

Loretta Lynn

BLUE KENTUCKY GIRL

TEACHER'S TOOL KIT
GRADES 7-12

English Language Arts • Visual Art
Music • Social Studies



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Young Loretta

The second of eight children, Loretta Webb was born April 14, 1932. She grew up in a one-room cabin, in a hollow, five miles from Van Lear, Kentucky. Lynn calls her home “Butcher Holler.” Her father worked in the Consolidated Coal mines for sixteen years, until black lung disease forced him to quit. He moved his wife and Loretta’s younger siblings to Wabash, Indiana, where he began working in a furniture factory.

On January 10, 1948, against the wishes of her parents, Loretta Webb married Oliver “Mooney” Lynn. She was fifteen; he was twenty-one. In the fall of 1948, they moved to Custer, Washington, where he worked as a farmhand and later as a logger. Two months after moving, Lynn gave birth to their first child, Betty Sue. In quick succession, she had three more children: Jack, in December 1949; Ernest Ray, in May 1951; and Cissy, in April 1952. Twelve years later, she had a set of twins, Peggy and Patsy.

Mooney began to notice his wife’s voice. In 1953, he bought her an acoustic guitar for seventeen dollars, and Loretta began writing songs by studying lyrics from sheet music. After a few years, Mooney encouraged Lynn to perform publicly. In February 1960 she recorded her debut song, “I’m a Honky Tonk Girl.” The success of the song led to an invitation to perform on the Grand Ole Opry. Lynn’s first appearance on the show—September 17, 1960—drew such a great response that she began to appear regularly. The Lynns moved to Nashville in the fall of that same year.

In 1962, Lynn joined Decca Records, where she began working with producer Owen Bradley. Her second country hit, “Success,” led to membership in the Grand Ole Opry. Lynn struggled with her management, country duo the Wilburn Brothers. The duo wanted her to polish her act, while Bradley encouraged Lynn to sing in her strong Kentucky drawl and to continue to use Southern idioms in her lyrics.



Lynn performing with Doyle (left) and Teddy Wilburn, the Wilburn Brothers, 1960s.

Photo by Sid O’Berry

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Lynn enjoyed modest success during her first three years at Decca Records, but she didn't write any of her early Decca hits. In 1966, Bradley endorsed Lynn's desire to record more of the songs she had written. "Dear Uncle Sam," (#4 in 1966), which was written shortly after America sent ground troops into Vietnam, dealt daringly with the devastating loss a wife experiences after her husband dies in combat.

Lynn's career leaped forward when she began recording songs of her own. Her radio airplay and record sales escalated, and the honesty in her songwriting created an emotional connection with listeners. "You Ain't Woman Enough," a spirited attack on a gal out to steal the singer's husband, became her most successful single to that point, spending two weeks at #2 in 1966. Lynn's next single "Don't Come Home A'Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)" became Lynn's first #1 when it topped the charts in early 1967. From then on, Lynn dedicated herself to drawing on her life experiences for many of her songs.

Cashbox advertisement, January 1, 1966.
The song went top 5 on the *Billboard* Country chart.



LP cover for *You're Lookin' at Country* (1971)

As Loretta Lynn's success grew, her songwriting became more autobiographical. In 1970, she released "Coal Miner's Daughter," the song with which she is most closely identified. The #1 country tune provided the title for her best-selling autobiography and an award-winning film. In 1971, Lynn recorded "You're Looking at Country," a self-defining song that reached #5.

Released in 1976, the autobiography *Loretta Lynn: Coal Miner's Daughter* became a best-selling book and led to a movie that would star Academy Award winner Sissy Spacek. In 2002, she released her second autobiography, *Still Woman Enough: A Memoir*.

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The candor expressed by Loretta Lynn in her music took a new direction when she started singing about social issues from a woman's point of view. The trend began in 1973, when Lynn reached #1 with "Rated 'X,'" an original song lamenting society's views of divorced women. Lynn created more controversy with "The Pill." Although she didn't write the song, its frank discussion of birth control was considered too risqué by some disc jockeys and newspaper columnists. Her record label knew the song might cause a stir. Lynn recorded it in 1972, but Decca Records waited until 1975 to release "The Pill." Despite the inevitable blowback, the song became a #5 hit.

