

LESSON PLAN

MUSIC AND ENGLISH

She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount is a classic folk song. Its simple, repeating words and melody make it ideal for sing-alongs. It has been recorded countless times by folk singers ranging from Pete Seeger to Buffy Sainte-Marie and is a perennial favorite children's song. But where did it come from?

The provenance of any particular folk song is often hard to know—and She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount is no exception—but lyrics often give us a clue.

Classroom Exercise 1: Distribute the lyrics to She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount and discuss possible stories which might have prompted them. Who was coming around the mountain anyway? Why does she have six white horses? And why on earth is she wearing red pajamas?

Discussion: The lyrics in this case probably refer to the arrival of a train ("toot, toot") or covered wagon ("she'll be wearing white horses"), an exciting and important event in rural America. Such an occasion would mean the arrival of visitors and special deliveries. The lyrics also suggest a country setting, perhaps a relative (Auntie Babe?) visiting a loved one (thus "she'll have to sleep with grandma"). The country setting is also hinted at by the reference to "dumplings," a traditional home-stay.

Because of their flexible structure, the lyrics for She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount have been reworked many times to suit all manner of protest songs, patriotic songs and commercial jingles. New lyrics can be easily fitted to the familiar melody. Several examples are given to the right.

Classroom Exercise 2: Discuss the rhythmic structure of the lyrics for She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount. Where do the accents fall? Have students invent new lyrics and sing them as a class.

She'll be	(short-short)
com-in'	(long-short)
'round the	(long-short)
mountain	(long-short)
when she	(long-short)
comes.	(long)

Discussion: The lyrics for this song are very adaptable words. To substitute, choose lyrics which fit the total syllable count (11 syllables) and which fit the long-short pattern of accents (see the break-down of the syllables above). Lyrics "she'll be.....when she comes" or create a new sentence.

The lyrics of She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount also reinforce its folk roots. They are written in a way which suggests the pronunciation of spoken colloquial English using 'contraction' and 'reduction'.

Classroom Exercise 3: Find the contractions in the lyrics to She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount and write out their complete equivalents. List some other common contractions and their written-out equivalents.

Discussion: A contraction shortens a phrase and replaces the missing letters with an apostrophe. They are also a way of which reflects natural speaking. Contractions can be used in advertisements, in songs and perhaps in email, but are not used in formal English. So the lyric She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount are definitely meant to sound spoken (or sung) and not written.

THE LYRICS:

She'll Be Comin' 'Round The Mount is a particularly good example of a folksong since its simple lyrics (only a single short sentence) permit easy, spontaneous invention. The lyrics given are only a small sampling of the most popular ones.

She'll be comin' 'round the mountain when she comes. (Toot, too)
She'll be comin' 'round the mountain when she comes. (Toot, too)
She'll be comin' 'round the mountain
she'll be comin' 'round the mountain
She'll be comin' 'round the mountain when she comes

She'll be drivin' six white horses when she comes. (Whoa back)
(repeat)

Oh, we'll all go out to meet her when she comes. (Hi, Babe)
(repeat)

She'll be wearing red pajamas when she comes. (Scratch, scratch)
(repeat)

And she'll have to sleep with Grandma when she comes. (Snore)
(repeat)

Oh, we'll all have chicken and dumplings when she comes. (Yum, yum!)
(repeat)

Halloween:

She'll be riding on a broomstick when she comes. (repeat)

Baseball:

He'll be hittin' lots of homers in the game
(repeat)

Food:

We'll be eatin' chips and sodas till we burst
(repeat)

School:

But the dogie ate my homework, it's the truth!
(repeat)