DROKACADEMY · A course guide to Saturdays at Three: A Song for Every Year



Saturdays at Three: The Course

A Twelve-Week Course Guide

First Edition · October 2026

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First edition, October 2026.

Readers who buy this book receive every revised First Edition free: write to sasha@drokacademy.ca.

The first edition remains the author's edition and will keep being updated. Second editions are written with co-authors who have lived experience; where they see a matter differently, each view is shown with its sources.

This guide teaches the course from the book Saturdays at Three: A Song for Every Year (First Edition, revised October 2026) and does not replace it. It prints no song lyrics; the songs are at the links the book gives.

Cover photograph by the author: Saratoga Beach, September 2023, from the book.

AI tools supported the research and drafting of this book. That support was substantial and I am grateful for it. I read and proofread the book myself, and every idea and every decision in it remains my responsibility.

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Week 1

Arriving (1991 to 1993)

In this section

- This week at a glance
- Day 1: Saratoga Beach · 1991 · Independence
- Day 2: Courtenay · 1992 · Statehood
- Day 3: Comox · 1993 · Identity
- Saturday at 3 p.m.
- Questions for discussion
- For children, youth and adults
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The first week stays close to Saratoga Beach and asks one question: what does it mean for a country, and a person, to begin?

This week at a glance

Table 1.1

Day	The journey	The Ukrainian song	The English partner
1	Saratoga Beach	«Україна» (Ukraina, "Ukraine")	This Land Is Your Land, Woody Guthrie
2	Courtenay	«Ще не вмерла України» (Shche ne vmerla Ukrainy, "Ukraine Has Not Yet Perished")	O Canada
3	Comox	«Україночка» (Ukrainochka, "Little Ukrainian Woman")	Rise Up, Andra Day

Day 1: Saratoga Beach · 1991 · Independence

The journey. No driving today, because in 1991 nobody went anywhere. The group stays at Saratoga Beach, on the Oyster River in K'ómoks territory, where the low tide pulls back so far that people on the flats look like marks against the silver.

The song. «Україна» (Ukraina, "Ukraine"), Taras Petrynenko.

Words and a performance. Words: WikiSpiv, https://www.wikispiv.com/wiki/Україно. Performance: Taras Petrynenko, a 1988 performance from the Suspilne archive, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLfxBxoean8.

The English partner. This Land Is Your Land, Woody Guthrie. The pair is about saying the country's name aloud. Performance: Woody Guthrie, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1my1jn6QHzE.

Key words. незале́жність (nezalézhnist): independence; референду́м (referendúm): referendum; Украї́на (Ukraína): Ukraine, named; Украї́но (Ukraíno): Ukraine, addressed; кли́чний відмі́нок (klýchnyi vidmínok): the vocative case; Чума́цький Шлях (Chumátskyi Shliakh): the Milky Way, lit. the Chumak Way; чума́к / чумаки́ (chumák / chumaký): salt trader / salt traders; шлях (shliakh): way, route; се́рпень (sérpen): August; во́ля (vólia): freedom, and also will; сві́чка (svíchka): candle; прое́кт / прое́кт (proékt / proiékt): project: the older spelling, and the one fixed in 2019; рідни́й (ridnýi): one's own. Watch this word. It comes back..

Pronunciation. г is a voiced h from the throat, never a g. Say го́ри (hóry, mountains), and feel it low. и and і are two vowels, not one. сир (syr) is cheese, сір (sir) is grey. ї is yi, two sounds in one letter, and it sits inside the country's own name. The Russian alphabet has no such letter.

How to sing it. Pitch low. Standing outdoors everyone drifts sharp, and by the second chorus nobody can reach the top. One person hums the tonic and the rest find it. Breathe before the chorus, never inside it. Україно is one breath.

What to listen for. The chorus calls Ukraine in the vocative, Україно (Ukraíno), while the verses talk about her in the plain form, Україна (Ukraína). The song turns from talking about a country to talking to her, and the chorus is always the turning.

Try it. Call people by name in the vocative: Ма́мо (Ма́mo, Mum), Та́ту (Tátu, Dad), Бра́те (Bráte, Brother), Оли́во (Olývo, Olivia).

Three sentences. Say each one out loud, to somebody.

- Я з Украї́ни. (Ya z Ukraíny.) I am from Ukraine.
- Як спра́ви? (Yak správy?) How are you?

- Дя́кую. (Diákuiu.) Thank you.

