

THE OKEE DOKEE BROTHERS

Who are The Okee Dokee Brothers?

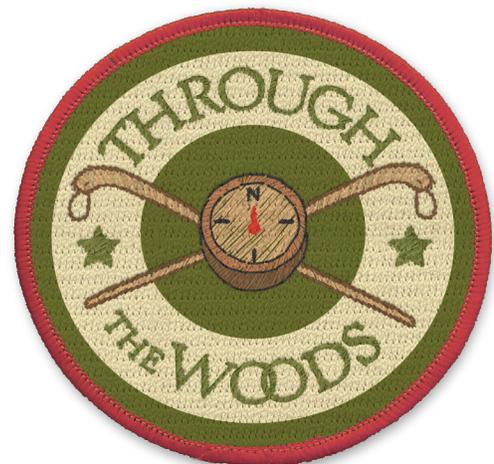
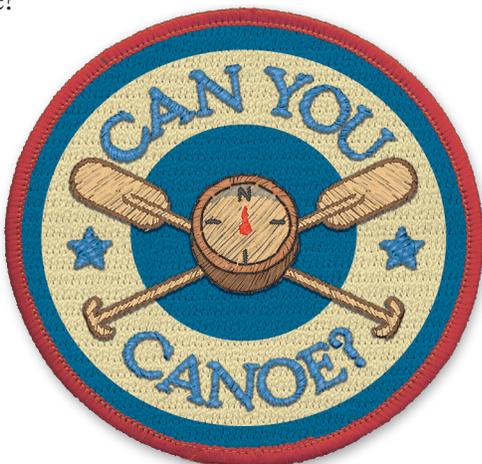
Our real names are Joe and Justin. We're not really brothers but we've known each other since we were three years old! We grew up together in Denver, Colorado, and we were always exploring the outdoors. Whether it was rafting down the neighborhood creek, taking long bike rides into the country, or discovering hiking trails through the Rocky Mountains, we loved taking **adventures**. Now, as The Okee Dokee Brothers, we're sharing our love of the outdoors through the music we make.

We think that kids and families deserve quality music. We make family music with a goal to inspire children and their parents to get outside and experience nature. We believe this can motivate people to gain a greater respect for the natural world, their communities, and themselves.

What's an Adventure Album?

So far, we have released two adventure albums: *Can You Canoe?: A Mississippi River Adventure* and *Through the Woods: An Appalachian Adventure*. An **Adventure Album** is a collection of songs that are directly inspired by a particular place or experience.

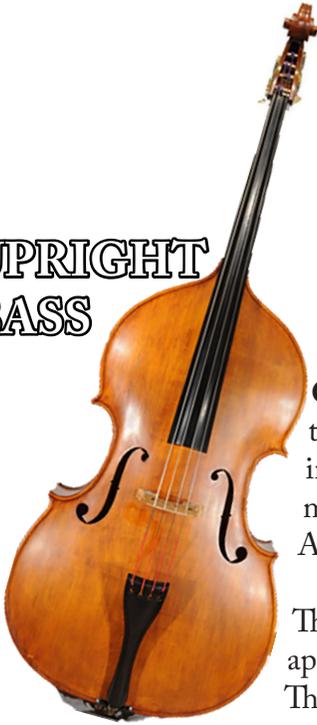
There's an old saying that goes something like "write about what you know." We decided that the best way to write a collection of songs about an adventure is to actually have that adventure in real life! Of course, you don't have to canoe down a river or hike through the mountains to find **inspiration** for your own adventures. You can start by simply exploring the world around you; the world that you know. Go to a park or take a walk through your neighborhood, an adventure can be anywhere! What ways do you interact with nature?



What is Folk Music?

Folk music was traditionally known as the music of the working classes, usually passed down from generation to generation. Originally, folk songs weren't written down, but were shared by word of mouth. This means that the creators of many folk songs are unknown. It also means the songs have evolved over time, changing with each person who sings them in his or her own style!

UPRIGHT
BASS



What are Old-Time and Bluegrass Music?

