music. Fiddlers from Scotland, Ireland, and England have had a strong influence on American folk music.



Guitar - One of the main instruments in Roots and Americana music. Its origins date back to the Renaissance. The hole in the middle helps give it a fuller, louder sound.

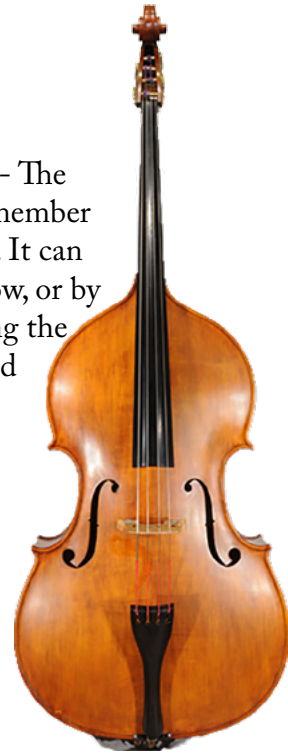
Banjo - The banjo is an instrument that comes from Africa, and was brought to North America on slave ships. It is similar in design to instruments still found in Africa today. In its simplest form, it is basically a drum with strings stretched across the top and a handle attached. The banjo is most often used in country, folk, Irish, and bluegrass music.



It can have four, five, or six strings.

Upright Bass

(pronounced Base) - The largest and lowest member of the string family. It can be played with a bow, or by plucking or slapping the strings. You can find the upright bass in classical music, jazz, and different styles of folk music.



Instruments In The Show: Percussion

A lot of traditional folk music occurred in parts of the country where manufactured instruments were scarce and hard to come by. People made simple and effective percussion instruments from what they had in their homes. The **Spoons**, often heard in bluegrass songs, are literally two spoons held in one hand and clacked together, either against a knee or the other hand. The **Bones**, another version of this instrument, were originally two rib bones that were clicked together in one hand. Most modern “bones” today are made of smooth wood, but some are still made from actual cow bones!



Another homemade percussion instrument is the **Washboard**, a ribbed piece of metal in a wooden frame used for scrubbing laundry. You play the washboard by putting thimbles (a sewing tool, sort of like a finger helmet, to prevent being poked by the needle.) on your index finger and thumb, then running those fingers up and down the washboard’s ribs.

Feet - Feet and hands are the world’s oldest and simplest percussion instruments. Many cultures have traditional styles of percussive dance (using their feet to stomp or tap the rhythms); for example: flamenco (Spain), step dance (Ireland), tap dance (USA), gumboot dance (South Africa), kathak (India), Malambo (Argentina), and many Native American dances.

Clogging (also called flatfooting) is considered the oldest form of street dancing, and an ancestor to tap dance. In Appalachia, it is both a style of dance and an instrument!

Old-Time music was originally played to accompany cloggers, and now it’s not unusual to see a clogger as a member of a band.



“The Bone Player” by William Sydney Mount

Cajón (pronounced ka-HONE) - The name means “box” or “drawer” in Spanish. It is basically a wooden box with a sound hole on the side (this works just like the sound hole in a guitar). The player sits on top and taps or slaps the front of the instrument with the hands. The cajón was originally used by African slaves in Perú.



Snare Drum - Snares are metal wires stretched tightly across the bottom of the drum. They make a sharp rattling sound as they vibrate against the bottom of the drum head. The snare drum was originally a military instrument used to signal to the soldiers. Today it is heard in many forms of music, including marching band, classical, rock, and jazz.



Before the Performance

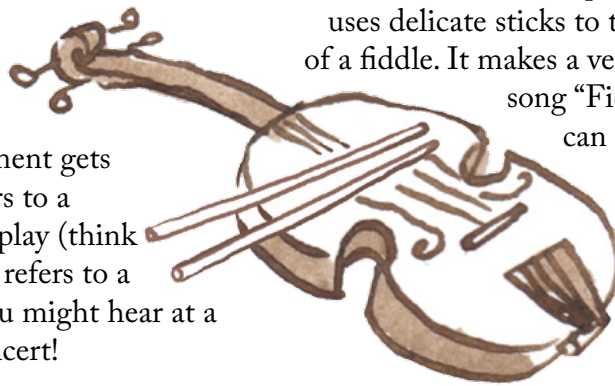
Listen to the songs, “**Echo**”, “Can You Canoe?”, and “Jamboree.” What instruments can you identify?



