

Songs of Spring Describe Her Many Moods This Is America



Spring brings bright greens to trees along the Susquehanna River in Maryland (Steve Ember)

From VOA Learning English, welcome to This Is America. I'm Steve Ember. If you've checked your calendar lately, you know - at least in the northern part of the world - it's spring. And, after a long winter, it's time to celebrate.

Hey, buds below

Up is where to grow

Up, from which below can't compare with...

Now, your English teacher might have had a problem with that phrase, but let's keep listening, shall we?

*Life down a hole takes an awful toll,
What with not a soul there to share with*

If you're wondering what those words are all about, she is singing to her flower pots.

*Hurry, it's lovely up here
Wake up, bestir yourself
It's time that you disinter yourself...*

Actress Barbara Harris in the musical "On a Clear Day, You Can See Forever" by Alan Jay Lerner and Burton Lane.

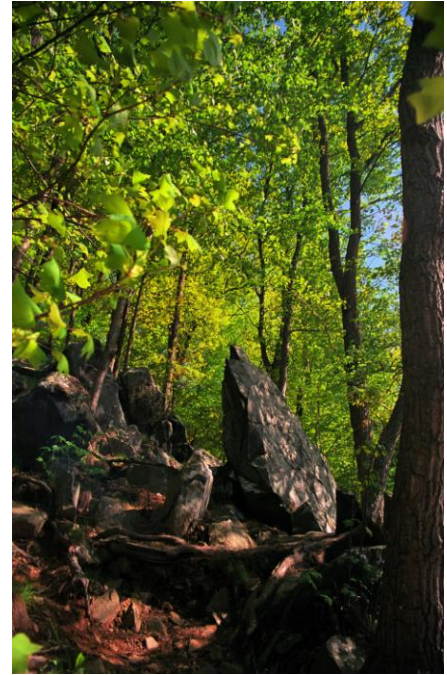
*And what a gift package of showers, sun and love
You'll be met above everywhere with
Fondled and sniffed by millions who drift by...*

And spring being the season of new growth, I hope that song, and all the others we're going to play for you, will paint a musical picture of this lovely season. Come along with us!

*Come poke your head out!
Open up and spread out!
Hurry, it's lovely here!*

She sometimes is slow to arrive...

Sometimes spring comes slowly – that was certainly the case this year. It seems like we wear our winter clothes for a long, long time. The weather stays cold...snow stays on the ground. Trees still look bare. Everything *is* changing, but we may not see the changes from day to day. And then suddenly, warmth seems to jump up from the earth overnight. Snow becomes a memory. Tree branches fill out. The gray and brown colors of winter give way to the green of spring. That's the spirit expressed here by the New Christy Minstrels.



Forest scene in spring (Steve Ember)

*Springtime, change of scenery, won't that be fine
Springtime, the grass is greener
And the berry grows redder on the vine
Into each life, there will come sunshine, sometime after the rain
Don't be downhearted, before tears get started,
Let Springtime make you smile again.
You know that Springtime, change of scenery, won't that be fine
Springtime, the grass is greener
And the berry grows redder on the vine.*

Springtime, change of scenery...Spring is a wonderful season to celebrate rebirth and new life. The sun is out again, the daylight stays around longer...the flowers are blooming. The season represents hope, joy and beauty.

However, not all songs about spring are happy. This song by K.D. Lang is about dreaming of spring in cold dark places. She recorded "I Dream of Spring" in two thousand eight.

*She arrives like autumn in a rainstorm
The threat of thunder above
I'll return from the streets of Melbourne
I'll return my love*

*This world is filled with frozen lovers
The sheets of their beds are frightfully cold
And I've slept there in the snow with others
Yet loved no others before*

*These cold dark places
Places I've been
In cold dark places
I dream of spring*

Springtime inspires lasting popular song...

Unlike the other seasons, there are not many rock songs about spring. Most of the songs about this season were written in the nineteen thirties and forties by famous American composers writing for the Broadway stage or Hollywood films or popular vocalists. The songs became "standards," popular songs recorded by many singers over the years.

If you're a young person, this may surprise you, but this was the *popular music* of its day.

Have you ever had "Spring Fever?"

Here is one example, "It Might as Well Be Spring." Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein wrote the song for the movie "State Fair" in 1945. Frank Sinatra sings about having "spring fever." This is not a real sickness. It is a feeling of restlessness or excitement brought on by the coming of spring.

*I'm as restless as a willow in a windstorm,
I'm as jumpy as a puppet on a string,
I'd say that I had spring fever,
But I know it isn't spring.*

*I am starry eyed and vaguely discontented,
Like a nightingale without a song to sing.
Oh, why should I have spring fever,
When it isn't even spring?*

*I keep wishing I were somewhere else,
Walking down a strange new street,
Hearing words I have never heard,
From a girl I've yet to meet.*

*I'm as busy as a spider, spinning daydreams,
I'm as giddy as a baby on a swing,
I haven't seen a crocus or a rosebud,
Or a robin or a bluebird on the wing,
But I feel so gay in a melancholy way,
That it might as well be spring,
It might as well be, might as well be,
It might as well be spring.*

A sad side to Spring...

