

**Themes for discussion after listening to the songs of The SIBL Project – Chapter Two**

“Pennsylvania” was inspired by *Songmaster* by Orson Scott Card.

**Topics for Discussion:** power of music, supernatural phenomena, child prodigy, mysticism, freewill vs. determinism, other "languages", science fiction and fantasy genres, platonic love of mentor.

"Tread Softly" was inspired by the poem "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven" by W.B. Yeats.

**Topics for Discussion:** nature of love, humility, generosity, simplicity of form in poetry, compare poem and song.

"1984" was inspired by *1984* by George Orwell.

**Topics for Discussion:** dystopian vision of society, dangers of totalitarianism, personal struggle/rebellion, anonymity in the Information Age, predicting the future, science fiction as satire.

"The Wish" was inspired by *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe.

**Topics for Discussion:** immortality, selling your soul, pacts with the devil, exploration of the human soul in Enlightenment era Context. re-evaluation of reformation ideals.

"Paula Ausente" was inspired by *Paula* by Isabel Allende. (sung in Spanish)

**Topics for Discussion:** memoir, Chilean politics, coping with death of a child, feminism, loss and mourning, naming "monsters of grief".

"Bobo's Country" was inspired by *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* by Alexandra Fuller.

**Topics for Discussion:** Zimbabwean War of Liberation (1971-79), memoir, racial issues, politics of land reform, post-colonialism in Africa, child's perspective. From the song: myths and superstitions in different cultures, metaphors.

"Listen, the Silences" was inspired by *Raids on the Unspeakable* by Thomas Merton. **Topics for**

**Discussion:** existentialism, the Sixties, spirituality. From the song: the skill and art of listening, power of silence.

"The Ballad of Poker Alice" was inspired by *Nothing Like it in the World* by Stephen E. Ambrose.

**Topics for Discussion:** history of U.S railroad expansion, bureaucracy, high finance, corporate influence on government, 19th century moguls, Abraham Lincoln's priorities. From the song: oral histories, female stereotypes of whore/angel, railroad songs of Woody Guthrie.

"Dixieland" was inspired by *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara.

**Topics for Discussion:** conscription, Civil War, Battle of Gettysburg, personal face of war, Declaration of Independence. Note: Steve Earle's song expands on the book's Civil War focus to draw parallels to Ireland's concurrent struggle for independence and the immigration of soldiers from Ireland directly to the front lines of battle in Gettysburg. From the song: definition of "American", class consciousness.

“Don’t Let Me Fall” was inspired by *The Color of Water; A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother* by James McBride.

**Topics for Discussion:** racial identity, coping with poverty, the transcendence of race and religion through family ties, history of New York City. From the song: faith, siblings, abuse and other difficult issues, idioms and adjectives.

"Goin' back to Moline" was inspired by *Mr. White's Confession* by Robert Clark.

**Topics for Discussion:** murder investigations, justice, role of memory in the legal system, post-Depression history of St. Paul, Minnesota. Note: the song takes a tangent from the book, imagining another ending for the character.

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" was inspired by the story *A Good Man is Hard to Find* by Flannery O'Connor.

**Topics for Discussion:** underbelly of life in rural south, sexual mores, religious fanaticism, character studies of the outcast, value systems.

"Voices Inside" was inspired by *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse.

**Topics for Discussion:** spiritual quest, Buddhist mythology, materialism vs. self-deprivation, personal journey towards enlightenment. From the song: predicting the future, transformation, comparative religion.

"The Summer I Read Colette" was inspired by *The Collected Stories of Colette* by Colette.

**Topics for Discussion:** life in pre-WW II France (La Belle Epoque), sensualism, nature of art, self-discovery, American exiles in Paris (Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, etc), finding yourself away from home.

"Hunger" was inspired by the poem "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*" by T.S. Eliot.

**Topics for Discussion:** mental paralysis, social and sexual anxiety, fear of aging, self-pity, class issues, rejection vs. belonging and community. From the song: metaphor, simile.

"Peel this Away" was inspired by *Night* by Elie Wiesel.

**Topics for Discussion:** the Holocaust, erosion of spirituality, examination of good vs. evil, forgiveness, adolescent experience of history