This Land Is Your Land

Woody Guthrie

Not everybody took to “God Bless America.” Songwriter, folk singer, and radical political activist Woody Guthrie (1912–1967) wrote this popular folk song in 1940 as an answer to Irving Berlin and Kate Smith. Troubled by many scenes of poverty and desolation that he had witnessed on his travels during the Great Depression, Guthrie wrote “This Land Is Your Land” in a populist egalitarian and antiestablishment spirit.*

What is celebrated in this song? What does Guthrie mean in his claim “This land was made for you and me”? Is this a patriotic song? Is there anything particularly American about its message? How does singing this song make you feel?

Read the lyrics to “This Land Is Your Land” here: http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm.

* The song caught on right away, after Guthrie expunged a couple of his overtly Marxist verses.