Richard Rodgers also wrote "Spring Is Here." But this time, the words were by lyricist Lorenz Hart. They were tender...but sad. The singer *wants* to feel happy in the new season, but can't, because something very important in life...is missing. Ella Fitzgerald had one of the loveliest versions of this classic Rodgers and Hart song.

*Once there was a thing called spring
When the world was writing verses like yours and mine.
All the lads and girls would sing
When we sat at little tables and drank May wine.
Now April May and June are sadly out of tune
Life has stuck the pin in the balloon.*

Spring is here!

Why doesn't my heart go dancing?

Spring is here!

Why isn't the waltz entrancing?

No desire, no ambition leads me,

Maybe it's because nobody needs me.

Spring is here...

New York has inspired so many wonderful – and timeless – songs, including those about the vibrant city in the various seasons of the year. My favorite is Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York." And if you'll write a note on your calendar to join us in September when autumn arrives, we have a date to listen to it together. But, for now, here's Tony Bennett.

Spring in Manhattan starts after dark

After a lazy afternoon in Central Park

Washington Square may be where you'll feel her first warm touch

Down in the Village, you'll find she may be much too much

Spring in Manhattan never stays long

Still, if you fall in love, she'll bless you with a song

And if you listen to every word the song she'll sing will bring

Spring in Manhattan to stay all winter long.

Just thinking about all the wonderful songs of New York, I realize we could actually do a program of New York songs. If you'd like to hear such a program on "This Is America," be in touch – let us know!

Have an umbrella handy – After all, it's Spring...

You know, we have a saying, "April showers bring May flowers." And, of course, showers happen throughout springtime, and certainly do their part in bringing out the flowers and making the trees turn a beautiful shade of green. Here is a very gentle song about those springtime showers, from the musical "The Fantasticks."

Soon it's gonna rain.

I can see it.

Soon it's gonna rain.

I can tell.

Soon it's gonna rain.

What're we gonna do?

Soon it's gonna rain.

I can see it.

Soon it's gonna rain.

I can tell.

Soon it's gonna rain.

What'll we do with you?

We'll find four limbs of a tree.

We'll build four walls and a floor.

We'll bind it over with leaves,

And run inside to stay.

Then we'll let it rain.

We'll not feel it.

Then we'll let it rain, rain pell mell.

*And we'll not complain
If it never stops at all.
We'll live and love
Within our own four walls.*

Kenneth Nelson and Rita Gardner...“Soon It’s Gonna Rain” from Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt’s “The Fantasticks.”

When Spring comes late...

Frank Loesser wrote a sad song about spring - "Spring Will be a Little Late This Year." Why has the season been delayed? Because the singer's lover has left her. Sarah Vaughan released her version of the song in 1953.

*Spring will be a little late this year
A little late arriving in my lonely world over here
For you have left me and where is our April of old?
You have left me, and winter continues cold*

*As if to say spring will be a little slow to start
A little slow reviving that music it made in my heart
Yes, time heals all things so I needn't cling to this fear
It's merely that spring will be a little late this year*

*Yes, time heals all things so I needn't cling to this fear
It's merely that spring will be a little late, a little late this year*

Well, by now you may be thinking: "Enough with the *sad* songs, already!" OK, then how about a cowboy song? Gene Autry was one of America's most famous singing cowboys. In 1937, he recorded "When It's Springtime in the Rockies."

*When it's springtime in the Rockies
I'm coming back to you
Little sweetheart of the mountains
With your bonnie eyes of blue*

*Once again I'll say I love you
While the birds sing all the day
When it's springtime in the Rockies
In the Rockies far away*

In most of the United States, spring is a warm and pleasant season. But this is not the case in the northwestern state of Alaska. According to Johnny Cash, it can be extremely cold.

*I mused from Point Barrow through a blizzard of snow
Been out prospectin' for two years or so
Pulled into Fairbanks, the city was a-boom
So I took a little stroll to the Red Dog Sea-loon*

*When I walked in the door, the music was clear
Purtiest voice I had heard in two years
The song she was singin' would make a man's blood run cold
When it's Springtime in Alaska, it's forty below...*

[From Frank Loesser's "Where's Charley?"]

'Twas a bright blue sky, and the lark sang high

On a bough that was blossom laden

And I had my eye on a very pretty maiden...

"In the Spring," Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote, "a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love." To that, I would simply add, you don't have to be a *young* man...

We heard a *sad* song about spring by Frank Loesser earlier in the program. But Loesser captured a joyful side of spring – and romance – when two lovers meet after many years...He wrote "Lovelier Than Ever" for his musical "Where's Charley." We'll conclude our "This Is America" Songs of Spring program with Jerry Desmond and Marion Grimaldi.

Springtime, you're looking lovelier than ever

Lovelier than ever before

Still irresistible in the same old gown of green

Still irresistible as that lilac-scented scene

When I was seventeen.

Springtime, you haven't changed your way of whisp'ring

Whisp'ring that romance lies in store

Springtime, you're being devastatingly clever



And lovelier than ever before...

This Is America is a production of VOA Learning English. Steve Ember here.
Hope you enjoyed the music. We'll see you next week.

Springtime, you're being devastatingly clever

And lovelier than ever before.