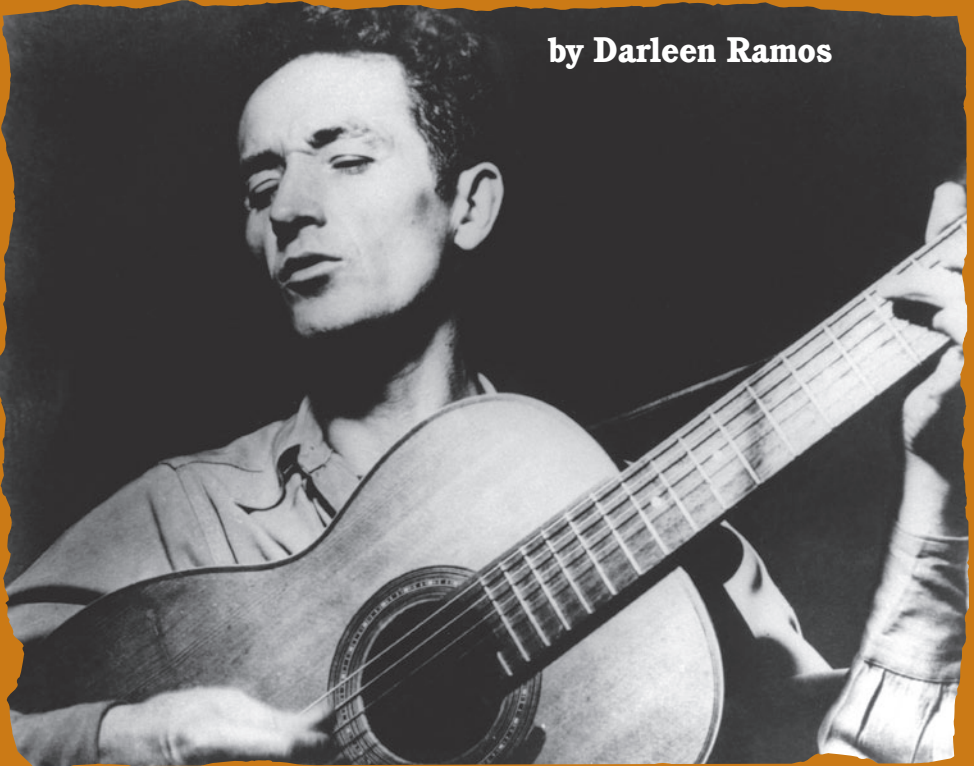


Songs for the People

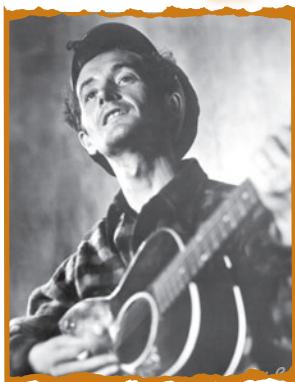
by Darleen Ramos



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT



Songs for the People



by **Darleen Ramos**



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

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Woody Guthrie was a popular folk singer.



Songwriters are like poets. The words of a song are just as important as the notes of the music. Songwriters write about what they feel in their hearts. Some songs are about love, while other songs tell stories. One of the most **brilliant** songwriters and storytellers of our time was a folk singer named Woody Guthrie.



The Early Years

 Woodrow Wilson Guthrie (Woody) was born on July 14, 1912, in Oklahoma. Both of his parents loved music and shared this love with Woody. His mother played the piano and sang songs about love, **conflicts**, and hard times. Woody would remember his mother's songs when he became a songwriter himself.



Woody grew up on a small farm in Okemah, Oklahoma.

Though the early part of Woody's childhood was happy, the good times did not last long. His sister Clara died when he was ten, and his mother became very sick. Not long after, Woody's father lost his business and moved to Pampa, Texas, to try to make money in the oil business. Woody and his brother joined their father in 1929.

Some people looked for jobs in towns that had oil.





Thousands of farmers lost their homes during the Great Depression.



Tough Times



The Great Depression started in 1929 and lasted for more than ten years. It was very hard to get a job during this period. Without money, many people didn't have enough food to survive. Families who could no longer pay for their farms were forced to leave their homes and move.