Old-Time music was inspired by the music of the Appalachian Mountains. It has mixed roots in Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and English traditional music. It was later influenced by the music of African-Americans through incorporation of blues elements.

The music we know as **Bluegrass** is actually relatively new. It appeared in the 1940s, with a band called the Bluegrass Boys. They combined elements of Old-Time music, folk, country, and blues to create a music that is still popular today!



MANDOLIN

This music is traditionally played with acoustic instruments like the guitar, the fiddle, the five-string banjo, the upright bass, and the mandolin.



FIDDLE

Which Type do We play?

Technically, we aren't playing purely Folk, Old-Time, or Bluegrass music. We believe our songs are a mix of these styles, as well as other influences. A good classification for our music would be Roots or Americana music. Just as American musicians have done for centuries, we use the many types of music that have come before us to find our own path and craft our own sound.



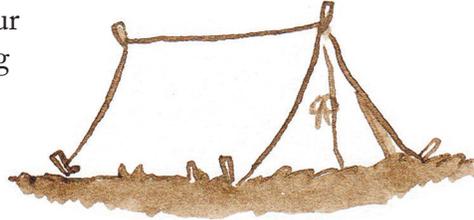
BANJO

GUITAR

The Mississippi River

“The Father of Waters”

Our first adventure album, *Can You Canoe?*, was written on a 30-day **canoe** trip down the Mississippi River. The river starts at Lake Itasca, in Minnesota, and flows south into the Gulf of Mexico. Did you know it takes a drop of water around 90 days to travel the entire river? That’s an awfully long time to be in a canoe, so we decided we’d only canoe the Upper Mississippi River, which stretches from Lake Itasca to Saint Louis, Missouri. Our canoe trip lasted thirty days, during which time we camped along the river and wrote songs.

