

Go To Sleep

Informant/Performer:
Harriet McClention
Livingston, AL, 1940

Source:
Library of Congress AFS 4025 B2
Collected by John A. and Ruby T. Lomax

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive, using mostly quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The first staff ends with a fermata over the word 'go'. The second staff ends with a comma. The third staff ends with a quarter rest. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line.

Go to sleep, go — to sleep,

Go to sleep - y lit - tle ba - by,

Ma - ma gone a - way, and pa - pa gone, too,

Go to sleep - y lit - tle ba - by.

Background Information

This lullaby has quieted restless babies throughout the whole South for at least a hundred years and probably more. Where other lullabies are generally localized, this one pops up everywhere and in innumerable forms. Aunt Hattie's version is not particularly full, but her rendition of it, taken as she rocked her own great-grandchild to sleep in front of the microphone, is completely authentic.

Alan Lomax, liner notes to *Afro-American Blues and Game Songs*