



by CARL BARON

One difficulty that new banjo players have is learning the different tunings used on the instrument. It appears to me that the tuning in which the banjo is tuned in the same intervals as the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th strings of the guitar should aid new banjo players who were formerly (or still are) guitar players.

The pitches of the banjo strings are from the highest pitched string to the lowest are D, A, E and B and are the same relative intervals as the four low strings on the guitar; G, D, A and E. All the chords used for guitar can be used in this banjo tuning with only the 5th string adjusted, depending on which key you want to play in. For example: If you play using the chords analogous to G on the guitar (actually it will be the key of D on the banjo) then the 5th string is tuned to the 4th fret of the first string (the note F#). When playing using chords analogous to C on the guitar (actually G on the banjo) then the 5th string is tuned to the 5th fret of the first string (G). The following table gives the 5th string tuning as it changes with the key you play in:

BANJO KEY	Fret on 1st String to tune 5th string		
	Analogous Guitar Key		Pitch of 5th string
G or Em	C or Am	5	G
A	D	2	E
A	D	7	A
B	E	4	F#
C or Am	F or Dm	5	G
D or Bm	G or Em	4	F#
E	A	2	E
E	A	6	G#

A GUITAR PLAYER'S EASY PATH TO CLAWHAMMER

The tune I first learned in this tuning was *Cumberland Gap* (see record jacket "Liberty", Kyle Creed [Mountain 304] in which this tuning is described though as if the capo were on the 2nd fret.) Below you will find two tunes, *Darling Nelly Grey* (in D) and *Pastures Of Plenty* (in E minor) along with the words for each. There are many songs that can be done in this tuning. Experiment and try some for yourself.

Part of this lesson was given in a banjo workshop at the Philadelphia Folk Song Society's Bluegrass and Old Time Festival (Spring 1980).

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PASTURES OF PLENTY (Woody Guthrie)

It's a might hard road that my poor hands have hoed,
My poor feet have travelled a hot dusty road.
Out of your dust bowl and westward we roll,
Your deserts was hot and your mountains was cold.

I've worked in your orchards of peaches and prunes,
Slept on the ground in the light of the moon,
On the edge of your city you've seen us and then
We come with the dust and we're gone with the wind.

California, Arizona I make all your crops,
And it's north up to Oregon to gather your hops,
Dig the beets from your ground, cut the grapes from your vines,
To set on your table some light sparkling wine.

Green pastures of plenty from the dry desert ground,
From the Grand Coulee Dam where the water runs down,
Every state in this union us migrants have been,
We work in this fight and we'll fight 'till we win.

It's always we ramble that river and I,
All along your green valley I'll work 'till I die,
This land I'll defend with my life if need be,
'Cause my pastures of plenty must always be free.

DARLING NELLY GREY (B.R. Hanby)

There's a low green valley on the old Kentucky shore,
There I've whiled many happy hours away,
A-sitting and singing by the little cottage door
Where lived my Darling Nelly Grey.

Chorus:

O my poor Nelly Grey they have taken you away
And I'll never see my darling any more
I am sitting by the river and I'm weeping all the day,
For You've gone from the old Kentucky-shore.

When the moon had climbed the mountain and the stars were shining too
Then I'd take my darling Nelly Grey
And we'd float down the river in my little red canoe
While my banjo sweetly I would play.

My eyes are getting blinded and I cannot see my way
Hark! There's somebody knocking at the door.
Oh! I hear the angels calling and I see my Nelly Grey,
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore.

Chorus To Last Verse:

O my darling Nelly Grey, up in heaven there they say,
That they'll never take you from me any more.
I'm a-coming, coming, coming, as the angels clear the way,
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore.

PASTURES OF PLENTY

Arrangement by CARL BARON

G [C] Em [Am] G [C] Em [Am] G [C]

h

Em [Am] G [C] Em [Am]

p

[] = Analogous guitar key.

DARLING NELLY GREY

Arrangement by CARL BARON

D [G] G [C] D [G]

A [D] D [G] G [C] D [G]

A [D] D [G] [] = Analogous guitar key. A7 [D7]
 Chorus

D [G] A [D] D [G]

G [C] D [G] A [D] D [G]