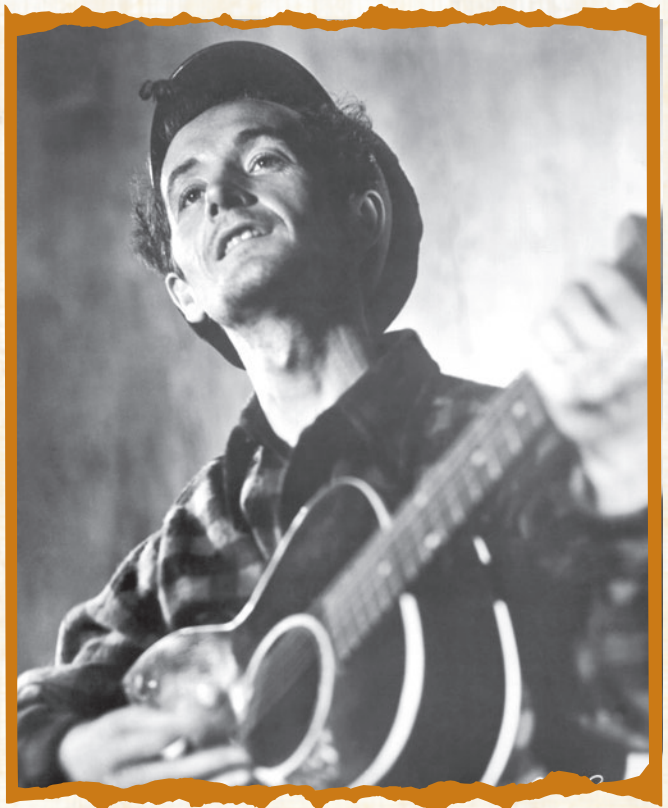
The Young Musician




Thankfully, Woody was able to earn money as a musician. He had learned to play the guitar after the move to Texas. The first band Woody joined was called the Corn Cob Trio, and they played at dances in town.




Woody's first radio appearance was with the Corn Cob Trio.





 Dust blocked out the sun during the Dust Bowl days.

The Dust Bowl

 In 1935, there was no rain for a very long time in Texas and Oklahoma. The **drought** dried the soil so much that the wind blew the dirt into the air. This area became known as the Dust Bowl. The drought and lack of jobs sent thousands of people to California to look for a better life. Woody decided to travel west, too.



Traveling Man



Woody didn't have enough money to travel to California, so he jumped on freight trains to get free rides. Many others did the same thing. Woody enjoyed talking to them, and he listened to their troubles. Though Woody had no job, he met others who were worse off. He gave them whatever money he had.



The journey was tiring, but Woody used his music to help him through. He'd sing about the good old days and the bright days ahead. He wrote his own music and hoped his songs would help others.



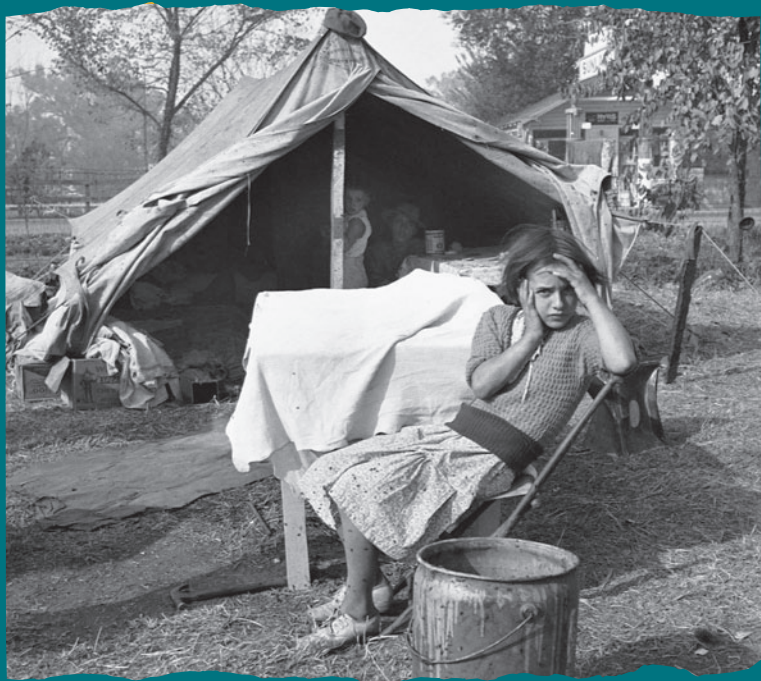
Struggles and Hardships

When Woody arrived in California, he was able to earn money by playing his guitar and singing his songs. Soon, he also got a job at a local radio station. He liked to **dedicate** his songs to the people he had met in his travels. After a while, Woody quit his radio job to travel around California.



Woody wanted to help others who had also fled the Dust Bowl.