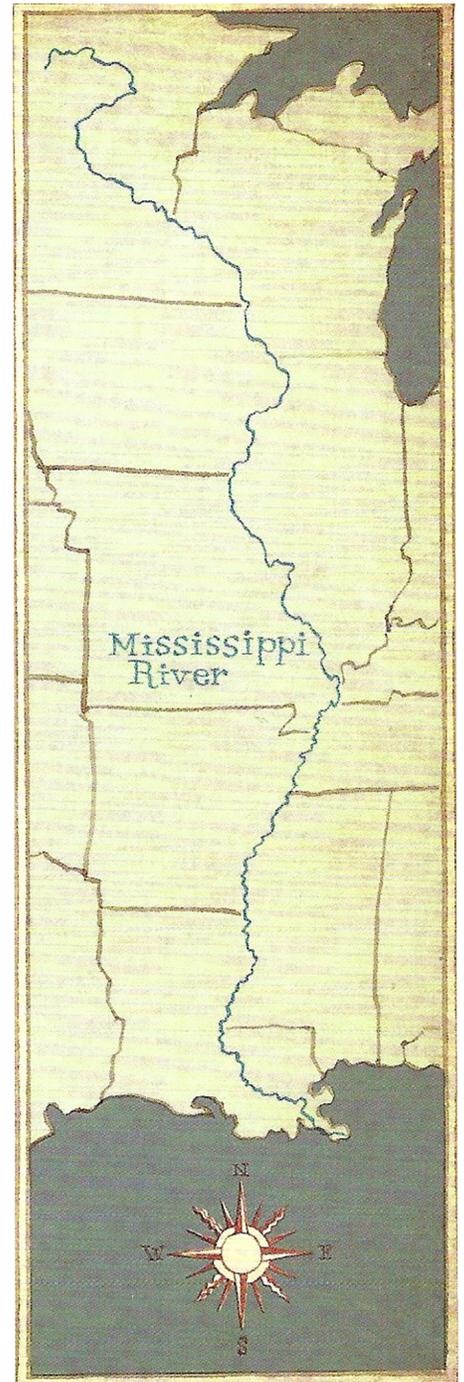


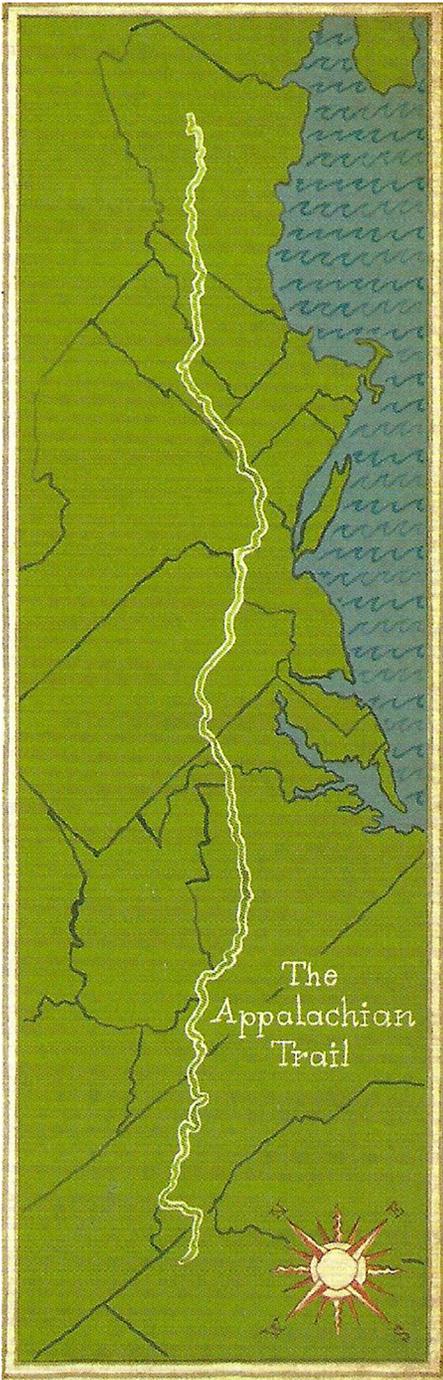
Even though it’s made of water, the Mississippi often functions like a highway! Large boats, known as barges, transport goods from destination to destination. And since so many other rivers flow into the Mississippi (these are called tributaries), the barges can travel a very long distance! Our canoes were very small compared to those large barges, so we stayed well out of their way.

The Mississippi River is the 4th longest river in the world. It’s 2552 miles long! The River runs through, or borders, ten states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Canoeing the Upper Mississippi meant we traveled through Minnesota, along Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri.

Canoeing is quite a workout! Not only are you using **paddles** to propel the canoe forward in the water, but the paddles also steer the craft left and right. That can be trickier than it sounds when the river’s current is strong. We kept all of our **gear** in the canoes, too, so everything was packed in waterproof bags just in case we tipped!

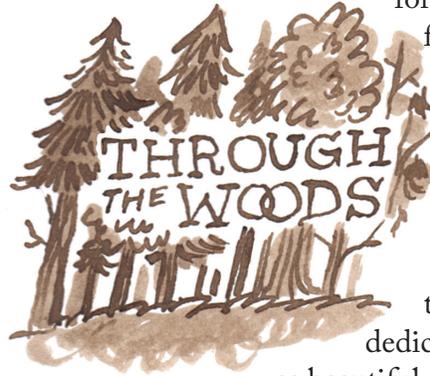
CAN YOU CANOE?





The Appalachian Trail

For our second adventure album, *Through the Woods*, we turned our attention to the Appalachian Mountains. We wanted to **hike** and explore the wilderness and cultures along the Appalachian Trail. Like the Mississippi, the Appalachian Trail (or the AT) is very long: It stretches through 14 different states, and is about 2,180 miles from start to finish. Also, the total elevation gain from Georgia to Maine is the same as climbing Mount Everest 16 times! Walking the full trail usually takes anywhere from five to seven months.



