

Tom Dooley – Traditional (Kingston Trio)

4/4 time (four beats to the measure)
(eight measures to the chorus or verse segment)

Key of D major (D root on 4th string open fret)
(A7 (root on 5th string open fret))

Two chord progression
the progression is the same for the chorus and verse
there is no bridge

"Throughout history, there have been many songs written about the eternal triangle. This next one tells the story of a Mr. Grayson, a beautiful woman, and a condemned man named Tom Dooley. When the sun rises tomorrow, Tom Dooley must hang."

Chorus

D D
Hang down your head Tom Dooley
D A7
Hang down your head and cry
A7 A7
Hang down your head Tom Dooley
A7 D
Poor boy you're bound to die

Verse

This time tomorrow
Reckon where I'll be
Hadn't have been for Grayson
I'd have been in Tennessee

Chorus

Verse

This time tomorrow
Reckon where I'll be
Down in some lonesome valley
Hanging from a white oak tree

Chorus

Verse

I met her on the mountain
There I took her life
Met her on the mountain
Stabbed her with my knife

Chorus

DOC WATSON: In the 1860s, when this story takes place, my great-grandparents were neighbor's of Tom Dooley's family, and my grandparents, when they were just children, knew Tom's parents. As the story goes, Tom Dooley was not guilty of the murder of Laura Foster, although he was an accomplice in covering up the crime. Instead of the "eternal triangle" mentioned in [the Kingston Trio's version](#), it was a quadrangle sort of thing. There were two men and two women involved in the whole affair. Mr. Grayson, the sheriff, had courted both Miss Laura Foster and Miss Annie Melton, as had Tom Dooley. Almost everyone around affirmed that Annie Melton had stuck the knife in Miss Laura's ribs and then hit her over the head. Tom Dooley, however, actually buried the girl, making himself an accomplice. Annie Melton was with Tom at Laura's burial, so she, too, was strongly suspected and was jailed. While in jail she bragged and told everyone that her neck was too pretty to put a rope around and that they'd never hang her. Of course, they never did.

Sheriff Grayson had quite a crush on Annie Melton, and he later married her. Near the end of her life Annie became very ill, and on her deathbed she called her husband in and told him something that seemed to really crush his spirit and reason for living. What Miss Annie told

her husband was what she had told the neighborhood women -- that she had actually murdered Laura Foster and had let Tom Dooley go to the gallows without saying one word on his behalf. Grayson was so upset that he took his remaining family and moved completely out of this part of North Carolina and went over the edge of Tennessee, which was just being settled.

The murder of Laura Foster happened just at the end of [the Civil War](#), and Tom Dooley, I believe, had been a hero during the war. Dooley was the kind of guy who grows up very quickly; at the age of fourteen, he was the size of a grown man. He went into the Civil War lying about his age and came back a hero. He was an unthinkably good old-time fiddler, and many people think that the original version, which I learned from my grandmother, has such a lilting, happy-sounding tune because the composer had tried his or her best to get into the song a little of Tom Dooley's personality as a fiddler.

The Songs of Doc Watson, New York, NY, 1971, p. 20

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed poor Laurie Foster,
And you know you're bound to die.

I know they're gonna hang me,
Tomorrow I'll be dead,
Though I never even harmed a hair
On poor little Laurie's head."

You left her by the roadside
Where you begged to be excused;
You left her by the roadside,
Then you hid her clothes and shoes.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed poor Laurie Foster,
And you know you're bound to die.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed poor Laurie Foster,
And you know you're bound to die.

"In this world and one more
Then reckon where I'll be;
If it wasn't for Sheriff Grayson,
I'd be in Tennessee.

You took her on the hillside
For to make her your wife;
You took her on the hillside,
And then you took her life.

You can take down my old violin
And play it all you please.
For at this time tomorrow, boys,
It'll be of no use to me."

You dug the grave four feet long
And you dug it three feet deep;
You rolled the cold clay over her
And tromped it with your feet.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed poor Laurie Foster,
And you know you're bound to die.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed poor Laurie Foster,
And you know you're bound to die.

"At this time tomorrow
Where do you reckon I'll be?
Away down yonder in the holler
Hangin' on a white oak tree.

"Trouble, oh it's trouble
A-rollin' through my breast;
As long as I'm a-livin', boys,
They ain't a-gonna let me rest.

Hang your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang your head and cry;
You killed poor Laurie Foster,
And you know you're bound to die.