Homeless people lived in tents or shacks made from cardboard and newspapers.

In his travels, Woody met many people who also had fled the Dust Bowl. Some of these people were forced to live in terrible camps. The tents were run down and had no running water.

Woody wanted everyone to know how much his fellow Americans were suffering. He began writing songs to tell these people's stories.



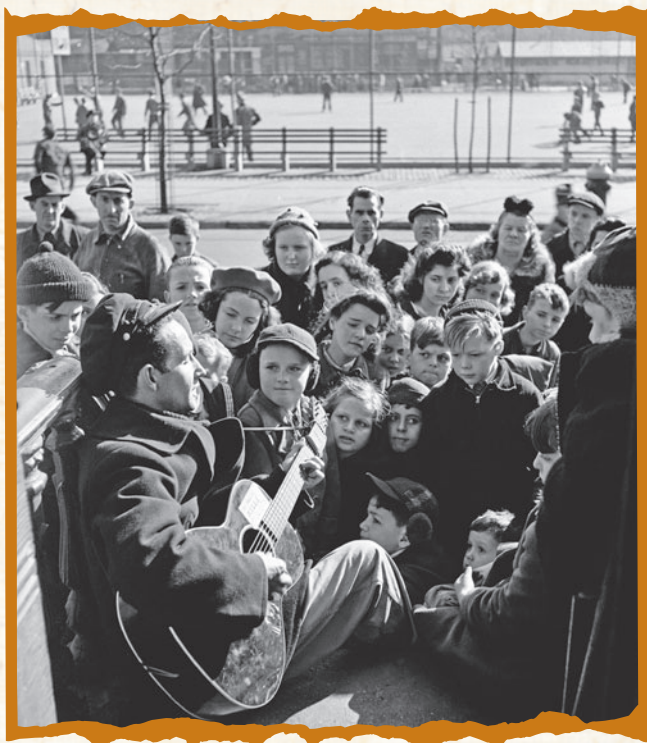
Poet of the People




Woody moved to New York City in 1940 to record his music. On the way there, he wrote his most famous song, “This Land Is Your Land.” The words of this song paint a picture of Woody’s view of America. It is a simple song about the beauty of the country and about the spirit of America and its working people.




Woody’s most famous song is “This Land Is Your Land.”






 Woody sang about issues that people faced every day.

 In New York, Woody recorded his first album, *Dust Bowl Ballads*. The album was a great success. Woody was finally making money. His listeners could relate to his songs because the songs made them feel that they were not alone and that their pain would not be forgotten.



Woody's Final Days

 Woody Guthrie wrote over one thousand songs in his lifetime. He was a brilliant songwriter who told the story of working Americans through his music. Unfortunately, Woody suffered from the same disease that his mother had struggled with. When he died on October 3, 1967, he was only 55 years old.



Woody played and sang with many popular musicians of his time.



Songs for Today



Today, a painting of Woody Guthrie hangs in the Oklahoma **capitol** building. It is a reminder that his music is timeless. Many musicians have recorded his songs, and his music can still be heard all over the world. He truly was a poet for the people.



Important Events in Woody's Life

- 1912** • Born in Okemah, Oklahoma
- 1937** • Moved to California and started working at radio station
- 1939** • Traveled to migrant camps to sing songs
- 1940** • Moved to New York City
• Wrote "This Land Is Your Land"
- 1967** • Died in Queens, New York
- 1988** • Member of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
- 1996** • Awarded Lifetime Achievement Award by North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance

Responding



TARGET SKILL

Conclusions and

Generalizations What details from the biography help you know that Woody Guthrie was a great songwriter? Copy and complete the chart below to name details that help you draw that conclusion.

Conclusion or Generalization: Woody Guthrie was a great songwriter.

Text Detail: Many musicians recorded his songs.

Text Detail: ?



Write About It

Text to Self Write a personal narrative about a particular song, type of music, or musician that is important to you. Organize your details carefully and group similar ones together.



TARGET VOCABULARY

association

brilliant

capitol

conflicts

dedicate

drought

horizon

overcome

publicity

violence



TARGET SKILL

Conclusions and Generalizations

Use details to explain ideas that aren't stated or are generally true.



TARGET STRATEGY

Infer/Predict Use text clues to figure out what isn't directly stated by the author.



GENRE Biography tells about events in a person's life, written by another person.

Level: P

DRA: 38

Genre:

Biography

Strategy:

Infer/Predict

Skill:

Conclusions and

Generalizations

Word Count: 732

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