Hits from the Songbook
Music Take-Home Packet
What's Inside?

Song Facts
Song Lyrics

Pre-recorded live performance by Chelsea Reynowsky (Program Coordinator of the Great American Songbook Foundation)

Watch and sing with Chelsea here.
• This was the first song of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical collaboration to be heard by theatre audiences.

• It has become one of their most famous numbers and quickly became one of the most popular American songs to emerge from the wartime era, gaining currency away from Broadway first on the radio and recordings, and then later on numerous television variety shows.

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Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'

There's a bright, golden haze on the meadow
There's a bright, golden haze on the meadow.
The corn is as high as an elephant's eye
And it looks like it's climbing clear up to the sky.

Oh, what a beautiful Mornin'
Oh, what a beautiful day.
I've got a beautiful feelin'
Everything's goin' my way.

All the cattle are standin' like statues
All the cattle are standin' like statues
They don't turn their heads as they see me ride by
But a little brown mav'rick is winkin' her eye

Oh, what a beautiful Mornin'
Oh, what a beautiful day.
I've got a beautiful feelin'
Everything's goin' my way.

All the sounds of the earth are like music
All the sounds of the earth are like music
The breeze is so busy it don't miss a tree
An' a ol' weepin' willer is laughin' at me

Oh, what a beautiful Mornin'
Oh, what a beautiful day.
I've got a beautiful feelin'
Everything's goin' my way.
Oh, what a beautiful day!
Today, “God Bless America” is often used as a symbol of support for war, sung by soldiers in uniform at baseball games and other events. But when Irving Berlin rediscovered his old song in a trunk in 1938, he had been looking for a “peace song” as a response to the escalating conflict in Europe.

He made changes to it and gave it to radio star Kate Smith to perform on her radio show on the eve of the first official celebration of Armistice Day—a holiday originally conceived to commemorate world peace and honor veterans of the Great War.

In announcing the song’s premiere on her daytime talk show, Kate Smith declared, “As I stand before the microphone and sing it with all my heart, I’ll be thinking of our veterans and I’ll be praying with every breath I draw that we shall never have another war.”
God bless America, land that I love
   Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies
   To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home

God bless America, land that I love
   Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies
   To the oceans white with foam
God bless America, my home sweet home
“Blue Skies” was composed by Irving Berlin in 1926. It made its debut in the Rodgers and Hart musical "Betsy"

The song was added at the last minute, and it was thanks to a panicky phone call from vaudevillian Belle Baker to Berlin, who complained that the score lacked a ‘Belle Baker song’

Benny Goodman and His Orchestra recorded a highlight Swing Era version of this song in 1935. Berlin’s composition was also popular among the modern jazz players and beboppers. “Blue Skies” has been re-interpreted by numerous artists, including Artie Shaw, Frank Sinatra, and a country version by Willie Nelson in his 1978 album “Stardust”
Blue Skies

Blue skies
Smiling at me
Nothing but blue skies
Do I see

Bluebirds singing a song
Nothing but bluebirds
All day long

Never saw the sun shining so bright
Never saw things going so right
Noticing the days hurrying by
When you're in love, my how they fly

Blue days
All of them gone
Nothing but blue skies
From now on
Movie audiences first heard this performed by Roy Rogers in the 1944 Warner Bros. musical "Hollywood Canteen," just two months after Kate Smith introduced it on her popular radio program.

The Bing Crosby/Andrews Sisters version topped the charts for eight weeks in 1944-45.

Roy Rogers' version became the most beloved rendition, and the title was used for one of his most popular Western films in 1945 (which included another performance of the song).
Don't Fence Me In

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above
   Don't fence me in
Let me ride through the wild open country that I love
   Don't fence me in

   Let me be by myself in the evening breeze
Listen to the murmur of the cottonwood trees
   Send me off forever, but I ask you please
   Don't fence me in

Just turn me loose, let me straddle my old saddle
   Underneath the western skies
On my cayuse, let me wander over yonder
   Till I see the mountains rise

I want to ride to the ridge where the west commences
   And gaze at the moon until I lose my senses
I can't look at hobbles and I can't stand fences
   Don't fence me in

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above
   Don't fence me in
Let me ride through the wild open country that I love
   Don't fence me in
Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)

• The first of Porter's "list songs", it features a string of suggestive comparisons and examples, preposterous pairings and double entendres, dropping famous names and events, drawing from highbrow and popular culture.

• Porter was a strong admirer of the Savoy Operas of Gilbert & Sullivan, many of whose stage works featured similar comic list songs. When the Cole Porter musical Paris opened in Atlantic City on February 6, 1928, it included a song called "Let's Misbehave." This was shortly replaced by "Let's Do It".