45-rpm single for "Rated X" (1973)

She was elected into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1988, the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2008, and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013. By telling her own truths, and by writing about her experiences with a perspective and voice unlike any other Southern storyteller, Loretta Lynn became an American hero—and a country music standard-bearer.



Above: Lynn was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2008.



Left: Jack White and Lynn, 2004, outside the East Nashville studio where *Van Lear Rose* was recorded. *Photo courtesy of Third Man Records.*

"If you don't know you're poor, you don't feel poor," Loretta has said about her childhood. "But Daddy never knew nothing fine in his whole life."

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Begin by asking your students what they know about Loretta Lynn. Read the biography included in this tool kit materials as a class. Then select activities that best correspond with your curriculum.





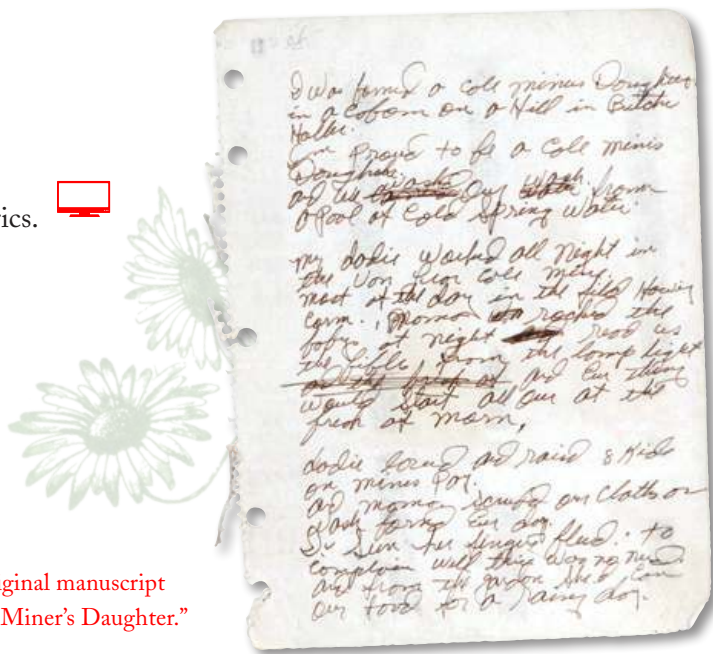
Log in to the [Digital Resource Portal](#) to find support materials for this tool kit. The portal also provides lesson guides, tool kits, videos, Power Points, and other resources that bring the museum into your classroom.

Register for free access at CountryMusicHallofFame.org/Portal

HONESTY IN SONGWRITING

Visual Art – Music – Social Studies

- Compare the original manuscript of “Coal Miner’s Daughter” and the recorded song lyrics. 
- Watch the video of Loretta Lynn performing “Coal Miner’s Daughter.” 
- Write a paragraph about your home experiences using descriptive language.




Lynn's original manuscript for “Coal Miner’s Daughter.”



INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SONGWRITERS

Music – College and Career Readiness

- Think of someone who inspires you.
- Make a list of qualities that person has which you admire.
- Watch Miranda Lambert, Kacey Musgraves, and Margo Price talk about Loretta Lynn. 
- While watching the videos, circle qualities on the list that the songwriters mention.
- Discuss how you would want to be a role model and influence future generations.

Kacey Musgraves and Loretta Lynn performing “You’re Lookin’ at Country” at the 2014 CMA Awards.

Loretta Lynn



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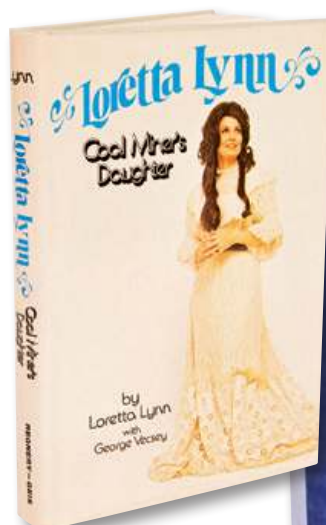
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STORY OF MY LIFE

English Language Arts – Visual Art

- Read an excerpt from  *Coal Miner's Daughter*.
- Watch clip from  *Coal Miner's Daughter*.
- Describe the scene as a class.
- Brainstorm a moment from your life that you would include in your autobiography.
- Write a paragraph about this moment in time.
- Write a scene of a screenplay about this moment in time.



