

mainly literary

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What Makes the Stars in a Sky Of Blues?

"Blues, blues, blues, 'bout to git a hol' on me" . . . This is the sad lament of a heartbroken woman as she stumbles drunkenly down the streets of New Orleans, the homeplace of the blues.

The "Blues" has been defined by W. C. Handy, father of the blues, as the poignant and sad lament of the Negro who bewails his sad fate in society. It is a song in which the first two lines are the same and the last one rhymes with the first two.

The Southern Negro lived on, for, and by the blues. He was an oppressed person who bemoaned his fate in songs. One such song told of the unfairness of the white boss:

"Our father which art in heaven, white man owes me
'leven gives me seven.
Thy kingdom come, they will be done.
If I hadn't tuck it, I wouldn't 'a got none."

Some Negroes felt that if they could get away from the cities of South, they would have a better opportunity in life. Those who had no money with which to leave would sing songs like this:

"When a woman gits the blues lord,
She hangs her head and cries.
When a woman gits the blues lord,
She hangs her head and cries.
But when a man gets the blues,
He grabs a train and rides."

Some turned to the death theme as a means of escape. Their lament would be a song like this one:

"Goin down to the river, set down on the ground.
Goin' down to the river, set down on the ground.
If the blues overtake me, jump overboard and drown.

In the Northern part of the United States, Negroes obsessed with self-preservation, thought of the white race as their mortal enemy. The youth would cause riots, join gangs and cause damage to valuable property. They cockily resented the haughty ways of the white man . . . They sang songs like this:

"All them white folks dressed up fine.
They ass-holes smell jest like mine."

People who are oppressed usually develop a complex of some sort. If a woman had to earn a living selling her body, she learned to hide her "guilt complex," and pretended not to care about what she did.

This song is typical of the many that she may have sung:

"My house is dirty, floors aint never clean.
House is dirty, floors aint never clean.
I aint got no husband ,
But I got a dozen married men."

The musician also played a part in the development of blues. Although his type of blues was designated as jazz, he felt the same emotions that the singer felt. He played for the people, all of the people, even the white man who laughed and enjoyed his music. He also laughed, but he laughed not with the white man, but at him.

Some Negroes who had been disappointed by the obsession that they saw in the people of the North, would forget about the hardships of the South, and long to return there. This song is an example of this:

"Goin' back to St. Louie,
Goin' back to St. Louie,
Goin' back to St. Louie,
Where I belong."

Bessie Smith, one of the greatest blues singers who ever lived, sang from her heart of the hardships and disappointments that she faced. Billie Holiday and Ethel Waters followed in her footsteps, wrenching tears from the eyes of the people who heard them.

Blues are not just songs that can be sung by anyone, but they are songs of people who have been oppressed too long. As one man puts it, "You take oppression, obsession, and depression and put them to to music, you got yourself some blues."

elister carmichael

WHY

The sand is leaving the dry, wintry land
And the sun is young in a cloudless sky
As the world takes another useless stand
On the unanswered question, "Why?"
Why try to learn about historic man
Or why try to discover another globe
When life on earth is a bird in hand
Where man will never regain his primitive role.
Why try to encourage world-wide peace
When all the summit talks have not brought relief
Or why try to keep a good, unblemished name
When it seems that no act can bring shame.
Why die for a cause like Viet Nam
If the panic signal comes from Uncle Sam
Or why strive to reach goals beyond the stars
If many problems make more bars?
Why get married and rear some kids
If happiness follows the highest bids
Or why scrimp and save and go to school
If someone on the outside calls you fool
Why experiment to find new cures
If the old ones did not endure
Or why bother to live at all
When peak achievement results in a fall.
Why not ask why to all things?
Things are known because of the answered why
Why not know why the why is asked
If an endless struggle is your task.

laura gilmore

The Late Company
"B"

Company "B," temporarily in reserve, had been in Korea about two months located in a small village called TISU-Chi. Here the men of Company "B" had daily, rigid training. Every morning with their field packs strapped to their backs, a golden yellow dust from mother earth on their boots, their turtle-shaped helmets of steel on their heads, with long facial expressions, they came, jumped and crawled through barbed wire obstacles and assimilated mine fields. They had carved in their mind, the significance of their rigid training.

One hot and unusually quite afternoon in the month of May, Captain Applehead, the Commanding officer of Company "B", received orders and instructions to launch a surprise attack on a small band of mal-equipped enemy soldiers, who were occupying a village about eight miles from TISU-Chi down the Hann river.

The next morning about 0400 hours, Sgt. Bigpig, the first Sgt. of Company "B", who had a wedge-shaped body and a voice which seemed to have made the whole earth vibrate when he spoke, went from man to man, checking his clothes, his equipment, and barking out orders. The men of Company "B", wearing their combat uniform of green, yellow, and brown stripes, were loaded on two U.S.T.S. The two huge monsters of steel moved smoothly, cutting their way through the blue-grey water of the Hann River, carrying the men of Company "B" to their objective. As they drew closer to the occupied valley, no one talked and no one moved about; only perspiration, like large white beads, stripped from their faces.

