

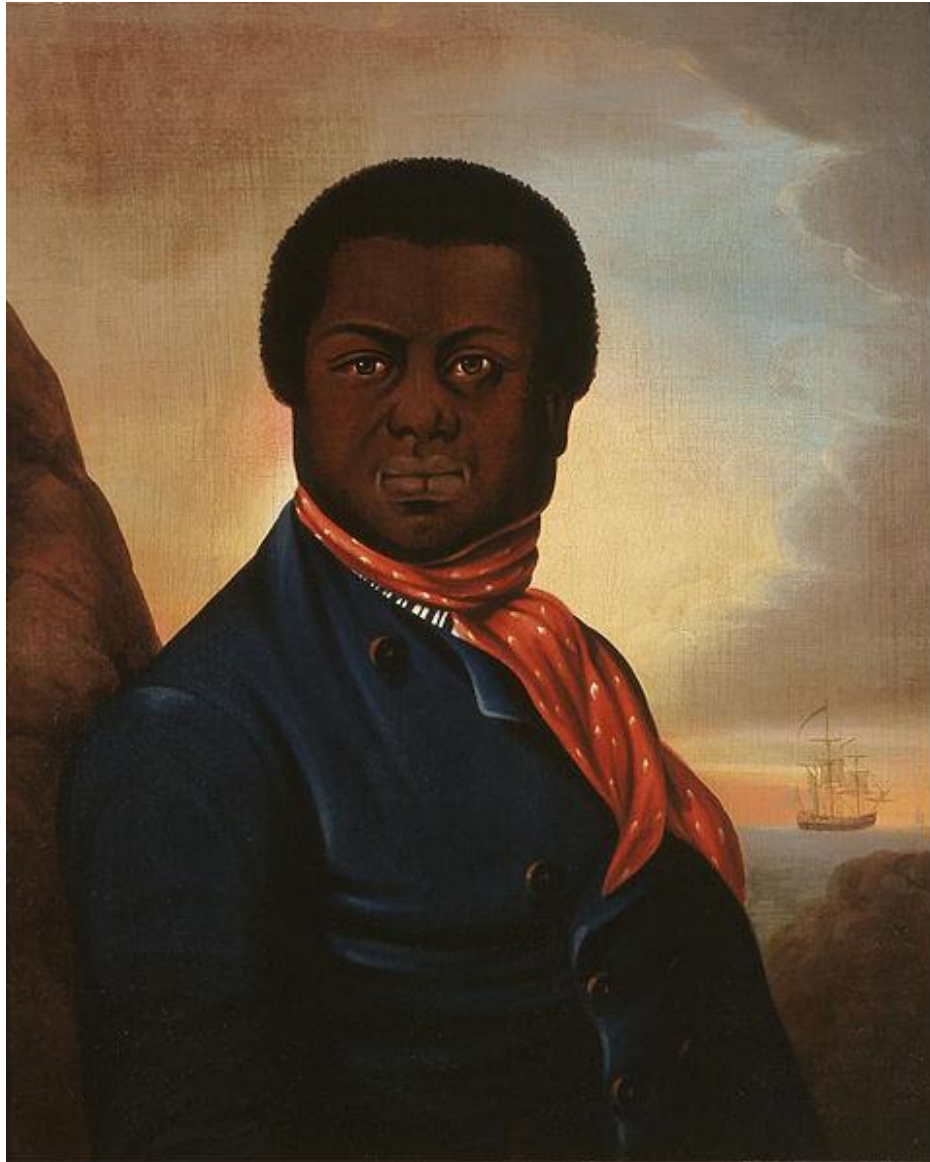


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# **Black Sailors and Sea Shanties**

**Three songs for use in the classroom**



**Portrait of a Black Sailor (artist & subject unknown)**

**(Wikimedia: Los Angeles County Museum of Art)**

**By Carla W Brown, in collaboration with Adriano Adewale,  
Hazel Askew & Natalie Bevan**

# English Folk Dance and Song Society

The **English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS)** is the national development organisation for folk music, dance and related arts, based at Cecil Sharp House, a dedicated folk arts centre and music venue, in Camden, North London. Cecil Sharp House is also home to EFDSS' Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML), England's national folk music and dance archive, which provides free online access to thousands of searchable folk manuscripts and other materials.

