

Song Title: **YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS**

Rating: **YES: Lyrics & YES: Caution**

REVIEWERS' NOTE

The original lyrics of this song imply a mocking or caricature of a "foreign" (Greek) accent. The cover art of the original sheet music also contains a caricature.

However, the song is admissible with the following requirements:

LYRICS: The intro line in the song's original lyrics (not contained in most arrangements) identifying the owner as Greek must be omitted.

CAUTION: Performers must not affect a "foreign" accent.

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What year was this song written? 1923

Who wrote the lyrics? Frank Silver

What did your research tell you about the lyricist?

Frank Silverstadt (1892 – 1960), better known by his stage name Frank Silver, was an American songwriter, jazz drummer and vaudeville performer. He was best known for co-writing and co-composing the popular song "Yes! We Have No Bananas" in 1923 with Irving Cohn. He wrote at least 75 songs in his career.

Early in Silver's career, he conducted orchestras in vaudeville houses and was a drummer in Loew's Metropolitan Theatre's orchestra. After those jobs, he toured with his own 12-piece band, playing one-night stands. He also performed with the Hitchy-Koo traveling revue of Raymond Hitchcock and worked at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

What other material has been written by this lyricist?

He is most known for this song. Other songs that Silver wrote included "Icky Wicky Woo" and "What Do We Get from Boston? (Beans, Beans, Beans)".

Who is the composer of this song? Irving Cohn

What did your research tell you about the composer?

Irving Cohn (1898 – 1961) was a British-American songwriter, best known for "Yes! We Have No Bananas", which he co-wrote with Frank Silver in 1923. He is sometimes credited as Irving Conn.

What other material has been written by this composer?

He was most known for this song. I could find no others listed.

Please provide a link to the song lyrics.

[Yes, We Have No Bananas Lyrics - Louis Prima](#)

Who and what is this song about, as originally intended by the composer and earlier performers?

It is about a shopkeeper who does not want to tell a customer no, so they come up with a creative way of telling the customer no bananas are available.

What did you learn about the history OF THE SONG?

Frank Silver explained the origin of the song to Time Magazine: "I am an American, of Jewish ancestry, with a wife and a young son. About a year ago my little orchestra was playing at a Long Island hotel. To and from the hotel I was wont to stop at a fruit stand owned by a Greek, who began every sentence with 'Yess'. The jingle of his idiom haunted me and my friend Cohn. Finally I wrote this verse and Cohn fitted it with a tune."

The song was the theme of the outdoor relief protests in Belfast in 1932. These were a unique example of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland protesting together, and the song was used because it was one of the few non-sectarian songs that both communities knew. The song lent its title to a book about the depression in Belfast.

The shopkeeper who said "Yes! We Have No Bananas" and inspired this song, may have been one of the many affected by a worldwide crash in the banana crop caused by Panama disease.

The song became so popular that it spawned a song lamenting the singing of the song: [I've Got the Yes! We Have No Bananas Blues](#)

The term has been resurrected on many occasions, including during rationing in the United Kingdom in World War II, when the British government banned imports of bananas for five years. Shop owners put signs stating "Yes, we have no bananas" in their shop windows in keeping with the war spirit

Share a link to the earliest performance of this song that you can find.

[Original versions of Yes! We Have No Bananas written by Frank Silver, Irving Cohn | SecondHandSongs](#)

Does any illustration or other characteristic of the original sheet music reflect an inappropriate theme? Yes

Please explain why the illustrations ARE or ARE NOT problematic.

The cover art shows a Greek man with an unrealistic long mustache that is more of a caricature.
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2778&context=mmb-vp>

Please supply the links to any additional sources you used for this section of research.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yes!_We_Have_No_Bananas

Did this song, originally or subsequently, demean a marginalized racial/cultural group (a group considered at a social disadvantage) through idiomatic expressions, metaphors,

jargon, or message? And/or does the song present a sanitized/idyllic or false narrative regarding the American South and the life of the enslaved or newly freed? Unsure

Please explain your reasoning for the answer above and indicate if your group feels the song should not be performed by Sweet Adelines.

The original recording and lyrics are sung with a Greek accent... perhaps making fun. The accent is not pertinent to the lyric and could be removed by the performer.

Additional Questions to Consider (do not pertain to Admissibility)

The remaining questions pertain to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion issues other than those of race. As such, **THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT AFFECT A SONG'S ADMISSIBILITY**. They are provided to encourage your group to consider factors that may affect members of your audience and/or your performers with regard to religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and more. ***Please refer to the Music Choices section of [Chapter Choices to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) (in the [Chorus Toolkit](#)) for details and strategies related to these factors.***

Could the message/lyrics of the song, original or subsequent, limit any singer or audience member's ability to engage, related to the following? A YES answer does not imply that the song is demeaning or exclusionary. [Please see instructions here.](#)

Age: No

Disability: No

Gender: No

Religion: No

Sexual Orientation: No

Visible Physical Difference: No

Other? No

Are there any adjustments to the lyrics that would make it more inclusive or current to our chorus culture or societal norms?

As noted in the Reviewers' Note at the top of this document, the intro line identifying the shop owner as Greek should be omitted.

Are there any other comments you want to provide or is there other information you think might be useful about this song?

A follow up song was written and performed in black face. The follow up song was NOT written by the same lyricist and composer.