Of course, the AT is also very accessible for **hikers** who don't want to hike the full trail. In fact, it's so easy to just hike sections of the trail that two to three million people hike a portion of it each year! The AT is over 80 years old (it was created in 1937)... so that's a lot of visitors! In addition to the millions of people who visit the trail, the AT is cared for by thousands of dedicated volunteers. They help keep the trail as beautiful as they found it, so that it can continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Aside from the elements, there are also a lot of animals along the trail. One of the largest is the black bear. Black bears will eat almost anything. They mostly eat grass, roots, berries, fish and insects, but can easily develop a taste for human foods and garbage left by campers. We didn't see any black bears, but we did encounter a herd of wild ponies. Ponies look like small horses who are in desperate need of a haircut! We also encountered some of the millions of hikers... (luckily not all at the same time). Most people who hike the trail wind up acquiring a trail nickname. These are usually descriptive and humorous nicknames, like "Slow and Steady," "Tumbleweed," and "Pack Rat". We gave ourselves nicknames too: Joe was "Flatfoot" on account of his clogging skills, and Justin was "Cricket."

We hiked for thirty days along parts of the trail in Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina. We carried everything we needed in our backpacks: tents, clothes, food, and cooking gear. Because the AT meanders through 14 different states, the natural surroundings vary greatly. Sometimes the weather was hot and humid, while other times the weather was very cold and rainy. All of these environmental changes meant we had to pack more gear. Hiking all day with a heavy backpack is hard work!



Before the Performance

Listen to the songs, “**Echo**”, “Can You Canoe?”, and “Jamboree.” What instruments can you identify?



Acoustic vs Electric: There are many differences between Acoustic and Electric instruments, but here are the basics: An acoustic instrument sounds rich and musical without being plugged into an **amplifier**. An electric instrument will make a dull sound if it is not amplified. Although our instruments are plugged into speakers to make their sounds louder, all the instruments you’ll see and hear at our show are acoustic. We play acoustic instruments, because our style of music is traditionally played acoustically. The original bluegrass and folk musicians didn’t play on electric guitars or fiddles either!

Readily-available instruments: A lot of traditional folk music occurred in parts of the country where manufactured instruments were scarce and hard to come by. But this didn’t stop people from making music, it just meant they had to be creative and use what was on hand! Simple (yet effective) percussion instruments were made from what people had in their homes.

The **Spoons** are often heard in bluegrass songs. They are literally two spoons held in one hand and clacked together, either against a knee or the other hand. Almost everyone has two spoons at their house.

An alternative to the Spoons are the **Bones**. Like the name suggests, these were originally two rib bones that were clacked together in one hand. While most modern Bones are often made of smooth wood, some are still made from actual cow bones!

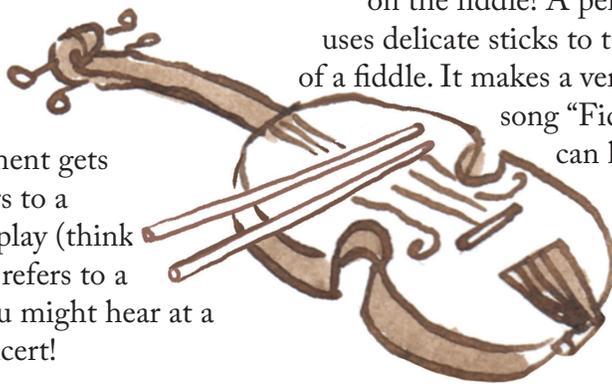
Another percussion instrument is the **Washboard**. The washboard is a ribbed piece of metal set between two pieces of wood that was used for scrubbing and washing laundry. The person playing the Washboard puts thimbles (a sewing tool, sort of like a finger helmet, to prevent being poked by the needle!) on their index finger and thumb, then runs their fingers up and down the ribs of the Washboard.



One instrument that most of us take for granted is our feet! In Appalachia, **Clogging**, or Flatfooting, is both a style of dance and a means of making music. Clogging is considered the oldest form of street dancing, and tap dancing is actually a clogging style. Old-Time music was originally played to accompany cloggers, and now it’s not unusual to see a clogger as a member of a band.

What's the difference between a violin and a fiddle?

Here's a secret: a violin and a fiddle are the same instrument! The difference is how that instrument gets played. The term "violin" refers to a classier, more formal style of play (think orchestras). The term "fiddle" refers to a more folksy style, the type you might hear at a barn dance or a bluegrass concert!