EFDSS creates and delivers creative learning projects for children, young people, adults and families at Cecil Sharp House, across London and around the country; often in partnership with other organisations. Learning programmes draw on the diverse and vibrant traditional folk arts of England, the British Isles and beyond, focusing on song, music, dance and related art forms such as storytelling, drama, and arts and crafts.

## **Black Sailors and Sea Shanties**

Produced by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), September 2015

Compiled by: Carla Willis-Brown, EFDSS Education Manager (Community Programmes) and Natalie Bevan, Librarian, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

Edited by: Carla Willis-Brown

Songs arranged by: Adriano Adewale and Hazel Askew

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# Black Sailors and Sea Shanties

## About this resource

This resource aims to introduce learners to sea shanties and black sailors and to explore the influence of black sailors on sea shanties. This is an interesting and growing area of research which has yet to be thoroughly investigated.

It is designed to support learning in the Key Stage 3 curriculum (for young people aged 11 – 14 years) and is based around three sea shanties associated with black sailors. The songs are known to have been sung and collected from locations as diverse as the Caribbean, Guyana in South America, on the Georgia Sea Islands, as well as Portsmouth and Somerset in England.

Background notes provide brief information on black sailors and shanties, and open up discussion about possible meanings and interpretations of the songs.

The songs are arranged for unison singing: one with guitar chords and the other two with additional three-part harmony. The resource also gives musical and other classroom activities to extend learning and explore the songs; these include composing shanties, drama games and body percussion exercises. There are vocal and instrumental sound files to accompany this resource pack. These can be accessed via the **EFDSS Resource Bank** [www.efdss.org/resourcebank](http://www.efdss.org/resourcebank).

Throughout the resource there is reference to the **Roud Folk Song Index**. This is a comprehensive online database with over 200,000 references to traditional songs found in both published and unpublished sources in the English language. Songs can be found by title, singer, place, etc., and variants of the same song can be identified using a unique numbering system. You will see references to the 'Roud number' next to the songs. For more information visit [www.vwml.org](http://www.vwml.org)

In the pack there are hyperlinks starting with <http://www.vwml.org/record/> which link directly to the **Vaughan Williams Memorial Library's online digital archive** which holds digitised versions of original manuscripts and other archival material.

Please note: material on the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website is not censored or expurgated and may contain material considered offensive by modern standards.

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## Links to the Key Stage 3 Curriculum

### Music

- Perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions
- Learn to sing and use voices, to create and compose music individually and with others
- Understand and explore how music is created, produced and communicated, including through the inter-related dimensions: pitch, duration, tempo, structure and musical notations

### History

- Know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world
- Know and understand the history of Britain; how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- Britain as the first industrial nation – the impact on society
- Britain's transatlantic slave trade

### English

- Write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting use of language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- Use discussion in order to learn; elaborate and clearly explain, understanding and ideas
- Speaking and listening; demonstrating to others and participating in debate

# Introduction

## Black Sailors at Sea

Black sailors have served on British ships for over 450 years. This little known history is documented by Ray Costello in his book 'Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships' (2012) which 'examines the contribution made by both ordinary and extraordinary black seafarers, from the earliest contact between Europeans and Africans to Britain's modern navy' and traces 'the voices of black seamen' back as far as 1547.

The 'Black Presence' section of the National Archives website also refers to black men defending the coast of Britain as early as 1595 and highlights their role in 'various expeditions against France, Holland and Spain, including famous battles such as Trafalgar (1805)'. It recognises the contribution of sailors from Africa, the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent 'to the life on board British ships during times of both peace and war', emphasising the large numbers of men required to fight and work on board Royal Navy ships and on commercial vessels – both in times of conflict (such as the Napoleonic wars) and eras of large-scale, international maritime trade.

## Sea Shanties

Shanties were the work songs of sailors on board cargo sailing ships and were at the height of usage in the mid-19th century. They were not permitted on Royal Navy vessels. To merchant seamen shanties were an important tool of the trade and were always associated with work (Hugill, 1984). They supported the various tasks required to operate a sailing ship - including weighing anchor and setting sail – all of which required a co-ordinated group effort in either a pulling or pushing action. They also helped sailors 'put heart' into this heavy and monotonous labour (Palmer, 2001).

