

Day Dah Light (Banana Boat Song)

Louise Bennett - *Day Dah Light*

Day oh, day oh,
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 Day da light an' me an go home
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)

Come missa tally man, come tally me
 banana
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 Come fix your cotta Matty, fe he come tek
 bunch banana.
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)

Six han', seven han', eight han', bunch!
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 Six han', seven han', eight han', bunch!
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)

Me come yah fe work, me no come yah fe
 idle
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 No gimme so so bunch, me no horse wi
 bridle
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)

Six han', seven han', eight han', bunch!
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 Six han', seven han', eight han', bunch!
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)

The checka man a check, but him check wi
 dah caution
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 Me back jus a bruk wid bare exhaustion
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)

Day oh, day oh.
(Day dah light an' me wan' go home.)
 Day dah light an' me wan' go home.



Harry Belafonte - *Banana Boat Song*

1. Day oh! Day oh!
 Daylight come an' me wan' go home
 Day, me say day, me say day, me say day,
 me say day, me say day oh
 Daylight come an' me wan' go home.

2. Work all night on a drink o' rum
(Daylight come and me wan' go home)
 Stack banana till the mornin' come
(Daylight come and me wan' go home)

3. Come mister tally man, tally me banana
(Daylight come and me wan' go home)
 Come mister tally man, tally me banana
(Daylight come and me wan' go home)

4. Lift six foot, seven foot, eight foot, bunch!
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Six foot, seven foot, eight foot bunch!
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)

5. Day! me say day oh
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Day, me say day, me say day, me say day,
 me say day, me say day...
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)

6. A beautiful bunch o' ripe banana
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Hide the deadly black tarantula!
(Daylight come an me wan' go home)

7. Lift six foot, seven foot, eight foot bunch!
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Six foot, seven foot, eight foot bunch!
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)

8. Day, me say day o
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Day, me say day, me say day, me say day,
 me say day, me say day
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)

9. Come mister tally man tally me banana...
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Come mister tally man tally me banana...
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)

10. Day oh! Day oh!
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home)
 Day, me say day, me say day, me say day,
 me say day, me say day oh
(Daylight come an' me wan' go home.)



Notes

Cargo loading shanty, from Jamaica and Trinidad.

Alternative Titles: Banana boat song, Day dah light, Day-oh.

Versions:

[Louise Bennett](#) MBE, 1954, Album: *Jamaican Folk Songs*
[Harry Belafonte](#), 1956, Album: *Calypso*

[Wikipedia](#) says Harry **Belafonte** based his version on those of

a) Trinidadian singers **Edric Connor** and the Caribbeans (1952, Day dah Light, Album *Songs from Jamaica*)

([YouTube](#) version available) and

b) Jamaican poet, folklorist and educator, **Louise Bennett** MBE (1954, Day dah Light, Album *Jamaican Folk Songs*)

([YouTube](#) version available)

(See also the [Wikipedia page](#) about Louise Bennett)

Folkways 1954 album: *Jamaican Folk Songs sung by Louise Bennett* says:

A banana-loading song. About three o'clock in the morning, the men and women who have been loading the banana boats all night see the first light of dawn and they sing: **Day dah light and me wan' go home**".

A "bunch" of bananas has nine or more hands; it is heavier than six or seven hands, but the loaders are not paid anything extra for carrying bunches, hence the stress on "bunch".

See also a comprehensive and well researched article by [BILL](#), 2005, at soquoted.blogspot.com/2005/09/who-wrote-banana-boat-song.html

Notes on the words

Day da light - There's the light (used by both Connor and Bennett)

Cotta - leaf binding bananas on the head

Me say day - I can see the daylight (by Belafonte).

Six foot etc - original versions say **six hand** etc. Much more sense!



Loading Bananas on Lighters, Montego Bay, Jamaica, early 20th century
from International Mission Photography Archive, University of Edinburgh,
via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Image of bananas being loaded onto lighters, small boats that were used to transport cargoes to ships. Groups of men and women can be seen round the dock carrying bunches of bananas on their heads waiting to be loaded onto the lighters. Others are loading up the lighters. Until well into the 20th century Montego Bay functioned primarily as a sugar port but also exported bananas.