



An Acre of Land

Extension Ideas for Key Stage 2

Sue Nicholls, Gavin Davenport & Wendy Knight



The Full English

The Full English was a unique nationwide project unlocking hidden treasures of England's cultural heritage by making over 58,000 original source documents from 12 major folk collectors available to the world via a ground-breaking nationwide digital archive and learning project. The project was led by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and in partnership with other cultural partners across England.

The Full English digital archive (www.vwml.org) continues to provide access to thousands of records detailing traditional folk songs, music, dances, customs and traditions that were collected from across the country. Some of these are known widely, others have lain dormant in notebooks and files within archives for decades.

The Full English learning programme worked across the country in 19 different schools including primary, secondary and special educational needs settings. It also worked with a range of cultural partners across England, organising community, family and adult learning events.

Supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Folk Music Fund and The Folklore Society.



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Additional Resources

- A set of **flash cards** to accompany the song, devised by Camden Music Service, is available for free download from www.efdss.org/resourcebank
- Camden Music Service have created **instrumental arrangements** for *An Acre of Land* suitable for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. These are freely available for download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank.

Contributors

- **Gavin Davenport:** Gavin was the Learning Officer for The Full English project and assisted in adapting the dance activities.
- **Wendy Knight:** Wendy wrote and edited the publication *English Traditional Dancing* (EFDSS 2012. ISBN: 978-0-85418-186-5). Devon Jig is taken from her publication.
- **Sue Nicholls:** Sue is a national primary music specialist, leading singing trainer and music consultant. Sue was commissioned to contribute the musical activities and cross-curricular ideas in this pack.

Introduction

This pack shows some ways in which a traditional English folk song can be used in a variety of ways across the primary curriculum.

This pack is an extension to the Key Stage One pack available at www.efdss.org/resourcebank.

Song Background

An Acre of Land is a song found across England, from Yorkshire to Hampshire. The version below was collected in Coombe Bisset in Wiltshire in 1904

On a literal level this song tells of the small amount of land that a father has left his son, so small that all the farming activities from sowing to harvesting can be achieved with smallest implements imaginable. At another level this song features an impossible task in each verse, doing a farming job with the wrong kind of tools!

These types of impossible tasks are a common motif in English folk songs and like traditional riddles force the listener to think a bit more deeply about what is being said or sung.

Some folk song enthusiasts believe that the song is related to the famous folk song *Scarborough Fair* in which a girl must accomplish impossible tasks, before she can be accepted as the young man's 'true love'. There are other folk songs that feature impossible tasks such as *Who's the fool now?*

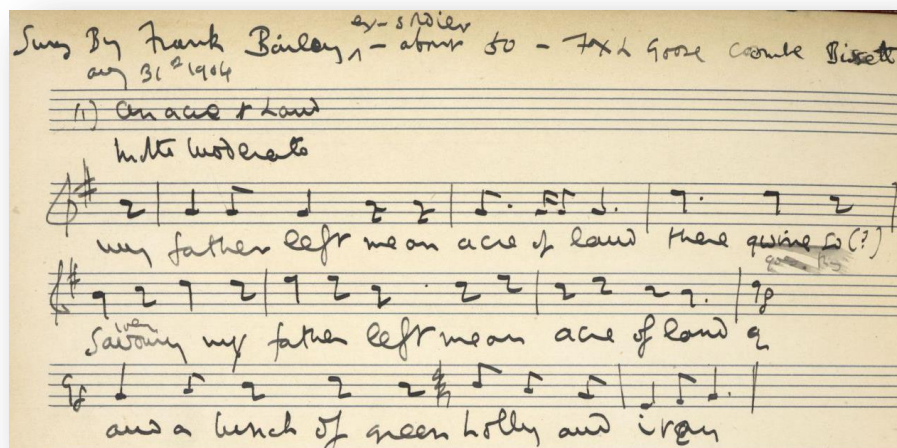


Photo: original manuscript of *An Acre of Land* from The Full English digital archive.