Fiddlesticks are like playing the drums on the fiddle! A person playing the fiddlesticks uses delicate sticks to tap out a rhythm on the strings of a fiddle. It makes a very unique sound. Listen to our song "Fiddlestick Joe," and see if you can hear the fiddlesticks being played.

Now that you've learned about some new instruments, try listening to some songs again.
Did you catch anything you didn't hear the first time?

During the Performance

Listen for: Which instruments can you hear? Can you identify the **verses**? the **choruses**?

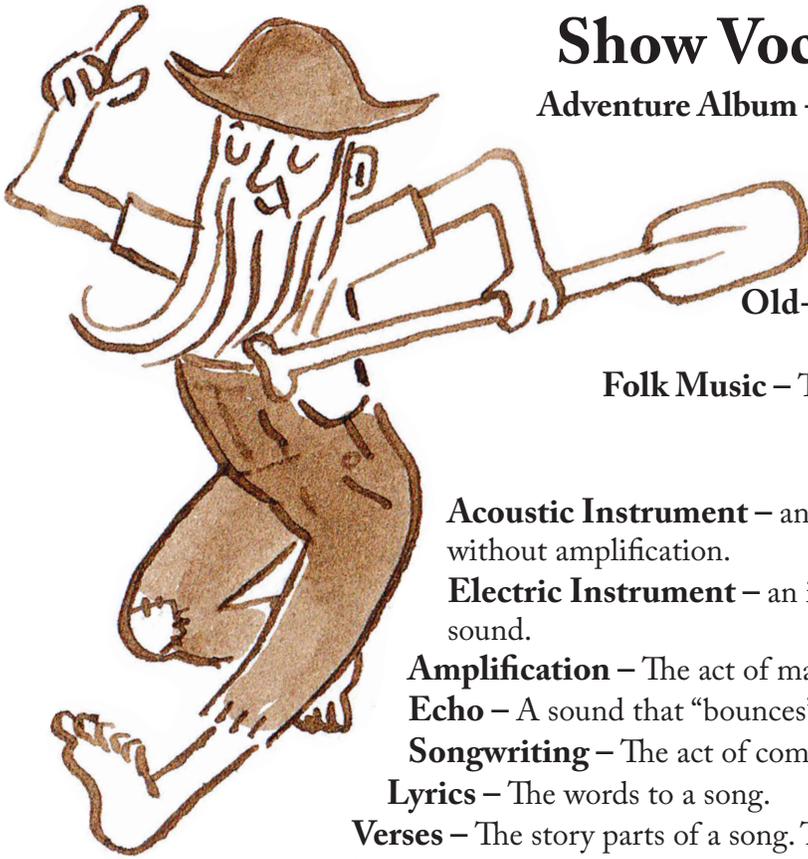
Watch for: Who sings which songs? Who's playing which instrument?

ECHO
ECHO
ECHO
ECHO

After the Show / Ideas for Discussion

- What instruments did you see? Which was your favorite? Why?
- Which song did you like the most? Why?
- Give yourself a nickname for the Appalachian Trail. Why did you pick the name you did?
- If you could write an adventure song, what would it be? Where would you go?
- What gear would you bring with you on an adventure? How would you choose? Would it all fit in your backpack?





Show Vocab

Adventure Album – A collection of music written about & inspired by an outdoor adventure.

Inspiration – The reason to create art, whether that's writing a song, drawing, painting, or building something.

Old-Time Music – Music inspired by the music of the Appalachian mountains.

Folk Music – Traditional music. Used as a means to tell stories.

Acoustic Instrument – an instrument that sounds rich and musical without amplification.

Electric Instrument – an instrument that must be amplified to make sound.

Amplification – The act of making something louder.

Echo – A sound that “bounces” from a surface back to the listener.

Songwriting – The act of composing lyrics and/or music.

Lyrics – The words to a song.

Verses – The story parts of a song. Typically non-repeating.

Chorus – The part of a song that is repeated several times and delivers the main message of the song.

Melody – The main musical part of a song.

Harmony – Slight variations to the melody, added to make a richer sound.

Yodel – A style of singing where the voice shifts quickly from low to high.

Clogging – Using your feet to make the beat for music. A style of dancing.

