

Glossary of Sea Chantey Types

[Note: The following glossary of types of sea chanteys was compiled by Beth Stein. For references, and more information, see the reading list at the end of this list, below.]

Capstan Chanteys

Style: Four lines and a full chorus, fast tempo for heaving the anchor, slower when the ship neared her anchor

Purpose: Creating rhythm for raising and lowering the heavy anchor by pushing the capstan [device attached to anchor cable] around

Example: “Rio Grande” by Sam Eskin

Ceremonial Chanteys

Style: Varied

Purpose: Celebrating notable events, such as crossing the Equator

Forebitters

Style: Often narratives, accompanied by instruments

Purpose: Leisure

Content: Love, adventure, historical or natural events, land, drinking

Example: “Dreadnaught” by Tom Sullivan

Long Haul/Drag Chanteys

Style: Chorus following each line

Purpose: Heavy labor taking long periods of time, such as raising or lowering large sails; work requiring breaks

Short Haul/Drag Chanteys

Style: Fast-paced

Purpose: Quick, fast tasks, such as shortening or unfurling sails

Example: “Haul Away Joe” by the Foc’sle Singers

Whaling Chanteys

Style: Varied

Purpose: Motivate whalers to face the risks whaling involved

Example: “Come All Ye Tonguers” by Jill King and Bob Webb

Windlass Chanteys

Style: Four lines

Purpose: Jerky rhythm

Sea Chantey Information Sources

For more information, please refer to the following sources:

Colcord, Joanna. 1964. *Songs of American Sailormen*. New York: Oak Publications.

Doerflinger, William Maine. 1951. *Shantymen and Shantyboys: Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman*. New York: Macmillan.

Frank, Stuart. 1980. Liner notes to *Songs of Sea and Shore*. Smithsonian Folkways 5256. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW05256.pdf

Goldstein, Kenneth S. 1977. Liner notes to *Foc'sle Songs and Shanties*. Smithsonian Folkways 2429. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW02429.pdf

Haslam, Cliff & John Millar. 1975. Liner notes to *Colonial & Revolutionary War Sea Songs & Chanteys*. Smithsonian Folkways 5275. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW05275.pdf

Hugill, Stan. 1977. *Songs of the Sea: The Tales and Tunes of Sailors and Sailing Ships*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fowke, Edith. 1957. Liner notes to *Songs of the Sea*. Smithsonian Folkways 2312. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW02312.pdf

Renahan, Ed & Pete Seeger. 1976. Liner notes to *Fifty Sail on Newburgh Bay*. Smithsonian Folkways 5257. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW05257.pdf

_____. Liner notes to *Sea Music of Many Lands: The Pacific Heritage*. Smithsonian Folkways 38405. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW38405.pdf

Wisner, Tom. 1978. Liner notes to *Chesapeake Born*. Smithsonian Folkways 32410. http://209.168.240.90/liner_notes/folkways/FW32410.pdf