



## Scarborough Fair / Canticle – Simon & Garfunkel – Notes



- **Activity type:** vocabulary (herbs), listening for specific words, discussion.
- **Level:** Intermediate / Upper-Intermediate.
- **Note:** Scarborough is a small town on the coast of England. The "Scarborough Fair" was a popular gathering in medieval times, attracting traders and entertainers from all over the country. The fair lasted 45 days and started every August 15th. ([www.songfacts.com](http://www.songfacts.com))
- The origins of the song can be traced to 1670 – there is a detailed history here: <http://www.justanothertune.com/html/cambricshirt.html>
- There are various interpretations of the lyrics (see: <http://infotainmentnews.net/2013/02/26/digging-up-the-truth-what-the-lyrics-to-scarborough-fair-mean/>), in which the singer sets impossible tasks for his potential lover.
- Each of the herbs used in the refrain is said to represent a virtue - this lesson was created as part of a project on herbal medicine.
- Paul Simon learned the song from English folk singer Martin Carthy in 1965 and recorded it accompanied by his own Canticle (it is not, in fact, a canticle!). The song was used in the soundtrack to the 1967 film *The Graduate* and was subsequently released as a single.
- Your students might enjoy the Muppets version, without Canticle – there is a link to this video on [www.tuneintoenglish.com](http://www.tuneintoenglish.com).

1) Ask students to list as many herbs as they can in 30 seconds. Play the first verse of the song, which four do they hear? (Alternatively, bring the four herbs to school and ask students to identify them.)

2) Give each student a copy of the worksheet, folded so they cannot see the lyrics. Ask them to match each herb to its meaning (they will probably have to guess!)

**Key:**

parsley: comfort / remove bitterness  
sage: strength / power

rosemary: love  
thyme: courage

3) Discuss possible meanings of other herbs, then look at the pictures – asks students to discuss what each one is.

4) Play the song, students tick the words and phrases as they hear them.

5) Tell students to unfold the worksheet. They match the pictures to the words, then complete the lyrics with the missing words. Do not play the song at this stage.  
(note: cambric is a fine and dense cloth)

**Key:** See complete lyrics

6) Discuss any difficult vocabulary, then explain to students that the singer sets impossible tasks for the girl who wants to be his true love. What are these?

- Key:**
- a shirt cannot be made without seams  
(note grammar inaccuracy – double negative!)
  - there is no land between the sea and the sand
  - a sickle will not work if it is made of leather
  - heather is too delicate to bind anything

7) Sing together – one half can sing the main song, the other the canticle.

**Follow up:**

Students research the origins and interpretations of the song (see links above).

Students might enjoy making Scarborough Fair oatcakes:

<http://thelassintheapron.com/2014/10/27/scarborough-fair-oatcakes/>

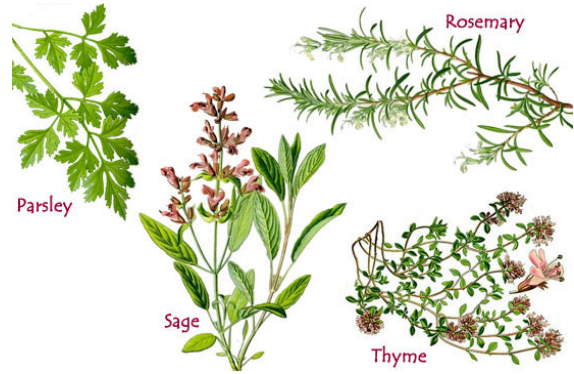


# Scarborough Fair / Canticle – Simon & Garfunkel



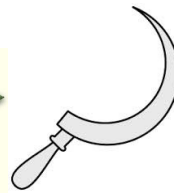
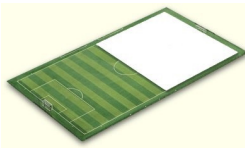
In Medieval times, herbs were said to represent virtues. Match these four herbs to their meanings.

- comfort / remove bitterness
- courage
- love
- strength / power



What other herbs and possible meanings can you think of?

What do each of these pictures represent? Discuss with a partner.



FOLD

## Match the pictures above to the following words and phrases

an acre  
a cambric shirt

heather  
the salt water and the sea strand

seams / needlework  
a sickle

## Look at the lyrics and complete the gaps with the words and phrases

Are you going to Scarborough fair?  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Remember me to one who lives there  
She once was a true love of mine

Tell her to make me \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Without no \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_  
Then she'll be a true love of mine

(On the side of a hill in the deep forest green)  
(Tracing a sparrow on snow-crested ground)  
(Blankets and bedclothes, the child of the mountain)  
(Sleeps unaware of the clarion call)

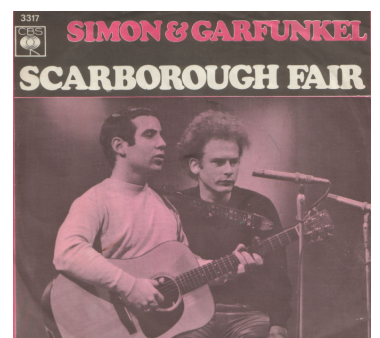
Tell her to find me \_\_\_\_\_ of land  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Between \_\_\_\_\_  
Then she'll be a true love of mine

(On the side of a hill, a sprinkling of leaves)  
(Washes the grave with silvery tears)  
(A soldier cleans and polishes a gun)

Tell her to reap it in a \_\_\_\_\_ of leather  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
And gather it all in a bunch of \_\_\_\_\_  
Then she'll be a true love of mine

(War bellows blazing in scarlet battalions)  
(Generals order their soldiers to kill)  
(And to fight for a cause they've long ago forgotten)

Repeat first verse





## Scarborough Fair / Canticle – Simon & Garfunkel – Complete



Are you going to Scarborough fair?  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Remember me to one who lives there  
She once was a true love of mine

Tell her to make me a cambric shirt  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Without no seams nor needlework  
Then she'll be a true love of mine

Tell her to find me an acre of land  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
Between the salt water and the sea strand  
Then she'll be a true love of mine

Tell her to reap it in a sickle of leather  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme  
And gather it all in a bunch of heather  
Then she'll be a true love of mine

Repeat first verse

(On the side of a hill in the deep forest green)  
(Tracing a sparrow on snow-crested ground)  
(Blankets and bedclothes, the child of the mountain)  
(Sleeps unaware of the clarion call)

(On the side of a hill, a sprinkling of leaves)  
(Washes the grave with silvery tears)  
(A soldier cleans and polishes a gun)

(War bellows blazing in scarlet battalions)  
(Generals order their soldiers to kill)  
(And to fight for a cause they've long ago forgotten)