



## **Social Studies Exemplary Text Student Handout**

“I hate a song that makes you think that you’re not any good. I hate a song that makes you think you are just born to lose. I am out to fight those kind of songs to my very last breath of air and my last drop of blood.”

Woody Guthrie could never cure himself of wandering off. One minute he’d be there, the next he’d be gone, vanishing without a word to anyone, abandoning those he loved best. He’d throw on a few extra shirts, one on top of the other, sling his guitar over his shoulder, and hit the road. He’d stick out his thumb and hitchhike, swing onto moving freight trains, and hunker down with other traveling men in flophouses, hobo jungles, and Hoovervilles across Depression America.

He moved restlessly from state to state, soaking up some songs: work songs, mountain and cowboy songs, sea chanteys, songs from the southern chain gangs. He added them to the dozens he already knew from his childhood until he was bursting with American folk songs. Playing the guitar and singing, he started making up new ones: hard-bitten, rough-edged songs that told it like it was, full of anger and hardship and hope and love. Woody said the best songs came to him when he was walking down a road. He always had fifteen or twenty songs running around in his mind, just waiting to be put together. Sometimes he knew the words, but not the melody. Usually he’d borrow a tune that was already well known—the simpler the better. As he walked along, he tried to catch a good, easy song that people could sing the first time they heard it, remember, and sing again later.

Partridge, E. (2002). *Ramblin ’Round. This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie*. New York: Viking.

This is an example of exemplary text found in *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Retrieved from [http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_B.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf)

## Social Studies Exemplary Text Teacher Resource

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**EFL 4**  
**Word Count 287**

*Teacher introduces the text with minimal commentary and students read it independently. Teacher then reads passage aloud. Give a brief definition to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in text). Teacher guides the students through a series of text-dependent questions. Complete the performance task as a cumulative evaluation of the close-reading.*

### Text-Dependent Questions

1. What could Woody Guthrie never cure himself of?
2. What are the three places across Depression America the text mentions that Guthrie would hunker down in?
3. What are some examples of the songs Guthrie was “soaking up” in his travels?
4. What does the text identify as Guthrie’s goal for the songs he wrote (what did he want people to be able to do)?
5. Based on the text, what can be said about travelling around the country alone in regard to getting material for songwriting?

### Performance Tasks for Informational Texts

Drawing on their knowledge of Steinbeck’s novel and the music and life of Woody Guthrie, students should describe connections between the song, *This Land is Your Land* and the book, *Grapes of Wrath*. They will want to include the use of irony, attitude toward the land, the idea of the “American spirit,” and political implications or views in their essay. [RI.6.7]

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