Canada and Ukraine. Canada and Poland were the first countries to recognise Ukraine's independence, on 2 December 1991, the day after the referendum, and Canada was the first Western country to do so.

What Sasha learned today, and from whom. From Yuriy: that Volhynian незалежність sits further back in the mouth. He had read about the vowel and never heard a person make it, and the person had been in the good chair the whole time. From Ulyana: that it is проєкт now, and has been since 2019, and nobody had told him. From James: that writing a word in both alphabets is not a habit but a necessity, if you are the kind of person who will otherwise lose it in one of them.

Day 2: Courtenay · 1992 · Statehood

The journey. Twenty minutes down the old highway to Courtenay, where the valley does its paperwork, in K'ómoks territory. The stone above the museum door still reads POST OFFICE. The Courtenay and District Museum holds the elasmosaur found in the Puntledge River in 1988 by Mike Trask and his daughter Heather, adopted as British Columbia's provincial fossil in 2023.

The song. «Ще не вмерла України» (Shche ne vmerla Ukrainy, "Ukraine Has Not Yet Perished"), the State Anthem of Ukraine.

Words and a performance. Words: nationalanthems.info, https://nationalanthems.info/ua.htm. Performance: the Exemplary Orchestra of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DakCtIqR1I.

The English partner. O Canada. The pair is about an anthem as a promise. Performance: a performance of the national anthem, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4PFyZEGzIU.

Key words. гімн (himn): anthem; держа́ва (derzháva): the state, the apparatus; держа́вний (derzhávnyi): of the state, official; прапор (prápor): flag; тризу́б (tryzúb):

trident; герб (herb): coat of arms; Украї́ни (Ukraíny): of Ukraine, genitive; родови́й відмі́нок (rodóvyi vidmínok): the genitive case; сла́ва (sláva): glory; во́ля (vólia): freedom, will; ще не (shche ne): not yet: the two words the anthem hangs on; вме́рла (vmérla): has died, feminine; зако́н (zakón): law.

Pronunciation. Щ is one letter and four English ones: shch. Not sh, not ch, both, run together with nothing between. В before a consonant softens toward w or u. вмерла and умерла (umerla, has died) are the same word and singers slide between them.

How to sing it. It is short. Do not rush it; it is not a march. Stand still rather than at attention. And never begin it without finding the note first, or the crowd will crack on the top line and the moment is gone.

What to listen for. One ending changes the meaning. The original text has the plain form of the country's name, so the country herself has not died. The 2003 law changed it to the genitive, України (Ukraíny, of Ukraine), so it is her glory and freedom that have not died.

Three sentences. Say each one out loud, to somebody.

- Мене́ зва́ти… (Mené zváty…) My name is….
- Ду́же прие́мно. (Dúzhe pryiémno.) Pleased to meet you.
- До поба́чення. (Do pobáchennia.) Goodbye.

Canada and Ukraine. Canada and Ukraine established diplomatic relations on 27 January 1992, twelve days after the anthem's music was approved on 15 January. Both countries were doing the paperwork of statehood in the same January.

What Sasha learned today, and from whom. From Ulyana: that the fossil waited thirty-seven years for its own name. He had read the panel twice and not noticed the dates. From Olivia: that the country stopped being the thing that might die is a better sentence than the one he had prepared, and he used hers for the rest of the trip.

Day 3: Comox · 1993 · Identity

The journey. The Comox marina on a working Wednesday morning, smelling of diesel, rope and seaweed drying on pilings. Comox carries a name that is not English, from the K'ómoks First Nation, who describe their territory on their own pages as the land of plenty. The language once called Island Comox is ayajuthem.

The song. «Україночка» (Ukrainochka, "Little Ukrainian Woman"), words by Andrii Demydenko, music by Hennadii Tatarchenko, sung by Oksana Bilozir.

Words and a performance. Words: pisni.ua, https://pisni.ua/oksana-bilozir-ukrainochka. Performance: Oksana Bilozir, official audio, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVeqlCaCbMI.

The English partner. Rise Up, Andra Day. The pair is about sad words, cheerful tune. Performance: Andra Day, official video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwgr_IMeEgA.