Score and Lyrics

An Acre of Land

Collected from Frank Bailey by Ralph Vaughan Williams

31 August 1904, Coombe Bisset

www.vwml.org/record/RVW2/2/131

Roud Number: 21093

Traditional



The Full English: www.vwml.org

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My father left me an acre of land

There goes this ivery,

My father left me an acre of land,

And a bunch of green holly and ivery.

I ploughed it with my ram's horn,

I sowed it with my thimble,

I harrowed it with my bramble bush,

I reaped it with my little penknife,

I sent it home in a walnut shell,

I threshed it with my needle and thread,

I winnowed it with my handkerchief,

I sent it to mill with a team of great rats,

Additional Resources

A set of flash cards to accompany the song, devised by Camden Music Service, is available for free download from www.efdss.org/resourcebank

Musical Activities

1. Teach the song line by line until the pupils are able to sing it confidently. Once the song is familiar, explore different ways of performing it, trialling and incorporating the pupils' ideas and suggestions.
2. The song has a straightforward *call and response* structure, so sing in two groups and when this is established, invite soloists, or small solo groups to take on the changing lines.
3. Try adding a simple descant to the first chorus pitched a third (two notes lower) than the original.
4. Confident singers may be able to work out a descant to the second chorus line too.
5. This song can be played using only two chords [note clusters] so try an accompaniment using chime bars, xylophones or even Boomwhackers. Play the notes D F# A (CHORD OF **D**) on the beats shown as underline syllables. Changing to the notes G B D (CHORD OF **G**) on the three emboldened syllables:

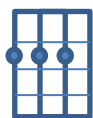
My fath-er left me an a-cre of land
There goes this iv-er-ry
 My **fath**-er left me an a-cre of land
 And a bunch of green **hol**-ly and **iv**-er-ry

6. You can extend this by adding in the optional chord of A (A C# E) to play a full three chord accompaniment. Guitarists and ukulele players should be able to manage these simple chord changes, too. Ukelele chords are shown on the next page.

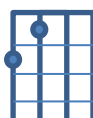
Additional Resources

Camden Music Service have created instrumental arrangements for *An Acre of Land* suitable for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. These are freely available for download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank.

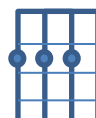
Ukelele Chords



D

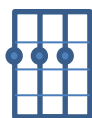


A



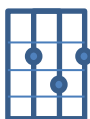
D

My fath-er left me an a-cre of land

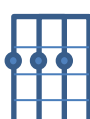


D

There goes this iv-er-ry

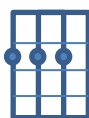


G

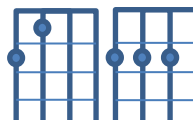


D

My **fath**-er left me an a-cre of land



D



A

D

And a bunch of green **hol**-ly and **iv**-erry

Other Instruments

Pupils who play melodic instruments such as flutes, clarinets, recorders or ocarinas may be able to pick out the tune to accompany the singing.

Organise an ensemble for a performance, perhaps giving individual players a chance to shine as soloists playing the melody during the interludes between verses. Some players may choose to compose their own melodic phrase for the interludes, as long as their tune keeps within the basic chord pattern.

Dance Activities

Work through some simple folk dance repertoire to familiarise pupils with stepping, skipping and galloping moves, plus some elementary patterning and turning manoeuvres that changes dancers' positions. The following dance is a simple progressive dance to match the structure of this song.

Devon Jig

Music: 12 x through song tune (32-bar jig)

Dance Formation: *Longways set* for 4–6 couples

Longways set - dancers stand in two straight lines (Xs on one side and Ys on the other) facing their partner. The *top* of the set is usually closest to the musicians – and is where the first pair starts at the beginning of the dance; conversely the *bottom* is the end furthest from the musicians.

MUSIC	DANCE
A1:	All except first pair make <i>arches</i> . First pair dance under the arches (8 beats, 4 bars), and return to places (8 beats, 4 bars).
A2:	<i>Single cast</i> .
B1:	First pair <i>swing</i> down to bottom.
B2:	<i>Double cast</i> – second pair (now at top) go left, third pair right, fourth pair left, etc.

