1. **Classroom Rituals**  
   Make songs a part of your school day.  
   • Sing songs about America every day at morning meeting.  
   • Sing the days of the week and months of the year.  
   • Sing a goodbye song at the end of the day (e.g. *Sing Your Way Home, So Long It's Been Good to Know Ya*)

2. **Song as Read Aloud**  
   Treat the song as you would a read aloud. Chart what they already know about the topic. Get them thinking about the topic before they hear the song or lyrics.

3. **The Rhythm Approach**  
   Rhythm: Clap the beats (Remember to pat knees and stamp feet, too!) Great for counting syllables.

4. **Part Singing**  
   Break class into groups and have them sing different parts of the song. Group 1 might sing the verse while Group 2 might sing the chorus. Or perhaps, as in *Crawdad Song*, Group 1 sings the song and Group 2 provides the echo. The combinations are limitless!

5. **The Visual Arts**  
   Children can illustrate different parts of the song. Let students choose their favorite line or lines from a song and interpret the line by drawing, collage or any art form you like. I've used this approach with *Garden Song*!

6. **Vocabulary Enhancement**  
   Introduce vocabulary. Folk songs are filled with words that ESL and other students might not be familiar with.

7. **Choral Reading**  
   Divide the lyrics of the song into lines for solo, small group, and unison reading and read the lyrics to the song as if it were a poem.
8. Identifying parts of Speech
Identify rhyming words, nouns, verbs or transitional words. Have students become song detectives and look for clues in the song’s lyrics that let you know the song is a dream, or tell you where the song takes place, etc.

10. Creative Drama
Have the students determine the who, what, where, and why of a song and have them act out the characters and situation in the song. For instance, in *Crawdad Song* there are many dramatic possibilities. 1) Children cast their line into the water, catch a crawdad, and reel it in. 2) After talking about how crawdads move and what they do, children become crawdads in a lake.

11. Creative Movement and Animal Behavior
Discuss with students the differences between how a fox moves and how a goose moves. How does a fox move when it is sneaking up on its prey? How does a goose move when it is frightened? Begin students on one end of the carpet and have them walk to the other side as if they are foxes. Then, have the students switch characters and move to the other side of the carpet as if they are frightened geese.

12. The Recording Studio
Record your children singing! No need for fancy equipment! Use your iphone for a microphone and then plug it into the audio jack of your smartboard so that students can hear their voices amplified. This technique gives the students an opportunity to self-critique.

13. Here Come the Songwriters!
Make up your own verses with the children. Ex. She’ll be Comin’ Round the Mountain (hoppin’, swimmin’ flyin’, jumpin’!) One group does action while others sing.

Use the reverse side of this paper to write down some of your own ideas for using songs in the classroom!

Some songs I have used in my classroom:
• Songs About America: (Who will teach them if you don’t?)
America, the Beautiful
The Star Spangled Banner
America (My Country 'tis of Thee)
This Land is Your Land

- Animal Songs:
  - Crawdad Song
  - The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night
  - Down by the Bay

- Story Songs
  - Oh! Susanna
  - Grandfather's Clock
  - Puff the Magic Dragon
  - When I first Came to this Land
  - The Big Rock Candy Mountain
  - Sweet Betsy from Pike

- Anytime Songs
  - Lavender's Blue
  - Polly Wolly Doodle
  - You are my Sunshine
  - Keep on the Sunny Side
  - Home on the Range

- Black History Songs
  - We Shall Overcome
  - The Drinking Gourd
  - The Harriet Tubman Song
  - Pick A Bale of Cotton
  - Children Go Where I Send Thee (Kids LOVE this song!)
• Goodbye Songs
  o Sing Your Way Home
  o So Long it's been Good to Know Ya

• St Patrick's Day
  o Molly Malone
  o Look to the Rainbow (from Finian’s Rainbow)
  o Tell My Ma

• Spring Songs:
  o Garden Song
  o I Made A Friend Of A Flower Today

• Train Songs
  o Wabash Cannon Ball
  o Freight Train
  o I’ve Been Workin’ on the Railroad

*****

There is a multitude of folk song anthologies published and on the internet. The following three song books are three of my favorites. I just checked on Amazon and all three books are available at super-low second hand prices. The Agay and Boni anthologies have chord symbols AND easy to play piano accompaniments. The Silverman anthologies have the chord symbols and melody lines – and over 1,000 fantastic songs!


Any questions, please email Debra at bessiem@aol.com