Bones – A form of percussion, played with the hands. Originally actual bones, now usually made out of wood.

Spoons – A form of percussion; two spoons clacked together.

Fiddlesticks – Delicate sticks that are used to tap out a rhythm on the strings of a fiddle.

Canoe – A narrow boat with pointed ends. Often made from materials like aluminum, wood, or fiberglass. The people riding in the canoe propel the boat with paddles.

Paddle – The object used by a canoe's passengers to propel the craft. A pole with a broad, flat fin at one end.

Hike – A long walk, usually through nature.

Hiker – A person going on a hike.

Gear – The tools, items, and equipment that a person might take on their adventure. Possible gear includes a tent, a camera, snacks, extra clothes.

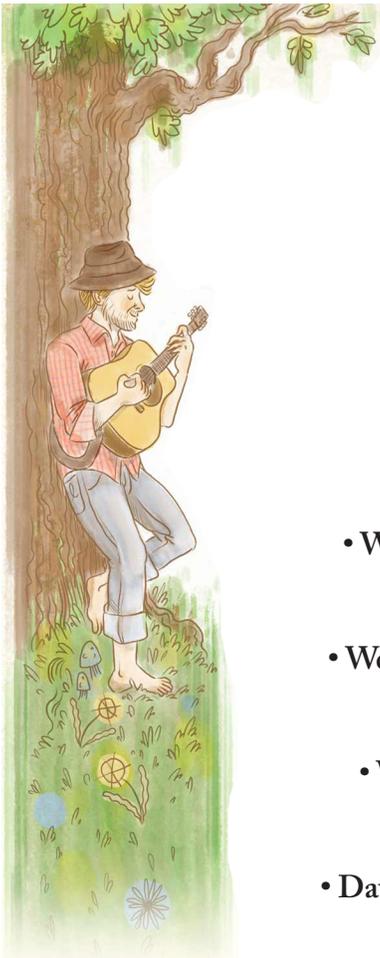
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 G P A P P A L A C H I A R M Y
 D Q P P B C A F M F V U D N G
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 H N Z L A J R P E P D S V N U

CAN YOU FIND THESE WORDS IN THE PUZZLE ABOVE?

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Acoustic | Cajon | Inspiration |
| Adventure | Chorus | Lyrics |
| Appalachia | Clogging | Melody |
| Banjo | Fiddle | Mississippi |
| Bass | Folk | Music |
| Bluegrass | Guitar | Spoons |
| Bones | Harmony | Verses |
| | | Washboard |

Instructions: Find and circle these 22 words. The words are hiding in many different directions: forward, backward, up or down. And don't forget about the tricky backward diagonals (like the one we circled)!





Links for Further Exploration

- **Our Website:** <http://www.okeedokee.org>
- **Our Mississippi River Adventure Blog:** <http://mississippialbum.blogspot.com>
- **Our Appalachian Trail Adventure Blog:** <http://appalachianalbum.blogspot.com>
- **Our YouTube Page:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/OkeeDokeeBros>
- **We interviewed Kenny Salwey, Mississippi River Expert:** <http://bit.ly/1kTK78x>
- **We interviewed David Holt, an expert in Mountain Music:** <http://bit.ly/1nhqdHL>
- **We interviewed the Bluegrass-playing Wright Family:** <http://bit.ly/1kTJtYu>
- **David Holt interviews William Cook about the Washboard:** <http://bit.ly/Qg2w1A>
- **David Holt interviews Percy Danforth about the Bones:** <http://bit.ly/1m6k79r>
- **“Can You Canoe?” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1gqebrB>
- **“Camping Tent” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1iAyQIU>
- **“Brother” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1hs8QMG>
- **“Memphis Town” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1jJnIsL>
- **“Haul Away Joe” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/OUJVuq>
- **“Thousand Star Hotel” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/OUKhw>
- **“Walking with Spring” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1juZeYq>
- **“Through the Woods” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/Rl0VuZ>
- **“Evergreen” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1hvdzh5>
- **“Jamboree” Music Video:** <http://bit.ly/1iiXnn1>