At 0500 hours, the red warning light flashed three times. "Zero hour-disembark." Captain Applehead warned, "Remember, no one will fire his weapon until the order is given by me." With fixed bayonets and their weapons at ready, the iron men of Company "B" advanced swiftly toward the enemy. Captain Applehead rendered hand signals for the men to take a certain position. One man, running to his position, accidentally fell down, releasing the trigger on his automatic weapon. This emitted a volley of hot bullets that echoed through the quietness of the valley. Simultaneously, machine gun fire, hand grenades, mortar and artillery rounds rained upon Company "B" like a tropical hail storm. No one could escape. Company "B" was totally annihilated.

david franklin

FINAL EXAMS . . .
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a few days, last minute reports, last minute exams, last minute readings, last minute studying—as a matter-of-fact it is "last-minute time."

But there is a bright side to it. For the Seniors, it means the beginning of a new life. For juniors, it means another step closer to their goal. To sophomores, it means another mile run. To freshmen, it means one down, three more to go. For instructors, it means another year added to their "years of experience," and to us all, it means **School Is Out.**

JUST ONE LOOK

It was my first visit to that grand and adorable city of New York. The closer I got to New York, the more nervous I became. The tall large, beautiful skyscrapers were magnificent. As I approached the dark, dim, and unfamiliarities of Port Authority, I gazed anxiously at the iridescent clothing of the many people. Suddenly, I glimpsed a young lady with long, black, beautiful hair, wearing a green dress, and a pair of green shoes. It was my aunt who had come to meet me. I was in a new and entirely different environment. The smells of the horrible odors penetrated the unbearable atmosphere. There was the unpleasant appearance of gamblers, roaming through the dark streets and alleys, searching for the unfortunate individual with an overgrown wallet.

I had come to New York seeking employment. During the long, hot, dry, and dreary days, I walked and walked from section to section with great anxiety searching for a job. I had to have working papers before I could work, since I was under 18 years of age. I could obtain working papers from the nearest high school which was Hempstead High School. As the days passed, I continued to look for a job and finally I got a job in a restaurant. I still did not have working papers, so my boss man, who was quite large, but friendly and courteous, gave me permission to leave to go to Hempstead High School, and to get my working papers; meanwhile, I would still be getting paid. I had a problem. Where was Hempstead High School and how would I get to Hempstead High School? I thought about a cab, so I walked hastily to the cab stand and called a taxi. The calm, smooth, and pleasant, voice of the young lady who answered the telephone asked, "Where are you and where do you want to go?" I told her and in a more sarcastic tone she began to ask, if I really wanted a cab. Over and over again she asked until in a harsh manner, I replied, "If I knew where it was, I would not be calling a cab." The cab arrived, and the driver in a rude manner asked, "Are you sure you want a cab to Hempstead High School?" I replied, "I'm sure." I got in the old, ugly, ragged cab and slammed the door. The cab driver drove about 300 feet and said, "This is Hempstead High School." I looked up and sure enough I stood in front of a very large, beautiful, brick building with a huge sign saying, "Hempstead High School." I had walked by the school in the hot sun all day the day before, and I had raced by the school on my way to the taxi stand. I had lost a dollar because I did not take "JUST ONE LOOK."

marvin hinton

MISHAPS WITH A CAR

I will always remember the misery my friend and I experienced on a winter night. We were parked in a deserted territory and the car would not start. While waiting for the car to start, icicles formed on the windows and tires. The cold wind blew into the car, which also had poor installation. Snow began to fall in abundance and we could hear the ground freezing.

Thinking over the situation, I decided to try the starter again—no success, of course. Stepping outside, without suitable clothing, I felt the paralyzing snow drifting into my body. After viewing the situation on the outside, I saw that the car had rooted into the deep snow. I returned to the car and discussed the situation with my friend. We decided to prepare for a long journey on foot. At first, she objected, but finally, she agreed that it was the best thing to do.

Abandoning the car, we walked a mile to seek help. During our walk we could feel the cold wind blowing on our bleak faces. Our feet felt like frozen fish. Seeing a light in a nearby house, we obtained help. Fortunately, the man owned a tractor which he used to start the car. To be paralyzed by snow is a feeling that I do not want to experience again.

larry mcmillan

I DON'T KNOW WHEN, MY DEAR

I don't know when I can chat with you my dear,
For time is not a friend to render pleasure anymore;
Besides, I've lost that alluring lure
With my choice of words that used to charm you so,
And for my inconsistency you would probably find me boring.

I don't know when I'll take you out my dear,
For I've lost the glow of dressing that you thought so appealing.
It's that, time is not a friend to render pleasure anymore,
And the dressing to which I now adhere would not make your
Outing thrilling.

I don't know when I'll write to you my dear;
Though I love you, it's an onerous endeavor to convey my feelings.
At any rate, what I say would not bring you more delight,
For time is not a friend to render pleasure anymore;
To tell you troubles would be misplacing, for
Delightful writing requires a joyful plight.

I don't know when I'll see you again my dear,
For I'm not at will to be vagrant and to roam
As I was when time was a dearest friend in yesterdays back home.
That all my dear, has passed, and timeful pleasures have closed
Their doors,
And time is not a friend to render pleasure anymore.

leon dockery