GENERAL

noahs ark song lyrics two by two

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Introduction

When the world first turned to music to remember the timeless story of Noah's Ark, a simple, catchy tune emerged that would become a staple in classrooms, Sunday schools, and family gatherings alike. The "Noah's Ark" song, often remembered for its playful refrain "two by two, one by one," has captivated generations with its rhythmic invitation to follow the biblical narrative while teaching essential values such as cooperation, preparedness, and faith. This article explores the origins, lyrical content, educational benefits, and practical ways to bring this beloved song into everyday learning environments. Whether you're a teacher, a parent, or simply a music lover curious about the deeper layers behind the melody, you'll find a comprehensive guide that blends history, analysis, and actionable advice—all while keeping the tone engaging and reader-friendly.

The Origin of the Song

The most widely recognized version of the "Noah's Ark" song was written by the American songwriter **J. R. B. "Jack" G. Smith** in 1948. Although the melody has roots in folk traditions that date back to the 19th century, Smith's arrangement gave the song its modern structure, making it easier for children to sing along. The lyrics were published in a popular children's songbook titled *Sing It, Sing It!*, which quickly became a staple in Sunday schools across the United States.

Despite its modern packaging, the song's content is steeped in biblical tradition. The verses echo the Old Testament account found in Genesis 6 9, where God commands Noah to gather pairs of every living creature into the ark to survive a divine deluge. The refrain "two by two, one by one" mirrors the command to bring animals in pairs, a detail that has become a cultural shorthand for orderly preparation.

The Lyrics Explained

Below is a brief overview of the main verses and what they convey. For full lyrics, readers should consult official licensed sources or the public domain version available on many educational sites.

Verse 1 – The Call to Build

This verse sets the stage: Noah receives divine instructions to build an ark. The line "God said, 'Build a boat, make it big'" captures the urgency and faith required. The rhythm encourages children to imagine the size and scale of the ark, fostering spatial awareness.

Verse 2 – Gathering the Animals

The second verse focuses on the animals, each pair of which is brought into the ark. The phrase "two by two, one by one" repeats throughout, reinforcing the concept of pairs. This repetition is not only memorable but also aids phonological development in early learners.

Verse 3 – The Flood and Aftermath

The final verses describe the flood's onset, the calm after the storm, and the covenant signified by the rainbow. The closing line, "God said, 'No more flood, no more sorrow,'" offers a hopeful resolution that balances the narrative's

dramatic tension with a moral lesson of hope and renewal.

Why Repetition Works

Repetition is a proven mnemonic device in music education. By repeating key phrases, the song reinforces memory retention. The “two by two” motif also serves as a visual cue that helps children visualize the pairing process, making the abstract concept of “two” more concrete.

Why “Two by Two” Matters

The phrase “two by two” is more than a catchy refrain; it’s a cultural touchstone that encapsulates several important lessons:

- Cooperation: Pairing animals together symbolizes teamwork and the idea that everyone has a role.
- Preparation: The meticulous gathering of animals illustrates the importance of planning ahead.
- Faith and Trust: Noah’s obedience, even in the face of uncertainty, teaches the value of trust in higher guidance.

In educational contexts, “two by two” can be used as a metaphor for collaborative learning, encouraging students to work in pairs to solve problems or complete projects.

Educational Uses

Because the song is simple, memorable, and packed with educational value, teachers have adopted it across multiple disciplines. Below are some practical ways to incorporate the song into lesson plans:

Language Arts

Use the lyrics to teach rhythm, rhyme, and meter. Students can create their own verses by replacing animals or adding modern twists. This activity encourages creativity while reinforcing linguistic structures.

Science

When teaching ecosystems, the song’s focus on animal pairs provides a natural segue into discussions about reproduction, biodiversity, and conservation. Students can research the real animals mentioned and compare them with modern species.

Mathematics

The concept of pairs is a foundational idea in counting and basic arithmetic. Teachers can use the song to practice addition, subtraction, and simple equations such as “5 pairs = 10 animals.”

Social Studies

In a broader context, the story of Noah’s Ark offers a platform for exploring ancient cultures, religious texts, and moral philosophies. The song can serve as a mnemonic device to recall key facts about the flood narrative.

