

## The History of the Yellow Ribbon

The Yellow Ribbon symbolizes **hope, remembrance, and safe return** — emotionally powerful and broadly appealing sentiments.

### 1. Folk Origins and Early Symbolism

- The tradition of using a yellow ribbon dates back centuries. One of the earliest symbolic uses comes from a 19th-century American folk song "**She Wore a Yellow Ribbon**", which tells of a woman wearing a yellow ribbon in her hair to show devotion to her beloved serving in the military.
- During the **Civil War**, women reportedly wore yellow ribbons to remember loved ones away at war.



### 2. "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree" (1973)

- The modern popularization of the yellow ribbon came with the **1973 hit song** by Tony Orlando and Dawn. The song tells of a man returning from prison, asking his loved one to tie a yellow ribbon around a tree if she still wants him.
- Although not originally about the military, the theme of **waiting, loyalty, and welcoming home** struck a chord with the public.

### 3. Iran Hostage Crisis (1979–1981)

- Americans tied yellow ribbons around trees to show support for the 52 U.S. hostages held in Iran. This solidified the yellow ribbon as a **public symbol of hope, remembrance, and support** for those far from home.
- It marked the shift from personal devotion to a **national symbol of solidarity**.

### 4. Gulf War and Beyond

- During the **1991 Gulf War**, yellow ribbons became widespread as a way for Americans to show **support for U.S. troops** deployed abroad.
- The phrase "**Support Our Troops**" often accompanied yellow ribbon magnets, pins, or bumper stickers.

The yellow ribbon didn't start as a military-specific symbol, but it evolved into one due to its emotional resonance and repeated public use in times of national military engagement.