Acoustic vs Electric: There are many differences between Acoustic and Electric instruments, but here are the basics: An acoustic instrument sounds rich and musical without being plugged into an **amplifier**. An electric instrument will make a dull sound if it is not amplified. Although our instruments are plugged into speakers to make their sounds louder, all the instruments you’ll see and hear at our show are acoustic. We play acoustic instruments, because our style of music is traditionally played acoustically. The original bluegrass and folk musicians didn’t play on electric guitars or fiddles either!

What’s the difference between a violin and a fiddle?

Here’s a secret: a violin and a fiddle are the same instrument! The difference is how that instrument gets played. The term “violin” refers to a classier, more formal style of play (think orchestras). The term “fiddle” refers to a more folksy style, the type you might hear at a barn dance or a bluegrass concert!



Fiddlesticks are like playing the drums on the fiddle! A person playing the fiddlesticks uses delicate sticks to tap out a rhythm on the strings of a fiddle. It makes a very unique sound. Listen to our song “Fiddlestick Joe,” and see if you can hear the fiddlesticks being played.

One Song, Many Voices

Our song “Haul Away Joe” is an example of a sea shanty, a song sung by groups of sailors as they worked onboard the ship. Even though they are no longer used as work songs, the sea shanty lives on as one of the main ingredients in the melting pot of American folk music.

Every musician who performs these traditional songs brings to it his or her own style and culture; for this reason, the same song can sound completely different, depending on who is performing it.

Listen to these different versions of “Haul Away Joe.” How are the music and lyrics different in each one? How are they the same? Which one uses call-and response? Which version do you think would be the best for working? Which version makes you want to dance?



- **Our version of “Haul Away Joe”:** www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDtRpqoAEC8
- **Lead Belly’s version (American Blues):** www.youtube.com/watch?v=Riw-63SnwXU
- **The Clancy Brothers’s version (Irish Folk music):** www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGbm8_oCqE0

During the Performance

Listen for: Which instruments can you hear? Can you identify the **verses**? the **choruses**?

Watch for: Who sings which songs? Who's playing which instrument?

ECHO
ECHO
ECHO
ECHO

After the Show

- What instruments did you see? Which was your favorite? Why?
- Which song did you like the most? Why?
- Did any of the songs make you feel like you were on an adventure? Which ones?



General Discussion

- If you wrote an adventure song, what would it be about? Where would you go? What are some of the people, places, and things you might see?
- What gear would you bring with you on an adventure? How would you choose? Would it all fit in your backpack? Would you be able to carry it?
- What ways do you explore nature?
- Do you have a friend who likes to take adventures? What kinds of things do you like to do together? Have you ever gone on an adventure with your friend? What was it like?
- What are some of the songs that have passed down from your culture? Where did you hear them? Does your family still sing these songs?





Okee Dokee Vocab

Adventure Album – A collection of music written about & inspired by an outdoor adventure.

Inspiration – The reason to create art, whether that's writing a song, drawing, painting, or building something.

Old-Time Music – Music inspired by the music of the Appalachian mountains.

Folk Music – Traditional music. Used as a means to tell stories.

Acoustic Instrument – an instrument that sounds rich and musical without amplification.

Electric Instrument – an instrument that must be amplified to make sound.

Amplification – The act of making something louder.

Echo – A sound that “bounces” from a surface back to the listener.

Songwriting – The act of composing lyrics and/or music.

Lyrics – The words to a song.

Verses – The story parts of a song. Typically non-repeating.

Chorus – The part of a song that is repeated several times and delivers the main message of the song.

Melody – The main musical part of a song.

Harmony – Slight variations to the melody, added to make a richer sound.

Yodel – A style of singing where the voice shifts quickly from low to high.

Clogging – Using your feet to make the beat for music. A style of dancing.

Bones – A form of percussion, played with the hands. Originally actual bones, now usually made out of wood.

Spoons – A form of percussion; two spoons clacked together.

Fiddlesticks – Delicate sticks that are used to tap out a rhythm on the strings of a fiddle.