• The first refrain covers human ethnic groups, the second refrain birds, the third refrain marine life, the fourth refrain insects and centipedes, and the fifth refrain non-human mammals.
Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love)

Birds do it, bees do it
Even educated fleas do it
Let's do it, let's fall in love

In Spain, the best upper sets do it
Lithuanians and Letts do it
Let's do it, let's fall in love

The Dutch in old Amsterdam do it
Not to mention the Finns
Folks in Siam do it - think of Siamese twins

Some Argentines without means do it
People say in Boston even beans do it
Let's do it, let's fall in love

Romantic sponges, they say, do it
Oysters down in Oyster Bay do it
Let's do it, let's fall in love

Cold Cape Cod clams, 'gainst their wish, do it
Even lazy jellyfish do it
Let's do it, let's fall in love

Electric eels, I might add, do it
Though it shocks 'em I know
Why ask if shad do it? Waiter, bring me shad roe!

In shallow shoals, English soles do it
Goldfish in the privacy of bowls do it
Let's do it, let's fall in love
Let's do it, let's fall in love
White Christmas

• With 50 million copies sold, not only is Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" the best-selling Christmas song of all time, it's also the best-selling single ever, according to Guinness World Records.

• It first aired during the Kraft Music Hall radio show (yes, sponsored by the food company) on December 25, 1941.

• Then-host, Bing Crosby, crooned the carol, which is soulful, longing, and sad anyway, but especially so at the time. Pearl Harbor had been attacked just a few weeks before.

• Irving Berlin wrote "White Christmas" for a musical that eventually morphed into the movie Holiday Inn and ended up winning an Academy Award for the song. In 1954, it was the title track of another Bing Crosby Christmas musical, "White Christmas"
White Christmas

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the tree tops glisten
And children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days, may your days, may your days
Be merry and bright
And may all your Christmas' be white

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the tree tops glisten
And children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days, may your days, may your days
Be merry and bright
And may all your Christmas' be white
We started out with the first song audiences heard of Rodgers and Hammerstein (Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'), now we'll sing the last song they created together.

Audience members were totally convinced that "Edelweiss" was an actual Austrian folk song.

"Edelweiss" was so good that film director Robert Wise also thought it was a real Austrian folk song. When they were shooting the scene at the Salzburg music festival, filming was delayed for hours while hundreds of Austrian extras were taught the words.
Edelweiss, edelweiss
Every morning you greet me

Small and white
Clean and bright
You look happy to meet me

Blossom of snow
May you bloom and grow
Bloom and grow forever
Edelweiss, edelweiss
Bless my home-land forever

Small and white
Clean and bright
You look happy to meet me

Blossom of snow
May you bloom and grow
Bloom and grow forever
Edelweiss, edelweiss
Bless my home-land forever
"You'll Never Walk Alone" is a show tune from the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "Carousel." In the second act of the musical, Nettie Fowler, the cousin of the protagonist Julie Jordan, sings "You'll Never Walk Alone" to comfort and encourage Julie when her husband, Billy Bigelow, the falls on his knife and dies after a failed robbery attempt.

If you’re a soccer fan, you might also know this from its use in football clubs around the world, where it is performed by a massed chorus of supporters on match day; this tradition developed at Liverpool F.C. after the chart success of the 1963 single of the song by the local Liverpool group Gerry and the Pacemakers.
When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark

At he end of the storm
Is a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark

Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Tho' your dreams be tossed and blown

Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone,
You'll never walk alone.
• This is one of the most recorded songs of all time and almost didn't make it into the movie

• “Over the Rainbow” was cut during previews of The Wizard of Oz in June 1939 because Louis B. Mayer, the studio chief, felt it slowed up the film and that no one would want to hear a girl sing a slow ballad in a farm yard

• The associate producer, Arthur Freed, a key figure on the film’s staff, told Mayer, “‘Rainbow’ stays—or I go!” “Rainbow” stayed and went on to become the film’s most popular song
Over the Rainbow

When all the world is a hopeless jumble
And the raindrops tumble all around
Heaven opens a magic lane

When all the clouds darken up the sky way
There's a rainbow highway to be found
Leading from your windowpane
to a place behind the sun
Just a step beyond the rain

Somewhere over the rainbow way up high
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue
And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true

Some day I'll wish upon a star and
Wake up where the clouds are far behind me
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops
That's where you'll find me

Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly
Birds fly over the rainbow,
why then, oh why can't I?
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