

About the Author

John McCutcheon's storytelling style has been compared to that of Will Rogers and Garrison Keillor—not bad for a guitar-slinging folk singer who just happens to write picture books for kids. Thanks to a cheap guitar and a used chord book, this former all-star catcher is now a Grammy-nominated folk singer and an author of children's books.

A backstage conversation with a woman in Birmingham, Alabama, was the inspiration behind *Christmas in the Trenches*, which McCutcheon first recorded in 1984. The song in turn inspired the folk singer to become an author. He writes, "To be able to introduce the ideas contained in songs like 'Christmas in the Trenches' or 'Streets of Sarajevo' in vivid ways to children at a very early age...is something I've hoped to do for years."

McCutcheon lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Bibliography

Happy Adoption Day. Little Brown and Company. 1996. ISBN 0-316-55455-3

Christmas in the Trenches. Peachtree Press. 2006. ISBN 1-56145-374-9

The Author's Web Site

<http://www.folkmusic.com>

Discography

The Greatest Story Never Told (2002)

Mightier Than the Sword (2005)

Welcome the Traveler Home (2004)

For children and families:

Autumnsongs (1998)

Bigger Than Yourself (1997)

Springsongs (1999)

Supper's on the Table (2001)

These activities were written by
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Suggested Activities for *Christmas in the Trenches*

Note to Teachers: Although this is a picture book, recommended for grades 2-4, ages 4-8, the content is also suitable for older students studying World War I.

Vocabulary:

Bayonet	Crumbled	Flare	Harmony	Messmate	Peculiar
Respite	Reverent	Sentry	Sights	Squeeze Box	
Stille Nacht	Strained	Strode	Trenches	Truce	Wondrous

1. Direct students to locate the following places on a map: Liverpool, Belgium, Flanders, Germany, France, the Western Front.
2. Read the story and listen to the story read and sung by John McCutcheon. Ask the students to retell the story in their own words as a group writing exercise. Extension Activity: Direct students to use the information provided in the back of the book and in other web resources listed below and to write a news release as though it were being written by a war correspondent, including the 5 Ws of journalism: Who, What, Where, When, and Why.
3. Discuss with the class the following questions: Do you think this really happened? What would you do in a case like this? What are options for resolving conflicts between people? What do we all have in common?
4. As a class, discuss if this event could happen today.
5. Plot the Western Front on a map of Europe. In the cafeteria or the gym, place chairs in trench formation, with 30 yards between them, and discuss with students what the military life must have been like.
6. Discuss with students what it was like the next day when fighting began again. Direct students to write a letter home about the event from the point of view of a soldier involved in the fighting.

Suggested Internet Resources:

Note to Teacher: As always, you must preview these sites prior to allowing your students to use them.

Christmas Truce 1914: Operation Plum Puddings

<http://www.christmastruce.co.uk>

Demystifying the Christmas Truce:

<http://www.greatwar.nl/frames/default-christmastruce.html>

The Great War: 1914 to 1918

<http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/greatwar/>

Peter Simkins Commentary "The Christmas Truce—A Mutual Curiosity"

http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_simkins_04_truce.html

The World War I Document Archive at Brigham Young University

<http://www.lib.byu.edu/%7erdh/wwi/>

World War I Lesson Plans

<http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/lesson.html>

World War I—Trenches on the Web

<http://www.worldwar1.com/>

Articles About the Truce

<http://history1900s.about.com/od/1910s/a/christmastruce.htm>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_i/197627.stm

<http://www.1914-1918.net/truce.htm>

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1209/p25s01-stin.html>

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/christmastruce.htm>

Maps of the Area Around Ypres Salient

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/maps/westernfront.htm>

Folk Music Web Resources

All About American Folk Music

<http://folkmusic.about.com/od/folkmusic101/a/AboutFolkMusic.htm>

Folk Instruments Lesson Plan

http://lessons.usamusic.org/lesson_plan.zhtml?P=33675&L=3&F=5&ML=238&LI=32884

Old Music for New Ears Teacher's Guide

<http://www.ket.org/education/guides/oldmusic.pdf>

Teacher Planbook: Dr. Alan Jabbour Integrating Folk Music, Folklore,
and Traditional Culture Instruction Into K-12 Education

<http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Teachers/folkAlanJabbour.html>

Suggested Books

Let's Be Enemies. Janice May Udry. HarperCollins Publishers. 1988. ISBN: 0-06-443188-6

Playing War. Kathy Beckwith. Tilbury House Publishers. 2005. ISBN: 0-88448-267-7

True Stories of the First World War. Paul Dowswell. EDC Publishing. 2004. ISBN: 0-7945-0721-2

World War I. Simon Adams. Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc. 2004, ISBN: 0-7566-3007-X

World War I. Ruth Tenzer Feldman. Lerner Publishing Group. 2004. ISBN: 0-8225-0148-1

A Brave Soldier. Nicholas Debon. Groundwood Books. 2002. ISBN: 0-88899-481-8

Trench Fighting of World War I. John Hamilton. ABDO Publishing Company. 2004. ISBN: 1-57765-916-3

Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce. Stanley Weintraub. Penguin Group. 2001. ISBN: 0-452-28367-1

Suggested Activities for *Happy Adoption Day*

1. Use a know, want to know, learned (KWL) chart to lead the class in a discussion on what the students know about families and what they want to know. After the lesson, direct the students to complete the “What I Learned” column.
2. Direct each student to draw and label a picture of his or her family.
3. Ask each student to make a pictograph of his or her family, dividing it by “boys” and “girls” or by “adults” and “children.”
4. As a class, direct students to make a pictograph of all the families in the class, using total numbers of family members.
5. Discuss with the class where their families came from. Use a world map to label the countries of origin with small digital pictures of the students.
6. Read the story to the class and then listen to the song. Discuss with students family celebrations. Ask students: What other things do families celebrate? Are there songs or traditions associated with these celebrations? Students may draw pictures of how families feel on Adoption Day.
7. Ask each student to bring to class a small item from home that reminds him or her of a special occasion in his or her family. Direct each student to draw the item and write about it (with teacher assistance, if necessary). Take a picture of each student with his or her item. You may want to print these for a family night at school.

Suggested Internet Resources:

Teacher's Guide to Adoption at Family Helper.

<http://www.familyhelper.net/ad/adteach.html>

Adoption in the Schools: A Lot to Learn—Promoting Equality and Fairness for All Children and Their Families

http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/policy/2006_09_adoption_in_the_schools.php

Books With an Adoption Theme

Millions of Cats. Wanda Gág. Penguin Group. 1952. ISBN: 0-399-23315-6

My Mei Mei. Ed Young. Penguin Group. 2006. ISBN: 0-399-24339-9

Waiting for May. Janet Morgan Stoeke. Penguin Group. 2005. ISBN: 0-525-47098-0

The Red Blanket. Eliza Thomas. Scholastic, Inc. 2004. ISBN: 0-439-32253-7

Sisters. Judith Caseley. HarperCollins Publishers. 2004. ISBN: 0-06-051046-3

My Family Is Forever. Nancy L. Carlson. Penguin Group. 2004. ISBN: 0-670-03650-1