

The Ballad of the Fearless Benjamin Lay

David Clinch and Marcus Rediker

C F
Benjamin Lay was a giant of man, though barely four feet tall.

C Dm G
He never knew fear and he never backed down, he faced the slavers all

C F
He fought with fearless courage for what he knew was right

C G C
He carried on his noble cause, searching for the light

G D G

Born in Copford, Essex, in sixteen eighty-two

F G D G G7
Into a humble family, Quakers through and through

C F

He tended sheep on his brother's farm, he loved the shepherd's life

C Dm G C
But when it came time to learn a trade, his lot was naught but strife

C F
Apprenticed to a glover in a lowly 'stinking trade'

C Dm G
He ran away to London soon a sailor he was made

C F
He sailed the seas for a dozen years, he longed to see the world

C G C
For ports afar he and his mates their gallant sails unfurled

G D G
But when he docked in Bridgetown his heart was grieved and sore

F G D G G7
The tyranny, the slavery, he'd fight for evermore

C F
He saw the hunger and the pain, the torture and the dead

C Dm G C
That sugar in a cup of tea from Africans had bled

C F
To Sarah Smith soon Ben was wed, in 1718

C Dm G
Though "weighty Quakers" did their best to try to intervene

C F
He fought them off and found his love, a perfect match for him

C G C
His very own size and fiery too against the slaver's whim

G D G
 He studied hard the Bible and found the verses strong
 F G D G G7
 The Book of Revelation inspired him to a song
 C F
 Of freedom, land, and Jubilee, no one shall have to slave
 C Dm G C
 But first he'd fight the Quakers, to Mammon they had caved

 C F
 To Quakers rich and powerful and to all who owned a slave
 C Dm G
 Lay was a mortal terror, against them he would rave
 C F
 And sprinkle them with bright red juice to publicize their crime
 C G C
 Symbolic blood upon their heads, a judgment in his time
 G D G
 Soon rich Quakers expelled him, from his devoted flock
 F G D G G7
 They tried to silence Benjamin, and put him in the stocks
 C F
 Yet Benjamin could not be stilled, he fought for the oppressed
 C Dm G C
 His courage and humanity could never be repressed

 C F
 Benjamin led a simple life, virtuous and free
 C Dm G
 He lived in a cave and made his clothes so very modestly
 C F
 He killed no animal, ate no meat, loved God's creatures all
 C G C
 He lived on fruits and vegetables, no violence at all
 G D G
 Benjamin died a very old man, in 1759
 F G D G G7
 His fellow Quakers saw the light and made his cause their own
 C F
 His iron will had won the day, but he slipped into the night
 C Dm G C
 It's up to us to bring him back, to inspire us in the fight

Repeat first verse/refrain to 'light'

Our acknowledgement to Dick Gaughan for the tune from ***The Ballad of '84***