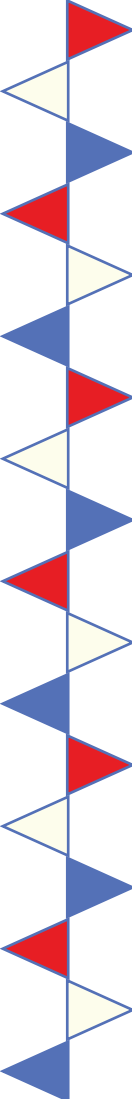


# Examine the Song "My Country 'Tis of Thee"

"My Country 'Tis of Thee" is an American patriotic song. Samuel Francis Smith wrote the song in 1831. It was the unofficial national anthem of the United States before the official adoption of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1931. It's not surprising that the tune in "My Country 'Tis of Thee" is from the British national anthem "God Save the King/Queen." We cannot be sure if Smith knew about this connection at the time.

Smith wrote this child-friendly version of the song based on older versions from Europe. The idea was to have children sing a song that was easier to understand than other patriotic songs. The first time students sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee" was on July 4, 1831. They sang it at a children's choir performance at the Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

## "My Country 'Tis of Thee"




My country 'tis of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing.  
Land where my fathers died!  
Land of the Pilgrim's pride!  
From every mountainside,  
Let freedom ring!

My native country, thee,  
Land of the noble free,  
Thy name I love.  
I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills;  
My heart with **rapture** fills  
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,  
And ring from all the trees  
Sweet freedom's song.  
Let mortal tongues awake;  
Let all that breathe **partake**;  
Let rocks their silence break,  
The sound prolong.

Our father's God to Thee,  
Author of liberty,  
To Thee we sing.  
Long may our land be bright  
With freedom's holy light;  
Protect us by Thy might,  
Great God, our King!



### Vocabulary Terms

**patriotic:** showing love that a person feels for their country

**'tis of thee:** it is about you

**rills:** a small stream cut in the surface of rocks or soil

**thee:** you

**thy:** your

# Examine the Song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”

**Directions:** Use the text and the song to help you make inferences and answer these questions.

Quote or refer to the texts in your answers.

Possible student answers.



1. Use context clues to determine the meaning of the word *rapture* in the second verse.

Rapture means a strong emotion or love. The second verse says, “Thy name I love” and mentions the word love a lot. So, the author’s heart is “fill(ing)” with love or adoration.

2. Why is it “unsurprising” that the tune of this song is similar to the British national anthem?

The British and the new United States had a long history. In 1813, the United States had won their independence less than 50 years earlier. Europe still had a strong influence on the new country. Also, many countries were inspired by other songs when writing new or improved versions. The author in the explanation of the song even mentions that Smith wrote “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” based on other versions in Europe.

3. Why does the author describe “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” as a patriotic song?

The word patriotic means “showing love that a person feels for their country.” This poem is all about the “love” the writer feels for their country, from the “woods and templed hills” to the “sweet land of liberty” all the words the author uses to describe the country are full of adoration. It also mentions “land where my fathers died” which can hint at recent wars, or just their growing history in the country.

4. The author says “Let all that breathe *partake*” in the third verse. What does the author want?

The author wants everyone to use their breathe to take part, or partake, in the singing. The song is about their pride in their country, so the author may ultimately want people to love the country as much as the writer does. The words “Let mortal tongues wake” talks about other people singing too.

5. Why would the song mention God and “Protect us by Thy might” in the fourth verse?

The author says that God is the “Author of liberty” in the song. The writer has a strong faith in God and believes that God will protect the country. Since the song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” was so popular for so long, I think the country believed in God, especially because of the reference to Pilgrims in the first verse. The Pilgrims were Christians trying to find a place where they could worship the way they wanted to.

6. What is the theme of the song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”?

A theme for the song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” could be that people should show their love and appreciation for their country. They can show this love by singing about their love “from every mountainside.”