Jargon Buster

- **Arches** - dancers face each other, join both hands high to form an arch.
- **Single cast** - dancers stand side-by-side *facing up* (towards the top of the set). First pair separate – X left and Y right – dance an arc to meet at the bottom of the set to lead back up to original places.
- **Double cast** - dancers in promenade hold, follow a 'D' shaped track to the left (or right) in an arc to the bottom of the set, return straight up the set to original places; first pair lead, others follow.

Cross Curricular Ideas

Drama

1. The Holly King is a mythological figure that represents and rules the Earth from the autumn to the spring equinox: he is at his strongest at mid-Winter. His rival, the Oak King, is weak at this time but gradually gains strength, ready to rule from spring to autumn and thus the year turns.
2. Ask KS2 pupils to write and perform their own plays focusing on an encounter between this pair, inviting other folklore, evergreen or forest characters to flesh out the dramatic content. Incorporate token costumes and create masks to heighten the atmosphere.

Literacy

1. Ask pupils to adapt the role of the unfortunate son from the song, writing to his father's lawyer or family to reverse the legacy of the pathetically small field. Use persuasive writing techniques to plead his case.
2. Write a brochure to advertise for *The Holly and Ivy Country Hotel*, extolling the attractions of your property: comfortable beds, wonderful food, luxurious facilities, excellent service woodland setting etc. Write concise but persuasive text to bring in customers, incorporating different devices to promote the hotel, such as images, bullet points, subheadings and special offer 'flashes'.
3. Write a poem about holly, using the *cinquain* form. This has a very limited structure which makes the write reflect very carefully on exact word choices that really intensifies the result. There are five lines, with two, four, six, eight and two syllables and no rhyming feature e.g.

*Holly
Prickly and green
Waxy leaves with small swords
Dangerous to the unwary
Watch out!*

Numeracy

1. An acre is the measure of an area of land approximately 4840 square metres. Round down to 4800 square metres and ask pupils to calculate as many rectangular perimeters as possible, by working out different lengths and breadth permutations e.g. 200m x 24m.
2. Discuss ways of calculating the area of your school grounds and whether or not this exceeds an acre

Art and Design

1. Imagine that you are making a costume for a character who personifies one of the seasons or parts of the year. What ideas and materials could you use to make a costume? How would the costumes for characters representing the different seasons differ from one another?
2. Conduct research into characters like the Green Man or Jack Frost and look at historical images to inform the design and making of over-sized 3D masks for the characters to wear.
3. Use a range of materials to achieve foliage, and tree bark effects and find ways to show their status as kings or queens – perhaps extending your activity by creating a crown or a staff to show authority.

Design Technology

1. The ram's horn, mentioned in the song for ploughing, was used as an instrument in ancient times and there are many Biblical references to the effects of the extraordinary sound produced. *Shofar* is the name given to the ram's horn that is still used today in Jewish synagogues for special religious days.
2. Using paper, card and other materials design and make a megaphone that will increase the volume of your voice. Experiment with prototypes to establish the best shape and size and think of a way of testing the increase of vocal sound.
3. Explore how other everyday items could be used as tools and why would they be suitable: shape, materials, material properties etc.

History

The original definition of an acre was *the amount of land that one man could plough between sunrise and sunset using a pair of oxen*. Sift through the vocabulary of the song and conduct research to discover what terms, such as *winnowing* and *threshing* mean and how they were achieved before mechanisation. You might be lucky enough to find a farmer who remembers the old-style of farming who would be willing to come and give a talk on farming practices and changes that have happened in their memory.

There are various rural life museums across the country – you may have one close to you that would be a good visiting link, many of these have old farming implements that relate to the themes within the song.

Science

1. Farming practices have developed over centuries and science has supported ever-increasing yields of cereals and vegetables. Embark on a study of what makes the best growing environment for one particular 'crop'.
2. Devise fair tests for using different *soils* – these could be collected from pupils' gardens or different locations – and keep detailed records of germination and growth using cameras, drawings and observation logs.

Geography

1. Collect food packets among the class – where does your food come from – compare the climates and different farming practices of the regions that the classes foods have come from. Which has come the furthest? Which is the most local?
2. Do you know any of the special farming practices that common foodstuffs require? e.g. Rice growing or harvesting apples. In groups can you write paragraphs about these special farming activities?



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