

# Ripple

Words Robert Hunter, Music Jerry Garcia © 1971, Ice Nine Publishing Co. All rights reserved

*G*  
If my words did glow,  
*C*  
With the gold of sunshine,  
*C*  
And my tunes were played,  
*G*  
On the harp unstrung.  
*G*  
Would you hear my voice,  
*C*  
Come thru the music?  
*G D*  
Would you hold it near,  
*C G*  
As it were your own?  
*G*  
It's a hand-me-down,  
*C*  
The thoughts are broken,  
*C G*  
Perhaps there better left unsung.  
*G C*  
And I don't know, don't really care,  
*G D C G*  
Let there be songs to fill the air.

## CHORUS

*A<sup>m</sup> D*  
Ripple in still water,  
*G C*  
Where there is no pebble tossed,  
*A<sup>m</sup> D*  
Nor wind to blow.

*G*  
Reach out your hand,  
*C*  
If your cup be empty,  
*C G*  
If your cup is full, may it be again.  
*G C*  
Let it be known there is a fountain,  
*G D C G*  
That was not made by the hand of man.  
*G C*  
There is a road, no simple highway,  
*C G*  
Between the dawn and the dark of night.  
*G C*  
And if you go, no one may follow.  
*G D C G*  
That path is for your steps alone.

## CHORUS

*G C*  
You who choose to lead must follow,  
*C G*  
But if you fall, you fall alone.  
*G*  
If you should stand,  
*C*  
Then who's to guide you?  
*G D*  
If I knew the way,  
*C G*  
I would take you home.

# History and Scripture

Robert Hunter wrote this song in 1970 in London in the same afternoon he wrote "Brokedown Palace"



Robert Hunter and Jerry Garcia

and "To Lay Me Down" (reputedly also drinking half a bottle of retsina in the process). Jerry Garcia wrote the music.

Hunter was born **Robert Burns** in Oceana, California. In a 1973 *Rolling Stone* profile of the Grateful Dead, Charles Perry reported that he is a great-great grandson of Romantic poet Robert Burns.

An early friend of Jerry Garcia, they played together in bluegrass bands (such as the Tub Thumpers) in the early sixties, with Hunter on mandolin and upright bass. Hunter's relationship with the band grew until he was officially a non-performing band member.

When the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994, Hunter was included as a band member, the only non-performer ever so honored.

*Wikipedia*

Garcia was quoted once, when talking about the "American Beauty" album as saying something approximating: "Yep—every song on that album is a winner." Side two (and I will always think of albums as having two sides) starts with "Ripple." Side one starts with "Box of Rain." What a nice pair of opening songs for album sides those two are!

The Dead first performed "Ripple" in an acoustic set at the Fillmore West on August 19, 1970, along with first performances of "Brokedown Palace," "Operator," and "Truckin'." (Yes, "Truckin'" was played in the acoustic set.).

Despite the song's American folk song quality, I think of it as something from the Far East. Early on, I read somewhere a description of "Ripple" as having a gentle, Taoist bent. And then there's the fact that the chorus is a haiku.

But the poetic allusions in the song are not entirely from the East. Perhaps the primary source for the song comes from the 23rd Psalm, with its reference to "still water," and to a cup that may be full or empty. The deceptively simple language of the song leads us to contemplate sources beyond our immediate knowing—whether human or "not made by the hands of men"—as well as the interplay of life and death.

*By David Dodd, [www.dead.net](http://www.dead.net)*

