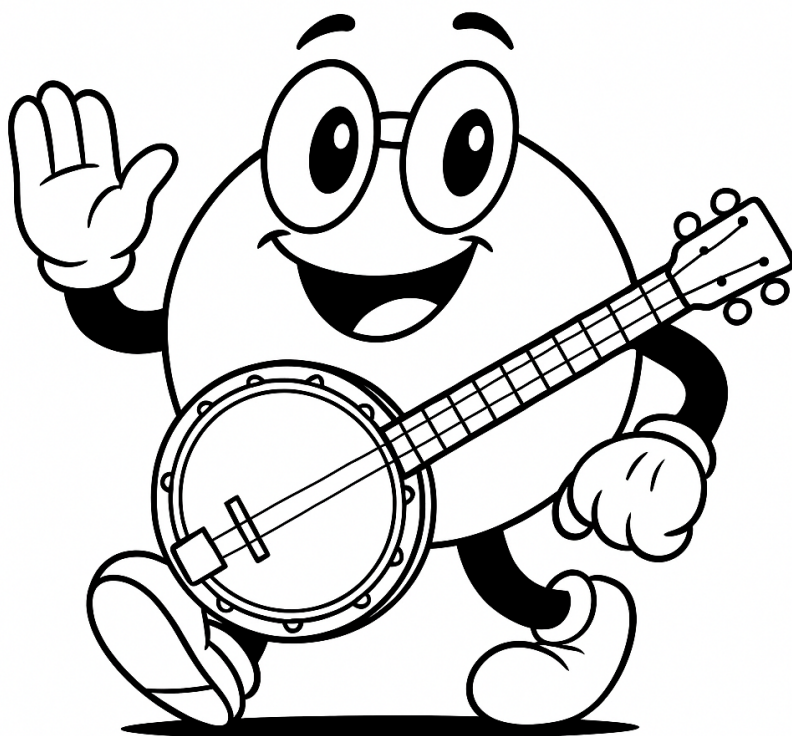


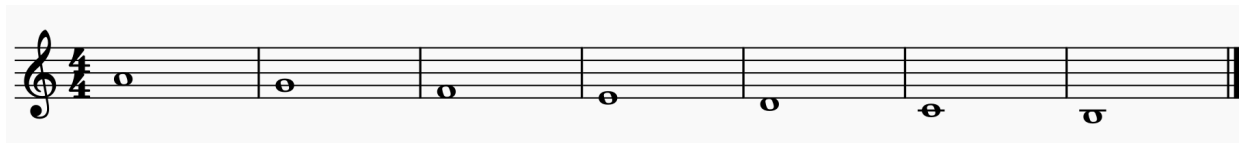
Lesson 44 – Oh, Susanna



Willie grabbed a banjo and plucked a chord: *“I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee.”* The class laughed and clapped along. Willie explained that this American folk song is lively, with verses and refrains that return like a chorus. In 2/4 or 4/4 time, the rhythm keeps it moving like a march. “This song shows how folk music tells stories about travel, love, and hope.”

Warm-Up – Tone Builder

Play the notes in the staff below slowly as **whole notes**, then as **half notes**, and finally as **quarter notes**. Start from the first note as written and go down, then turn around and go back up to the first note in the score. Keep every note steady and focus on producing clean, long tones on your instrument.



Oh, Susanna

1 2 3 5 4 5 4 2 1 2 3 3 2 1 3 1 2

I come from A - la - ba - ma with a ban - jo on my knee. I 'm
It rained all night the day I left The wea - ther it was dry. The sun

6 3 5 4 5 4 2 1 2 3 3 2 2 1 1 2

going to Lou - si - a - na my true love for to see
so hot I froze to death Su - san - na don't you cry.

11 3 3 5 5 5 4 4 2 1 2 1 2

Oh! Su - san - na, oh don't you cry for me. I -

15 3 5 4 5 4 2 1 2 3 3 2 2 1

-come from A - la ba - ma with my ban jo on my knee.

Music Theory

This song is written in **C major** and uses the **4/4 time signature**, which means there are four beats in every measure. It begins with a **pickup note (anacrusis)**, so the first bar is not full but starts the melody early. The tune mostly moves in a **stepwise motion** with some skips, making it easy to sing. The steady quarter-note rhythm helps the song march forward like a walking beat, which matches the lively folk style.

Write the rhythm of “Oh, Susanna” in quarter notes.



Which chord fits the word “Susanna”?

Listening / Ear Training

Did the verses sound bright and lively?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Was the refrain “Oh, Susanna” more energetic than the verses?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the music match the storytelling lyrics?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Music Form

This song begins with a **pickup note**, which leads smoothly into the first full bar. The melody is built from **four-bar phrases**. The first phrase ends with a half cadence that feels open, while the second phrase answers with a full cadence. In the middle, we see a **first-time bar** (1.) that closes the phrase but then repeats back. The **second-time bar** (2.) is different, leading the music forward instead of repeating. The chorus then follows, giving the song its strong and memorable finish.

How does the song begin?

How many bars make one phrase in this song?

What is written at the end of the first repeated section?

How does the second-time bar change the ending?

Where does the chorus bring the music back?

Music History

“Oh, Susanna” was written in **1848 by Stephen Foster**, who is often called the “father of American songwriting.” It quickly became one of the most popular American folk songs, sung at

gatherings, dances, and later during westward expansion. The lively tune and simple refrain helped it travel across the country, making it an important part of American folk history.

Who composed “Oh, Susanna”?

Why did this song become so popular in American folk tradition?

How does a strong refrain help people remember and sing a song together?

Reflection

Reflection – Everyone

Did you enjoy clapping or tapping along to the lively rhythm of this song?

Reflection – Challenge

Which chord is most often used to support the chorus in this song?