British vessels often had multi-ethnic crews as sailors were recruited from across the colonies. There were many cultural and musical influences on the development of shanties, such as the songs sung by African Americans whilst loading vessels with cotton in ports of the southern United States. Shanty repertoire was shaped by the numerous music forms popular with sailors: these included folk songs; fiddle, dance and march tunes; minstrel music; and land-based work songs.



**Leader of Mississippi steamboat hands singing atop a capstan. Circa 1870**

*Wikimedia: (illustrator unknown)*

# Pay Me My Money Down

Roud number 21449

In common with many folk songs and shanties, the origin of the work song, *Pay Me My Money Down* is not known. However there are clear records that it was sung by black stevedores (dock workers) in the Georgia Sea Islands of the southern United States. Apparently it was not uncommon for ships docking at port there, to be unloaded immediately on arrival with captains promising to pay the dock workers the following morning. From the lyrics of the song it seems that this promise was sometimes broken by the likes of a wealthy boss such as 'Mr Coffin'.

**Collection information** The song was collected by Lydia Parrish and published in her 1942 book, *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands*. It was made popular by The Weavers in the 1950s and was performed by Bruce Springsteen in the 2000s. In 1959, as part of his Southern journey across America to collect and record folk music, Alan Lomax travelled back to the Georgia Sea Islands. Lomax recorded this song, known as *Pay me* and sung by Joe Armstrong, there. Lomax describes Armstrong at the time of recording: 'formerly one of the strongest men on the Sea Islands, but ailing at the time of recordings, had performed every kind of hard labour during his ninety-odd years, including loading lumber schooners and working on the railroad. In spite of his age, he still performed as a strong lead singer.' Of the song, Lomax comments: 'Its text reflects the independent spirit of the Sea Island workers when they went to Brunswick to labour along the docks.'

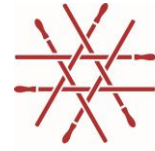
(Notes taken from the 1998 re-mastered CD sleeve notes from: *Alan Lomax's Southern Journey Volume 13: Earliest times. Georgia Sea Islands songs for everyday living.*)

## Pay Me My Money Down

### Style: Calypso

Arrangement:	Adriano Adewale & Tim Cansfield
Producer:	Adriano Adewale
Recording:	Marcelo Andrade
Mixing & Mastering:	Paul Rumbol
Lead vocals:	Tim Cansfield
Acoustic guitar:	Tim Cansfield
Backing vocals:	Adriano Adewale, Tim Cansfield & Marcelo Andrade
Percussion:	Adriano Adewale
Water bottles:	Adriano Adewale & Tim Cansfield





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# Pay Me My Money Down

Roud 21449

**Chorus:**

Pay me, Oh pay me  
*Pay me my money down*  
Pay me or go to jail  
*Pay me my money down*

Oh pay me, Oh pay me  
*Pay me my money down*  
Pay me or go to jail  
*Pay me my money down*

Think I heard my captain say  
*Pay me my money down*  
T'morrow is my sailin' day  
*Pay me my money down*

Wish't I was Mr. Coffin's son  
*Pay me my money down*  
Stay in the house an' drink good rum  
*Pay me my money down*

You owe me, pay me  
*Pay me my money down*  
Pay me or go to jail  
*Pay me my money down*

Wish't I was Mr. Foster's son,  
*Pay me my money down*  
I'd set on the bank an' see the work done,  
*Pay me my money down*



# Pay Me My Money Down

Arranged by Adriano Adewale and Tim Cansfield

Traditional

Musical score for "Pay Me My Money Down" in 4/4 time. The score consists of eight staves of music. Chords are indicated above the notes: C, G7, and C. There are triplets of eighth notes in measures 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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# Games:

## Game 1:

### Keeping in time

- i. Identify the pulse of the song and clap along listening to the audio track. Always in time with the track, not speeding up or slowing down.
- ii. Identify the pulse of the song and using your feet, tap along listening to the track. Always in time with the track, not speeding up or slowing down.
- iii. Identify the pulse of the song and walk around the room to the beat of the song. Always in time with the track, not speeding up or slowing down.
- iv. Identify the points of the song where the lyrics say 'pay me' (only in the choruses).
- v. Ask the class to jump just before they hear 'pay me'. They should land on the ground together when the lyrics say 'pay'. It means they will have to jump slightly before they hear 'pay me'.