Key words. Украї́ночка (Ukraínochka): Ukrainian girl, in the affectionate form; зме́ншувально-пе́стливий су́фікс (zménshuvalno-péstlyvyi súfiks): the diminutive-affectionate suffix; скори́тися (skorýtysia): to submit, to be subdued; відроди́тися (vidrodýtysia): to be reborn; сльоза́ (slozá): a tear; чужина́ (chuzhyná): a foreign land, with the sense of not ours; поло́н (polón): captivity; мату́ся (matúsia): mum, in the affectionate form; со́нечко (sónechko): little sun, from со́нце; хлі́бчик (khlíbchyk): from хліб, bread; гро́ші (hróshi): money; молоко́ (molokó): milk: the vowel drill.

Pronunciation. O stays O. An unstressed Ukrainian o keeps its full value. Молоко́ is mo-lo-KO, never ma-la-KO. Russian slides unstressed o toward a; Ukrainian does not. This single thing is the fastest way to hear which language is being sung.

How to sing it. Bounce, slightly ahead of the beat, and no reverence. Diaspora choirs kill songs like this by treating them as sacred. It is defiance with a dance beat, and the lightness is the argument.

What to listen for. Count the affectionate word forms, then notice what the verses say: a bright tune carrying captivity and exile, and an ending that refuses to submit. The tune is not hiding the words. It is the answer to them.

Three sentences. Say each one out loud, to somebody.

- Я не розумі́ю. (Ya ne rozumíiu.) I don't understand.
- Повторі́ть, будь ла́ска. (Povtorít, bud láska.) Please say it again.
- Повільні́ше, будь ла́ска. (Povilníshe, bud láska.) More slowly, please.

Canada and Ukraine. The first Ukrainians to settle in Canada came mostly from Galicia and Bukovyna, and many were recorded by the name of their region rather than as Ukrainians: a photograph of about 1911 in the Canadian Encyclopedia is captioned "Galician (Ukrainian) immigrants". The name had to be argued for here as well as there.

What Sasha learned today, and from whom. From Ulyana: to play it twice. He had been about to explain the words over the top of the first listen, and she stopped him, and the second listen did the work no explanation would have.

Saturday at 3 p.m.

There is no Saturday in the book this week, but your group still stops. At three in the afternoon, wherever you are, stand for a few minutes. Somebody hums the first note, low enough for everyone, and the group sings «Україна» (Ukraina, "Ukraine") standing, as the travellers do on the first evening, because you stand for that one. Then each person says one of the week's sentences to the person beside them.

Questions for discussion

The book closes every day with one question. These are the three for this week.

1. Day 1. Yuriy remembers a night when a country began to exist. Ulyana has never known it not to. Which of them is standing on firmer ground?

2. Day 2. Ukraine chose its anthem, flag and coat of arms in six weeks. British Columbia took five years and a public vote to choose a fossil. Which process produces symbols people actually believe in?
3. Day 3. In the worst economic year of its short life, the song the country sang was a bright one about not submitting. Was that avoidance, or was it the most useful thing anybody did that year?

For children, youth and adults

- **Children and families.** Call people in the room in the vocative, the way day one's Try it does: Маґмо (Мámo, Mum), Таґу (Tátu, Dad), Браґе (Bráte, Brother). Learn three key words with pictures: the sea, a candle, a road.
- **Youth.** Compare «Україна» with This Land Is Your Land. Listen to both, then find three words doing the same job in both songs, as the book's method asks (page 452).
- **Adults.** Read Yuriy's memory of 1991 aloud, a paragraph each (pages 30 to 31), and take day one's question: which of them is standing on firmer ground?

Week 1 review

- Say the three sentences from each day out loud. They are gathered in the book under All the Sentences (page 438).
- Practise the vocative with the names of people in your group.
- Listen to all three songs in the course playlist and notice which one feels like a beginning to you.

In the book

Read the chapters before the session, or read them aloud together, a paragraph each.

Table 1.2

Day	English edition	Ukrainian edition	Sources and links
1	Chapter One, pages 28 to 42; three sentences, page 39; key words, page 40	Урок 1, page 34	Sources by day, page 492
2	Chapter Two, pages 43 to 54; three sentences, page 51; key words, page 51	Урок 2, page 55	Sources by day, page 493
3	Chapter Three, pages 55 to 66; three sentences, page 63; key words, page 63	Урок 3, page 70	Sources by day, page 493

Enjoyed this sample?

The full book is available at krasun.ca.

Teachers and community groups can request a review copy:
sasha@drokacademy.ca

Sing along with the performances linked in the book

Days 1 to 25
50 videos

Days 26 to 36
22 videos