Songs are used to share ideas and to communicate with people in ways that would help them remember. “One good song is worth a thousand addresses and proclamations,” said Joseph Barlow, a poet, statesman and friend of Thomas Jefferson, at the beginning of the American Revolution.

In fact, during the American Revolution, songs were used to shape how people thought about issues and other people. The popular song Yankee Doodle is a good example. It was written by a British man to make fun of the American colonists. The British used it to ridicule those who thought differently from themselves. They would sing it as a way of reinforcing their beliefs and communicating to others that American colonists were stupid and silly people incapable of self-government. At the time, a “doodle” was a foolish person. “Yankees” were the colonists in New England. “Macaroni” was a fashionable hair style popular in England at the time.

The original song whose tune was taken for Yankee Doodle was called Lydia Fisher's Jig.
Sing the tune again with these words:

Lucy Locket lost her pocket,
Kitty Fisher found it;
Nothing in it, nothing on it,
But the binding 'round it.

It was quite common in years past to take a popular, well-known tune and to write new verses for it. In fact, is was years after Sir Francis Scott Key wrote his poem, The Star Spangled Banner, that it was sung to the tune of a well-known British drinking song. Today that is our National Anthem.

To do: Learn the rhythm and pattern of this song well. You will use it to write one of your own. See Balladeer.