## Game 2:

### Learning the master drum rhythm

- i. Listen to the track and identify the rhythm of the line 'pay me my money down'
- ii. Clap that same rhythm together with the lyrics. Clap on every syllable of 'pay me my money down'. Repeat this exercise, until everybody is familiar with it.
- iii. The next step is to clap only on 'money down', however miss out 'ney' from 'money'.
- iv. So when singing 'money down', there are only claps on 'mo' and 'down'. The end result will be: 'money-down, money down, money down', this is the master drum rhythm, the lowest sounding drum of the whole percussion orchestra.
- v. A development of this rhythm can be played by adding a third note in the end, which would be: 'money down, my money down, my...' (Note: money always starts on the first beat).

Note: syllables that are stressed with a clap are underlined.

## Game 3:

### **Learning different percussion parts**

- i. Divide the class into two groups: orange group and green group
- ii. Ask the orange group to identify the pulse of the song and using hands, clap / tap along listening to the track. This is also the rhythm of the water bottle, which always plays on the beat.
- iii. Ask the green group to clap the master drum rhythm while the orange group is clapping their part.
- iv. Swap parts around and try it once more.
- v. The next step will be to do the exercises above whilst listening to and singing with the audio tracks.

### **Game 4: Call and response**

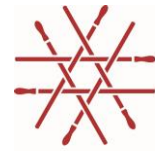
- i. Teach the chorus to all participants.
- ii. Start the song with everybody singing the chorus, preferably standing in a circle.
- iii. Choose one person to be the first lead singer. The lead singer will sing the line 'Pay me or you go to jail!' as a solo and the rest of the group will respond 'Pay me my money down'
- iv. Once the lead singer finishes their solo line, he/she can shout out who the next person to sing the solo line will be and it can continue in this way until everybody sings it.

The chorus should not stop, the beat always keeps going, the same way as it happens on a ship, the lead singer will shout over the chorus with a strong and loud voice, just like sailors!

# Discussion

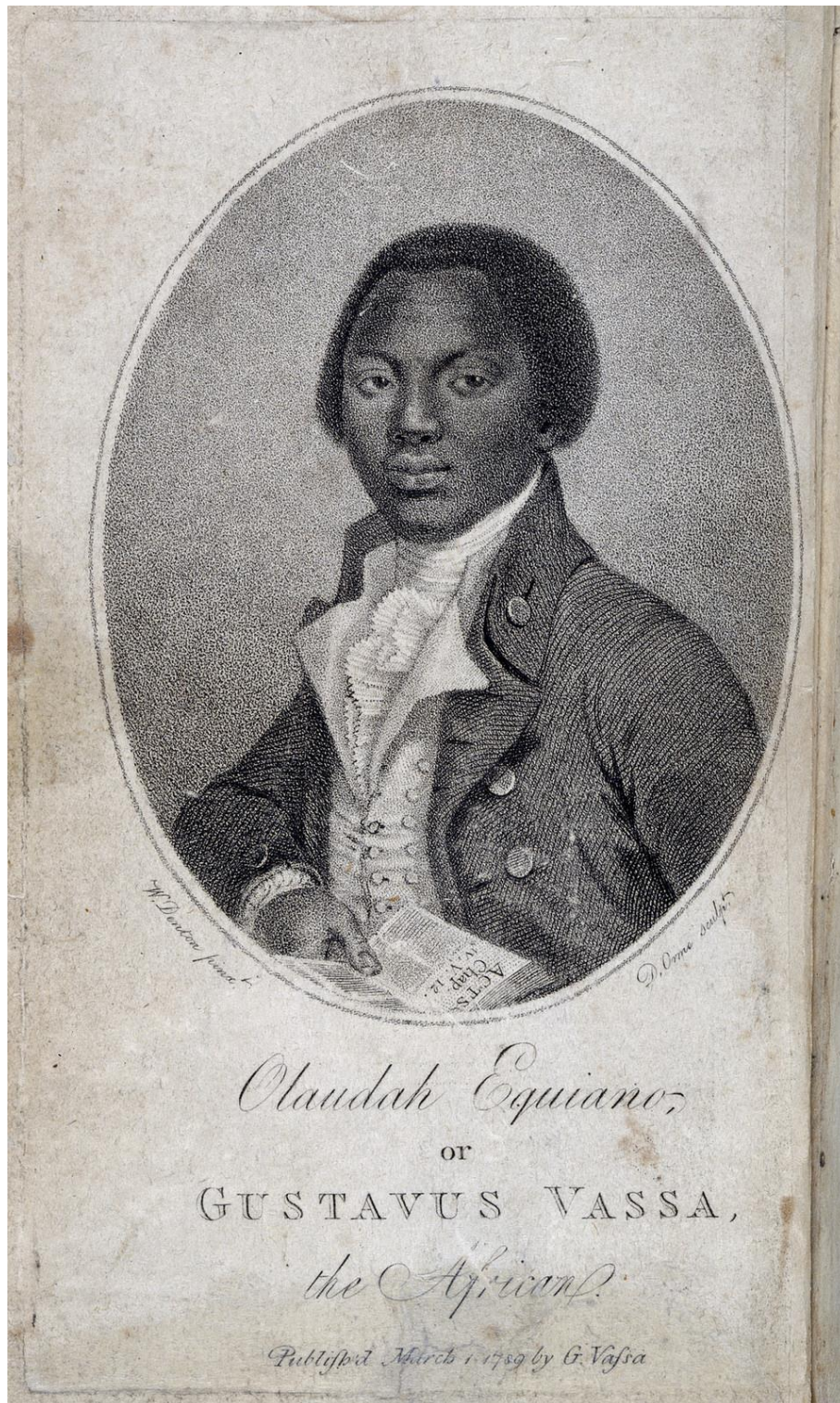
## Points for discussion:

