

# I'm Gwine Home on de Mornin' Train

## As you read...

"I'm Gwine Home on de Mornin' Train" is an African American spiritual from the John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip collection at the Library of Congress.

John Lomax was a folklorist and musicologist (person who studies music) who traveled throughout the U.S. making field recordings of American folk music. In 1939, he and his wife, Ruby Lomax, made a trip through the southern states and recorded more than 300 performers, representing a diverse array of traditional musical styles, including ballads, blues, children's songs, cowboy songs, fiddle tunes, field hollers, lullabies, play-party songs, religious dramas, spirituals, and work songs.

"I'm Gwine Home on de Mornin' Train" is a folk spiritual, part of an African American song tradition that arose during slavery. Spirituals were created by slaves using elements of African music such as clapping, drumming, repetition of lyrics, and call-and-response to express their religion and their experiences as slaves.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. We know that many of these songs were sung by people as they worked. Think about the tempo and the tone of this song. How might this song have encouraged people to continue working even though they were tired or discouraged?
2. These spirituals contained references to Christianity, but also to slavery. In what ways could the lyrics have referred to experiences of slavery?

## Listen

This media is available in the web edition only.

## Lyrics

I'm goin' home on the morning train  
Well I'm goin' home on the morning train

I'm goin' home on the morning train  
If you don't see me you can hear me singing  
All of my sins been taken away, taken away  
    Sister Mary wore three lengths of chain  
Sister Mary she wore three lengths of chain  
Sister Mary she wore three lengths of chain  
Every length was Jesus' name  
All of my sins been taken away, taken away  
    The tallest tree in paradise  
Tallest tree in paradise  
Tallest tree in paradise  
The Christians call it the tree of life,  
All of my sins been taken away, taken away  
    Jordan deep, and Jordan wide  
Jordan deep, and Jordan wide  
Jordan deep, and Jordan wide  
Chill my body but not my soul  
All of my sins been taken away, taken away

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