Canoe – A narrow boat with pointed ends. Often made from materials like aluminum, wood, or fiberglass. The people riding in the canoe propel the the boat with paddles.

Paddle – The object used by a canoe's passengers to propel the craft. A pole with a broad, flat fin at one end.

Hike – A long walk, usually through nature.

Hiker – A person going on a hike.

Gear – The tools, items, and equipment that a person might take on their adventure. Possible gear includes a tent, a camera, snacks, extra clothes.

Horsepacking - A horse, mule, donkey, or pony used to carry goods on its back, usually in sidebags or panniers.

Panniers – Basket or bag carried in pairs slung over the back of a horse.

Things To Do

Instrument Improvisation

The people who first played Folk, Bluegrass, and Old-Time music often used musical instruments they crafted themselves out of ordinary objects they found around them – kitchen utensils, machine parts, paper bags, scraps of wood, metal cans, bottles, and even animal bones.

Look around your environment: the classroom, playground, home, etc. What kinds of objects do you see that could be used to make music? What ordinary objects do you have at home that could be used as musical instruments?

With your class, brainstorm all the ways you could make sounds with an object, for example: blowing, plucking, tapping, hitting (with hands or a stick), shaking, scraping, or banging together.

What were some of the ways you made music with the objects? Did anyone come up with surprising ideas? Did you get any new ideas from your classmates?



Try this game: Sit in a circle. The first participant takes an object and improvises a way to play it. The movement should be brief—just a couple of seconds. The object gets passed to the next person, who repeats that movement, then performs his or her own idea. The next person repeats the two preceding movements (in order), and then adds on, etc. How long can you keep it going?

Wildlife Along the Way

The Mississippi River is home to more than 400 species of wildlife, including many endangered and threatened species. Forty percent of the United States migratory birds stop along the Mississippi Flyway on their routes south in the fall and north in the spring.

The Appalachian Trail has a very different ecosystem than the Mississippi. There is also a wide range of wildlife species, though it is hard to see them because they generally hide from humans. Many rare and endangered species of birds, mammals, reptiles, crustaceans, and amphibians live along the trail.

Choose either the Mississippi River, Appalachian Trail, or the Great Divide. Create a class book about the wildlife that can be found in each region. Begin by dividing into teams of two or three people. Have the teams count off by four. Assign each team to research the plants or animals from the category below that corresponds to their number:



1. Fish
2. Birds
3. Mammals
4. Plants

From the research, each group should write and illustrate a brief (one page) report. Include information like diet, habitat, lifecycle, predator/prey relationships, etc. Put all the reports together to create an Adventure Journal for your class.



The Great Divide and the surrounding region has many environments such as dry deserts, high mountain peaks, vast plains, and dense forests. These unique terrains and climates of The West are home to equally unique animals such as rattlesnakes, bison, mountain goats, and pronghorns.





Links for Further Exploration

- Our Website: <http://www.okeedokee.org>
- Our Mississippi River Adventure Blog: <http://mississippialbum.blogspot.com>
- Our Appalachian Trail Adventure Blog: <http://appalachianalbum.blogspot.com>
- Our Great Divide Adventure Blog: <http://westernalbum.blogspot.com/>
- Our YouTube Page: <https://www.youtube.com/user/OkeeDokeeBros>
- Video introduction to this us and this study guide: <http://bit.ly/21k5ByW>
- We interviewed Kenny Salwey, Mississippi River Expert: <http://bit.ly/1kTK78x>
- We interviewed David Holt, an expert in Mountain Music: <http://bit.ly/1nhqdHL>
- We interviewed the Bluegrass-playing Wright Family: <http://bit.ly/1kTJtYu>
- We interviewed Radmilla Cody about Navajo culture: <http://bit.ly/1sEowJK>
- “Can You Canoe?” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1gqebrB>
- “Camping Tent” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1iAyQIU>
- “Haul Away Joe” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/OUJVuq>
- “Thousand Star Hotel” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/OUKhhkw>
- “Walking with Spring” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1juZeYq>
- “Through the Woods” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/Rl0VuZ>
 - “Evergreen” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1hvdzh5>
 - “Jamboree” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1iiXnn1>
 - “Jackalope” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1YeS7VW>
 - “Saddle Up” Music Video: <http://bit.ly/1Xcx1sv>