- What do you think of the song?
- What do you think the lyrics mean?
- Why do you think this song was sung?
- Who are the characters in the song?
- What do they represent?



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***Picture of Olaudah Equiano; who documented his time at sea (1789)  
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Michael Graham Stewart Slavery  
Collection***

# The Sailor Likes His Bottle O'

Roud number 314

An early version of *The Sailor Likes His Bottle O* was described by James Edward Alexander in his book *Transatlantic Sketches*. He heard it being sung on a river trip in Guyana in 1831. This song, sung by the black rowers, is now known as *The Sailor Likes His Bottle O* with a variant title of *So Early in the Morning*.

*The men merrily plied the paddles, and we brushed past the overhanging trees to their favourite song of "Velly well, yankee, velly well oh!"*

*De bottley oh! de bottley oh!  
De sailor like de bottley oh!  
Right early in de marning, de sailor like de bottley oh!  
A bottle o'rum, loaf a bread,  
Make de sailor dandy oh!  
Right early in de marning, de sailor like de bottley oh!*

Enjoyment of alcohol was a popular topic for many shanties in the English language!

## Collection information

Also known as '*So early in the morning*', there are currently 10 entries for this song in the Roud Folk Song Index. Variant titles also include '*A bottle of rum*' – a variant noted by James Madison Carpenter during folk song collecting fieldwork in the 1920s and 30s. Cecil Sharp collected this song in Somerset from the singer John Short on the 2 June 1914: <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2944>. Sharp described '*So early in the Morning*' as a 'pulling chanty'.

## The Sailor Likes His Bottle-O

### Style: 3 part harmony

Arrangement: Hazel Askew  
Recording: Hazel Askew  
Vocals: Hazel Askew

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# The Sailor Likes His Bottle O'

Roud number 314

*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

The Bottle O, the Bottle O, the sailor loves his bottle O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

A bottle of rum, a bottle of gin, a bottle of Irish whiskey O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

The baccy O terbaccy O, the sailor loves his baccy O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

A packet of 'bac and a packet of cut, a plug o' hard terbaccy-O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

The lassies O, the maidens O, the sailor loves the Judies O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

A bully rough house, bully rough house, the sailor likes a rough house O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

A tread on me coat, an all hands in, a bully good rough and tumble O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

A sing song O, a sing song O, the sailor likes a sing song O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

A drinkin song, a song o' love, a ditty o' seas and shipmates O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*

The Bottle O, the Bottle O, the sailor loves his bottle O  
*So early in the morning, the sailor likes his bottle O*





# The Sailor Likes His Bottle-O Tune

Traditional, arr. by Hazel Askew

**Introduction** **Verse**

So ear-ly in the mor-ning, the sail-or li-kes his bot-tle O! 1.The bot-tle O! The  
bottle of r-um! A  
6 bot-tle O! The sail-or loves his bot-tle O! So  
bottle of gin! A bottle of I-rish whis-key O!

9 ear-ly in the mor-ning, the sail-or li-kes his bot-tle O!



