

The tramp in American literature

Literary precursors to the tramp can be seen in the mid-nineteenth century. Walt Whitman's *Song of the Open Road* contained elements which would be seen in later works by Jack London, Mark Twain and many others. In most of these texts, tramping was a carefree, often sublime experience and a sense of freedom, adventure and opportunity underlies the stories. Tramp autobiographies began to appear in the 1870s and are still being published today.



1 Listen and complete the text with the missing words.

Song of the Open Road

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,

Healthy, 1., the world before me,

The long brown path before me leading wherever I 2.

Henceforth I ask no good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,

Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no 3., need nothing,

Done with indoor complaints, 4., querulous criticisms,

Strong and content I 5. the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,

I do not want the 6. any nearer,

I know they are very well where they are,

I know they suffice for those who 7. to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,

I carry them, men and 8., carry them with me wherever I go,

I swear it is impossible for me to get 9. of them,

I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in 10.)

2 What are the poet's feelings? Underline the correct alternatives.

pessimistic / optimistic • happy / unhappy • satisfied / unsatisfied

afoot: a piedi
 burden: dovere, responsabilità
 henceforth: da adesso in poi
 light-hearted: felice, senza pensieri
 querulous: lamentoso
 to suffice: bastare
 tramp: vagabondo, barbone
 to whimper: piagnucolare