

English Worksheet - The Words Academy

Checkpoint / IGCSE / O Level

"High Cotton" - Alabama

We didn't know that times were lean
Round our house the grass was green
It didn't seem like things were all that bad
I bet we walked a thousand miles
Chopin' cotton and pushin' plows
And learnin' how to give it all we had.

As life went on and years went by
I saw the light in daddy's eyes
And felt - the love in mama's hands
They kept us warm and kept us fed
Taught us how to look ahead
Now lookin' back, I understand.

[Chorus:]

We Were Walkin' in High Cotton
Old times there are not forgotten
Those fertile fields are never far away
We Were Walkin' in High Cotton
Old times there are not forgotten
Leavin' home was the hardest thing we ever faced.

When Sunday mornings rolled around
We dressed up in hand-me downs
Just in time, to gather with the church
Sometimes I think how long it's been
And how it impressed me then
It was the only day my daddy wouldn't work.

Comprehension

1. What does 'times were lean' mean in the first verse?

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2. 'Give it all we had.' What does this line suggest? (Verse 1)

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3. 'Taught us how to look ahead.' What does this suggest? (Verse 2)

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4. The term "**high cotton**" or "**tall cotton**" originates from the rural farming community in the antebellum (pre-Civil War) South when "**high cotton**" meant that the crops were good and the prices were, too. The term has generalized to **mean** one is doing well or is successful. (Wikipedia)

The term 'High Cotton' is a

- a. Exaggeration b. Idiom c. Simile

5. What can you deduct about the character of the father and the mother from the song?

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6. What is the kind of mood evoked in the song? What words are used to convey this feeling?

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Language

1. 'Taught us how to look ahead // Now looking back I understand.' What is the literary device used in these two lines?

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2. Identify the imagery used in the poem.

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3. Select two imagery used and comment on why they are effective.

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4. Identify alliteration in the text.

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Descriptive/Narrative writing

1. **NARRATIVE** - Imagine that you are the speaker in the song. Write down a story based on the song on the title 'The scarred hands.'
2. **DESCRIPTIVE** – Write a descriptive piece about how the speaker of the poem walks through the cotton fields as a child, with his siblings.



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EMY