# The Sailor Likes His Bottle-O

## Arrangement

Traditional, arr. by Hazel Askew

**Introduction** **Verse**

High  
So ear - ly in the mor - ning, the sail - or lik - es his bot - tle O! 1.The  
2.A

Middle (melody)  
So ear - ly in the mor - ning, the sail - or li - kes his bot - tle O! 1.The  
2.A

Low  
So ear - ly in the mor - ning, the sail - or likes his bot - tle O! 1.The  
2.A

5

H.  
bot - tle O! The bot - tle O! The sail - or loves his bot - tle O! So  
bottle of rum! A bottle of gin! A bottle of I - rish whis - key O!

M.  
bot - tle O! The bot - tle O! The sail - or loves his bot - tle O! So  
bottle of r - um! A bottle of gin! A bottle of I - rish whis - key O!

L.  
bot - tle O! The bot - tle O! The sail - or loves his bot - tle O! So  
bottle of r - um! A bottle of gin! A bottle of I - rish whis - key O!

9

H.  
ear - ly in the mor - ning the sail - or li - kes his bot - tle O!

M.  
ear - ly in the mor - ning, the sail - or li - kes his bot - tle O!

L.  
ear - ly in the mor - ning, the sail - or likes his bot - tle O!

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## Activity – The Sailor Likes His Bottle O'

- Form a boat shape with all the people in the class
- Nominate a drummer to keep the rhythm
- Nominate a soloist to lead the call and response
- Everyone rows to the beat
- Row forward to the first beat of the first bar
- Pull backward to the first beat of the second bar
- What happens when the drummer speeds up the rhythm?

### Points for discussion:

- Did the song help you keep in time?
- What happened when the rhythm was sped up?
- Do you think the sailors found singing and working more enjoyable? Why?

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# Shallow Brown

Roud number 2621

*Shallow Brown* is a farewell song, described by Stan Hugill as a pumping shanty of West Indian origin. It also has the title of *Challo Brown* – Challo is a Caribbean term that means mixed race. The song was heard as far afield as the ports of Chile. There is also a version that describes the life of a slave sold to an American ship owner.

## Collection Information

There are currently 35 entries for this song on the Roud Folk Song Index. It has been collected in both Britain and the United States. The song's variant titles are as follows: *Shallo Brown*, *Challo Brown*, *Shiloh Brown* and *Shallow Brown*.

During the English folk song revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, this song was first noted down on 20 August 1907 at Portsmouth Workhouse by George Gardiner – it was sung to him by Frederick Fennemore: <http://www.vwml.org/record/GG/1/14/873>.

Amongst other early folk song collectors who have noted down this song are Percy Grainger and Cecil Sharp. Sharp described *Shallow Brown* as a 'pulling chanty' which he collected from Harry Perry on board the St Paul: <http://www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/3075>

## Shallow Brown

### Style: 3 part harmony

Arrangement:	Hazel Askew
Recording:	Hazel Askew
Vocals:	Hazel Askew

# Shallow Brown

Roud number 2621

*Shallow, O Shallow Brown*  
*Shallow, O Shallow Brown*

I'm bound away to leave yer,  
I never will deceive yer

I long to look upon yer,  
I spend me money on yer

Ye are me only treasure  
I love ye to full measure

The packet sails termorrer  
I'll leave ye with much sorrer

In the cradle is me baby  
I want no other lady

My wife an' baby grieves me  
Tis pain for me ter leave ye

Be on the pier ter meet me  
With kisses I will greet thee



# Shallow Brown Tune

Traditional, arranged by Hazel Askew

Shal low— O Shal-low brown, Shal- low— O Shal-low Brown. I'm bound a way to  
6 leave - yer, Shal low— O Shal-low Brown, I ne-ver will de -  
10 cei - eve yer, Shal low— O Shal-low Brown



