

Radio Broadcast — The Rise of Radio Historical Perspective

The first commercial radio broadcast was transmitted from Pittsburgh in 1920. In the following years, the radio industry grew rapidly. The scope of programming widened to include music, news, sports, and political shows. Recognizing the power of radio, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used a series of on-air “Fireside Chats” to address concerns about the Great Depression. Radio linked citizens in urban and rural America for the first time, providing them with information, entertainment, and a sense of connectedness.



West Virginia, 1938: A couple enjoys an evening radio broadcast in the comfort of their living room.

Interpretation

Look at the photograph on the previous page.

* How does the radio in the photograph differ from the radios of today?

* What does the photograph suggest about the prominence of radio in 1930s daily life? How does the photo suggest this?

Songs

Listen as carefully as you can to the word of each song and answer the following questions:

1) Name of song (or chorus) _____

What is this song about?

Who does this song speak for?

What does it reveal about the Depression?

2) Name of song (or chorus) _____

What is this song about?

Who does this song speak for?

What does it reveal about the Depression?

3) Name of song (or chorus) _____

What is this song about?

Who does this song speak for?

What does it reveal about the Depression?

Drama

As you listen to the introduction to this radio serial, think about the main character and what he represented to listeners. What might he represent?

Politics In the first broadcast, Roosevelt seems to be defending some of his New Deal programs. Why did some criticize the new deal? How did Roosevelt answer this criticism? What does Roosevelt seem to be trying to accomplish in the second broadcast? What does he say that makes you think this?

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," lyrics by Yip Harburg, music by Gorney Harburg (1931)

They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob,

When there was earth to plow, or guns to bear, I was always there right on the job.

They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace and glory ahead,

Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?

Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time.

Once I built a railroad; now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick, and rivet, and lime;

Once I built a tower, now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?

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"We're in the Money," lyrics by Al Dubin, music by Harry Warren (from the film Gold Diggers of 1933, 1933)

We're in the money, we're in the money;
We've got a lot of what it takes to get along!
We're in the money, that sky is sunny,
Old Man Depression you are through, you done us wrong.

We never see a headline about breadlines today.
And when we see the landlord we can look that guy right in the eye

We're in the money, come on, my honey,
Let's lend it, spend it, send it rolling along!

Oh, yes we're in the money, you bet we're in the money,
We've got a lot of what it takes to get along!
Let's go we're in the money, Look up the skies are sunny,
Old Man Depression you are through, you done us wrong.

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND
words and music by Woody Guthrie

Chorus:

This land is your land, this land is my land
From California, to the New York Island
From the redwood forest, to the gulf stream waters
This land was made for you and me

As I was walking a ribbon of highway
I saw above me an endless skyway
I saw below me a golden valley
This land was made for you and me

Chorus

I've roamed and rambled and I've followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts
And all around me a voice was sounding
This land was made for you and me

On the Good Ship Lollypop

On the good ship lollypop
Its a sweet trip to a candy shop
Where bon-bons play
On the sunny beach of Peppermint Bay

Lemonade stands everywhere
Crackerjack bands fill the air
And there you are!
Happy landing on a chocolate bar

See the sugar bowl do the tootsie roll
With the big bad devils food cake
If you eat too much ooh ooh
You'll awake with a tummy ache

On the good ship lollypop
Its a night trip into bed you hop
And dream away
On the good ship lollypop

**Lyrics as recorded by Woody Guthrie, RCA Studios, Camden, NJ,
Apr 26, 1940, released on "Dust Bowl Ballads," transcribed by
Manfred Helfert.**

I ain't got no home, I'm just a-roamin' 'round,
Just a wandrin' worker, I go from town to town.
And the police make it hard wherever I may go
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

My brothers and my sisters are stranded on this road,
A hot and dusty road that a million feet have trod;
Rich man took my home and drove me from my door
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Was a-farmin' on the shares, and always I was poor;
My crops I lay into the banker's store.
My wife took down and died upon the cabin floor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Now as I look around, it's mighty plain to see
This world is such a great and a funny place to be;
Oh, the gamblin' man is rich an' the workin' man is poor,
And I ain't got no home in this world anymore.

Strange Fruit: Lyrics by Lewis allen

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.