Above: First edition of *Loretta Lynn: Coal Miner's Daughter*, published in 1976.


Right: Poster for *Coal Miner's Daughter*.



Clockwise, from upper left: LP covers for *Fist City* (1968), *Wouldn't It Be Great* (2018), *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1970)

SELF-PORTRAIT

Visual Art

- Look at Loretta Lynn portraits. 
- Discuss Lynn's image and the stereotypes associated with her Kentucky upbringing.
- Write a list of what you see when looking at her portraits.
- Write a list of what qualities or characteristics of yourself you would like reflected in a portrait.
- Work with a partner to create portraits of each other that reflect your personal list.

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SOCIAL CHANGE IN SONG

English Language Arts – Social Studies


- Listen to “The Pill.” 
- Discuss the social issues of the 1970s.
- Discuss social issues of today.
- Consider how artists can affect public opinion through music.
- Research and report on a controversial topic today, include newspaper articles, television, film, and songs referring to the issue.

45-rpm single for “The Pill” (1975)



AMERICA'S HIGHEST HONOR

English Language Arts – Social Studies

- Look at the Presidential Medal of Freedom. 
- Consider what this honor could represent and how it is earned.
- Choose a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient.
- Research the recipient.
- Present on the recipient to the class.
- Discuss the recipients and the work they have done to receive this award.

Lynn receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama at the White House, November 20, 2013.

Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images

LYRIC SHEET

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER

Loretta Lynn

Well I was borned a coal miner's daughter
In a cabin on a hill in Butcher Holler
We were poor but we had love
That's the one thing that daddy made sure of
He shoveled coal to make a poor man's dollar

My daddy worked all night in the Van Lear coal mines
All day long in the field a hoin' corn
Mommy rocked the babies at night
And read the Bible by the coal oil light
And everything would start all over come break of morn'

Daddy loved and raised 8 kids on a miner's pay
Mommy scrubbed our clothes on a washboard everyday
Well I'd seen her fingers bleed
To complain there was no need
She'd smile in Mommy's understanding way

In the summertime we didn't have shoes to wear
But in the wintertime we'd all get a brand new pair
From a mail order catalog
Money made from selling a hog
Daddy always managed to get the money somewhere

Yea I'm proud to be a coal miner's daughter
I remember well the well where I drew water
The work we done was hard
At night we'd sleep cause we were tired
I never thought of ever leaving Butcher Holler

Well a lot of things have changed since way back then
And it's so good to be back home again
Not much left but the floor
Nothing lives here anymore
Except the memories of a coal miner's daughter

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LYRIC SHEET

THE PILL

Lorene Allen / T.D. Bayless / Don McHan

You wined me and dined me
 When I was your girl
 Promised if I'd be your wife
 You'd show me the world
 But all I've seen of this old world
 Is a bed and a doctor bill
 I'm tearin' down your brooder house
 'Cause now I've got the pill

All these years I've stayed at home
 While you had all your fun
 And every year that's gone by
 Another baby's come
 There's a gonna be some changes made
 Right here on nursery hill
 You've set this chicken your last time
 'Cause now I've got the pill

This old maternity dress I've got
 Is goin' in the garbage
 The clothes I'm wearin' from now on
 Won't take up so much yardage
 Miniskirts, hot pants, and a few little fancy frills
 Yeah I'm makin' up for all those years
 Since I've got the pill

I'm tired of all your crowin'
 How you and your hens play
 While holdin' a couple in my arms
 Another's on the way
 This chicken's done tore up her nest
 And I'm ready to make a deal
 And you can't afford to turn it down
 'Cause you know I've got the pill

This incubator is overused
 Because you've kept it filled
 The feelin' good comes easy now
 Since I've got the pill
 It's gettin' dark it's roostin' time
 Tonight's too good to be real
 Oh but daddy don't you worry none
 'Cause mama's got the pill
 Oh daddy don't you worry none
 'Cause mama's got the pill