

Popular War of 1812 Songs

The lyrics to popular music in 1812 often can be read as poetry. Read each of the following songs out loud as a class. Identify the rhyming scheme (ie A, A, B, B, C) and consider – do any of the songs have a strange way of pronouncing words to make them rhyme? How might they be pronounced? What do you think the lyrics mean in the context of the War of 1812? Who might have sung these songs?

The Sailor's Complaint.

Come and listen to my ditty, all ye jolly hearts of gold,
Lend a brother tar your pity who was once so stout and bold;
But the arrows of God Cupid, alas ! have made me rue,
Sure true love was ne'er so treated as I am by scornful Sue.
When I landed first at Dover she appeared a goddess bright.
From foreign parts but just come over I was struck with so fair asight;
On the shore pretty Susan walked near to where our frigate lay,
And altho' so near the landing, I, alas ! was cast away.
When first I hail'd my pretty creature, the delight of land and sea,
No man ever saw a sweeter, I'd have kept her company ;
I'd fain have made her my true love, for better or for worse,
But, alas! I could not compass her for to steer the marriage Course.



Ye Parliament of England

Ye Parliament of England, you Lords and Commons too,
Consider well what you're about, and you're going to do;

You're now to fight with Yankees , I'm sure you'll rue the day
You roused the sons of liberty in North America.

You first confined our commerce, and said our ships sha'n't trade;
You next impressed our seamen, and used them as your slaves;
You then insulted Rogers while ploughing o'er the main,
And had not we declared war you'd have done it o'er again.

You thought our frigates were but few and Yankees could not fight,
Until brave Hull your Guerriere took and banished her from your sight.
The Wasp then took your Frolic, we'll nothing say to that –
The Poictiers being of the line, of course she took her back.

The next, your Macedonian, no finer ship could swim,
Decatur took her gilt-work off, and then he sent her in.
The Java by a Yankee ship was sunk, you all must know;
The Peacock fine, in all her plume, by Lawrence down did go.

Then next you sent your Boxer to box us all about,
But we had an Enterprising brig that beat your Boxer out;
We boxed her up to Portland and moored her off the town,
To show the sons of liberty the Boxer of renown.
The next upon Lake Erie, where Perry had some fun,
You own he beat your naval force, and caused them for to run;
This was to you a sore defeat, the like ne'er known before –
Your British squadron beat complete – some took some run ashore.

There's Rogers in the President, will burn, sink and destroy;
The Congress, on the Brazil coast, your commerce will annoy;
The Essex in the South Seas, will put out all your lights,
The flag she waves at her mast-head – 'Free Trade and Sailors' Rights.'

Lament ye sons of Britain, far distant is the day
When you'll regain by British force what you've lost in America;
Go tell your King and Parliament, by all the world 'tis known
That British force by sea and land by Yankees is o'erthrown.

Use every endeavor and strive to make a peace,
For Yankee ships are building fast, their navy to increase;
They will enforce their commerce; the laws by heaven are made
That Yankee ships in time of peace to any port may trade.

Shannon and Chesapeake.

The Chesapeake so bold,
Out of Boston, we've been told,
Came to take the "British frigate
Neat and handy, O !

All the people of the port
They came out to see the sport,
And the bands were playing
Yankee doodle dandy, O !

The British frigate's name,
Which for the purpose came
Of cooling Yankee courage
Neat and handy, O !

Was the Shannon—Captain Broke.
All her crew were hearts of oak,
And at fighting they're allowed to be
The dandy, O !

Now before the fight begun,
The Yankees with much fun,
Said they'd take the British frigate
Neat and handy, O !

And after that they'd dine,
Treat their sweethearts all with wine,
And the band should play up
Yankee doodle dandy, O !

