

# English Folk Music

## Key points

### **What is folk music?**

Traditional music of the people.

Performed by the people themselves and played within their own community.

Passed on orally from one generation to the next.

### **What instruments are used?**

fiddles [violins]

concertina [a type of accordion]

penny whistle [similar to a recorder]

Northumbrian small pipes [a form of bagpipes]



### **What happened in the 18th and 19th centuries?**

The Industrial Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries destroyed communities and so many of the traditional songs were lost.

### **Why did people write ballads down?**

To try to stop these ballads (a ballad is a song) disappearing altogether people started to write them down.

### **American folk music.**

In the 1950s the popularity of American folk music in Britain added more instruments, the guitar and banjo. Folk music became popular again and so folk clubs began to develop all over Britain.

### **Two important styles.**

- a) Traditional folk music. Traditionalists reproduced music as it was originally.
- b) Modern versions were developed incorporating modern and commercial versions of old songs in folk style. Many wrote new songs in folk style using modern issues - drugs, homelessness, and race.

## Singers, Groups and folk music after the 1970s.

The popularity of folk music at this time can be seen by the fact that **Ralph McTell** had a hit song called *Streets of London* that was a folk style song.

During the 1970s electric folk bands and folk rock groups experimented with new technology as well as the rhythms of rock music to produce a combination of traditional and modern music.

Examples of such groups: Steeleye Span and Lindisfarne who achieved Top Twenty Hits.

Since then English folk music has become less popular. However this type of music has influenced some musicians such as The Beatles and Paul Simon.

---

### Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. What is folk music?
2. What instruments are used in folk music?
3. What happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century?
4. Why did people start to write the songs down?
5. What is a ballad?
6. What new instruments did American folk music add?
7. Which two styles became important?
8. Who sang 'Streets of London'?
9. What happened in the 1970s?
10. Give examples of groups who have been influenced by folk music?

Task:

Write a newspaper article about folk music, telling the history, instruments used and any other important facts. (One side of A4 paper)