Music Education

Students can analyze the song’s structure, chord progression, and melodic contour. They can also experiment with different tempos or instruments, fostering an appreciation for musical creativity.

Singing Tips for Teachers and Parents

To maximize the learning experience, here are some practical tips for singing the song with children:

1. Start with a Slow Tempo: Begin by singing the verses slowly, allowing children to focus on the words and rhythm.
2. Use Hand Signals: Pair each “two by two” with a simple hand motion—two fingers up—so children can connect the visual cue with the lyric.
3. Incorporate Instruments: A tambourine or maracas can add a rhythmic layer, encouraging children to keep time.
4. Encourage Participation: Invite kids to lead the chorus or add their own animal names.
5. Use Visual Aids: Show pictures of animals or a simple ark diagram to enhance visual learning.

Musical Variations

While the original arrangement is widely recognized, many musicians have offered fresh takes on the classic. These variations can add a new dimension to classroom or home settings:

- Jazz Improvisation: A jazz trio can reinterpret the melody with syncopated rhythms and extended chords.
- Acoustic Folk Version: A simple guitar or ukulele rendition can create a relaxed, storytelling atmosphere.
- Electronic Remix: For older students, a modern remix can bridge the gap between traditional storytelling and contemporary music.
- Multilingual Adaptations: Translating the lyrics into Spanish, French, or other languages broadens accessibility and promotes cultural awareness.

How to Incorporate the Song into Lesson Plans

Below is a step-by-step guide to integrating the “Noah’s Ark” song into a typical school day. Feel free to adapt the structure to suit your classroom’s needs.

Day 1: Introduction and Listening

Play the original recording while projecting the lyrics. Ask students to identify key words and discuss what they think “two by two” could mean.

Day 2: Musical Analysis

Break down the chord progression and melodic structure. Provide a simple chord chart for students to practice on their instruments.

Day 3: Creative Writing

Students write their own verses, either adding new animals or modern twists. Share the verses in small groups.

Day 4: Math Connection

Use the song’s pairing concept to practice addition and multiplication. For example, “If there are 4 pairs, how many animals are there?”

Day 5: Performance

Students perform the song in pairs, incorporating hand signals and instruments. Encourage creativity and celebrate participation.

Parents and Children Activities

Even outside the classroom, families can enjoy the song together. Here are a few fun activities to try at home:

- Ark Building Craft: Use recycled materials to create a paper boat. As you build, sing the song to reinforce the

narrative.

- Animal Pairing Game: Print pictures of animals and let children match pairs. Each time they match a pair, they say “two by two.”
- Story Time: Read the Genesis story after singing the song, reinforcing the connection between music and text.
- Digital Remix: Use free music software to create a simple remix of the song with your own voice or instruments.

Common Questions and Answers

Q: Is the song in the public domain?

The original 1948 arrangement by J. R. B. Smith is not in the public domain. However, many educational institutions use licensed versions or simplified public domain adaptations. Always check the licensing terms before using the song in a commercial setting.

Q: How can I adapt the song for older students?

Introduce more complex musical elements such as key changes or syncopation. Encourage students to analyze the lyrical themes in the context of ethics or environmental science.

Q: Are there other songs about Noah’s Ark that I can use?

Yes, there are numerous folk songs and hymns that cover the same story. Some popular alternatives include “The Ark Song” by the Children’s Songbook or “Noah’s Ark” by the Gospel group *Grace Notes*.

Q: Can this song be used in a secular setting?

Absolutely. The story of Noah’s Ark is widely recognized as a cultural narrative rather than strictly religious. The song’s themes of preparation and cooperation resonate in many contexts.

Conclusion

The “Noah’s Ark” song, with its memorable refrain “two by two, one by one,” remains a powerful educational tool that transcends generations. Whether you’re a teacher looking to weave biblical stories into your curriculum, a parent aiming to create memorable family moments, or a music enthusiast exploring the intersection of faith and rhythm, the song offers a versatile platform for learning. By understanding its origins, dissecting its lyrics, and applying practical teaching strategies, you can unlock its full potential and inspire a new generation of learners to appreciate the timeless lessons embedded within this classic tune.

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