# Shallow Brown

## Arrangement

Traditional, arranged by Hazel Askew

**Introduction**

High  
Shal low O Shal-low brown, Shal low O Shal-low brown, I'm  
I

Middle (melody)  
Shal low O Shal-low brown, Shal-low O Shal-low Brown, I'm  
I

Low  
Shal low O Shal-low brown, Shal low O Shal-low brown, I'm  
I

**Verse**

5  
H.  
bound a way to leave - yer, Shal low O Shal-low brown, I  
long to look u - pon yer, I

M.  
bound a way to leave - yer, Shal low O Shal-low Brown, I  
long to look u - pon yer, I

L.  
bound a way to leave - yer, Shal low O Shal-low brown, I  
long to look u - pon yer, I

9  
H.  
ne - ver will de - cei-eve yer, Shal low O Shal-low brown,  
spend me mo-ney on yer,

M.  
ne - ver will de - cei-eve yer, Shal low O Shal-low Brown  
spend me mo-ney on yer,

L.  
ne - ver will de - cei-eve yer, Shal low O Shal-low brown,  
spend me mo-ney on yer,

---

## Group work activity

Each group is given a scenario on a postcard: they are all characters on a ship/boat with cargo to deliver.

- 4 printable postcards with different scenarios/synopsis for ships going to sea

Each person in the group comes up with their own character

- Name and age
- Background
- Have they been to sea before?
- Where is their family/home?
- What are their hobbies / likes and dislikes / favourite food?





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The Caroline is sailing from Antigua to America to deliver its cargo of sugar and rum. There are 50 crew members altogether on board (it is a large ship) the journey will take 28 days altogether.



"USS Constitution 1997" by Journalist 2nd Class Todd Stevens: Wikimedia

There is a war on! Press Gangs have kidnapped you and you are on board the war vessel against your will. You are forced to be a soldier as well as a sailor. You don't want to be on board the ship. You have no idea how long you will be at sea.



"Cordeliere and Regent" by Unknown, photo from Mary Rose Trust - David Childs, The Warship

You are on a 3 month voyage at sea. You are responsible for loading and unloading the ship's cargo at each port. The pay is poor but it is the only job you could find! Your aim is to get the cargo loaded and unloaded as quickly as possible as this means a quicker voyage.



HMS Victory at dusk, Portsmouth: Wikimedia

You are on board a small boat which is powered by oars. There are 16 rowers on board with two captains. You are rowing from one Caribbean island to another nearby island. The journey is expected to last a whole day with no breaks.



"The Rowing Boat - geograph.org.uk - 1146472" by Colin Kinnear

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## Activity/Extension

As a group, come up with your own sea shanty, in the form of call and response (soloist and chorus)

Things to think about:

- What would you like to say?
- The other characters on the boat/ship
- What will it be used for?
- Is it a happy song?
- Will it help to boost morale?
- What is likely to be the mood of your fellow co-workers?
- Is it simple to learn?
- What work will be done whilst this shanty is sung?

Use the template to help write your shanty.

Feedback to the group – each group can sing their shanty and read their scenario

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## Sea Shanty Template

<b>Verse 1</b>	
Solo	
Unison	
Solo	
Unison	
<b>Verse 2</b>	
Solo	
Unison	
Solo	
Unison	



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<b>Verse 3</b>	
Solo	
Unison	
Solo	
Unison	
<b>Verse 4</b>	
Solo	
Unison	
Solo	
Unison	

## Adriano Adewale



Picture by Anna Kunst

Brazilian percussionist and composer Adriano Adewale is a versatile musician and performer.

Based in the UK for over ten years, Adewale established himself as a respected percussionist, composer, educator and band leader whose creativity and artistry have led him to work on a range of high quality and crossover art form projects, engaging with local communities as well as high profile artists such as Bobby McFerrin, Joanna MacGregor, Antonio Forcione, Britten Sinfonia and Benjamin Taubkin.

An artist in residence at the English Folk Dance and Song Society at the Cecil Sharp House in London, Adriano has been developing a series of projects combining English and Brazilian folk traditions. Recently Adriano worked on 'Within the Waves', a project which featured percussion plus massed singers from Cecil Sharp House Choir and Werca's Folk performing sea songs and sea shanties from England and Brazil, as part of the London Jazz Festival 2015.

## Hazel Askew



Hazel Askew is a London-based singer, musician and workshop leader. She has worked as a performer on the folk scene for many years with Lady Maisery and The Askew Sisters.

Hazel grew up with the folk scene, participating in many youth folk education programmes and now works as a folk educator and workshop leader. She frequently leads projects for EFDSS on adult, youth and schools projects, most recently delivering three of the London-based 'The Full English' education projects.

She has also led workshops and courses for organisations such as Barbican Creative Learning, Folkworks, Aldeburgh Young Musicians, Dartington Summer School, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and at various festivals around the country.

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