

KENTUCKY IS MY LAND

*Kentucky is my land.
It is a place beneath the wind and sun
In the very heart of America.
It is bounded on the east, north and west by rivers
And on the south by mountains.*

*Only one boundary line is not a natural one,
It is a portion of the southern boundary
That runs westward from the mountains
Across the delta lowlands to the Mississippi.*

*Within these natural boundaries is Kentucky,
Shaped like the mouldboard on a hillside turning plow.
Kentucky is neither southern, northern, eastern or western,
It is the core of America
If these United States can be called a body,
Kentucky can be called its heart*

*I didn't have any choice as to where I was born,
But if I had had my choice,
I would have chosen Kentucky.
And if I could have chosen wind to breathe,
I would have chosen a Kentucky wind
With scent of cedar, pine-tree needles,
Green tobacco leaves, pawpaw, persimmon and sassafras.
I would have chosen too,
Wind from the sawbriar and greenbriar blossoms . . .*

*. . . The heart of America
A land of even tempo,
A land of mild traditions,
A land that has kept its tradition of horse racing,
Ballad, song, story and folk music.
It has held steadfast to its pioneer tradition
Of fighting men, fighting for America
And for the soil of Kentucky,
That is filled with bluegrass beauty
That is not akin to poetry
But is poetry . . .
And when I go beyond the border,
I take with me growth and beauty of the seasons,
The music of the wind in pine and cedar tops,
The wordless songs of snow-melted water
When it pours over the rocks to wake the spring.
I take with me Kentucky embedded in my brain and heart,
In my flesh and bone and blood
Since I am of Kentucky
And Kentucky is part of me.*

By Jesse Stuart

