



# Develop your Idea

Using the Five Commandments  
of Storytelling

- ① *Inciting Incident*
- ② *Turning Point*  
*Progressive Complication*
- ③ *Crisis*
- ④ *Climax*
- ⑤ *Resolution*



*includes  
Work- &  
Cheatsheet*



*Notes:*

# Work- and Cheatsheet

## EPISODE 026: Five Commandments of Storytelling

The five commandments provide the basic structure for our story. They are the elements that provoke change in your lyrics' story or story moment.

### Commandment #1 The Inciting Incident

An inciting incident is an event that throws the central character of your song out of homeostasis. It can be either causal which refers to an action by a character, or it can be coincidental which means it's an event out of the control of the characters, e.g., the weather.

The job of the inciting incident is not only to throw the character's life out of balance but also to raise a question in the audience's mind that must be resolved. The key to writing an inciting incident is to make that event invisible in some way. That means the character will ignore it, or they will not understand the true nature of that event, so they won't be able to deal with it accordingly.

## 5 Commandments of Storytelling

1. the inciting incident (*causal or coincidental*)
2. turning point progressive complications (*active or revelatory*)
3. a crisis question with a binary choice
4. the decision / the climax
5. the resolution

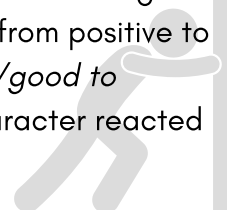
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### Commandment #2

#### The Turning Point Progressive Complication

If you want your lyric idea to gain weight and more meaning, you should focus on progressively complicating the situation for your song's main character until they hit a turning point. That means life gets more and more complicated for the character until something irrevocably changes. The Turning Point Progressive Complication shifts the value from positive to negative, negative to positive (*or bad to worse/good to better*). Here, the initial strategy of how the character reacted to the inciting incident doesn't work anymore.



# Work- and Cheatsheet

## EPISODE 026: Five Commandments of Storytelling

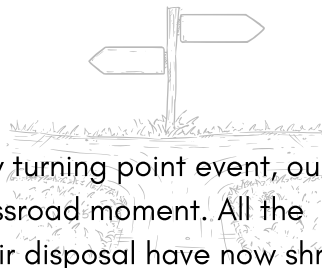
The turning point can be caused by an action of another character or it's a revelation.

If you use progressive complications in your song, make sure that your complications get greater, are unique, and escalate to a turning point. To see how this is done, check out episodes 27 and 32 of the Stories in Songs Podcast.

### Commandment #3

#### The Crisis

After that active or revelatory turning point event, our character has reached a crossroad moment. All the choices they once had at their disposal have now shrunk to a binary choice.



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And that choice is either choosing the lesser of two evils (*Best Bad Choice*) or deciding between two irreconcilable goods. (*What is good for one is not good for another.*) There can't be a clear right or wrong way. And something must be at stake.

### Commandment #4

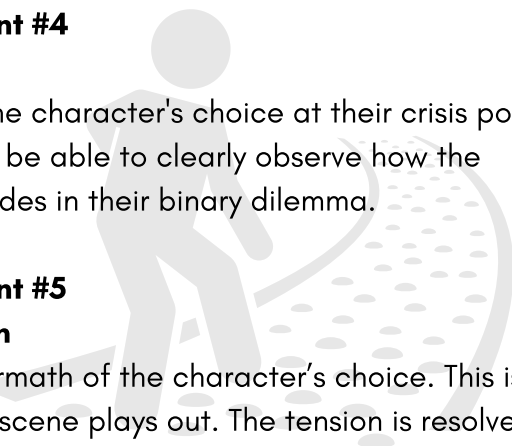
#### The Climax

The climax is the character's choice at their crisis point. The audience must be able to clearly observe how the character decides in their binary dilemma.

### Commandment #5

#### The Resolution

This is the aftermath of the character's choice. This is how the rest of the scene plays out. The tension is resolved.



### Levels of progressive complications

- NONE (reversible and/or no relevant consequence)
- LOW (reversible and/or minor consequence)
- MODERATE (Reversible but with difficulty and/or greater consequence)
- HIGH (Reversible but only with great difficulty and severe consequence)
- TOTAL (Irreversible)

NOTES:

# Work- and Cheatsheet

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## Outline your Idea

#1 *What's the inciting incident?*  Causal  Coincidental

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Position in Lyric Structure: \_\_\_\_\_

#2 *What's the turning point progressive complication?*  Active  Revelatory

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Position in Lyric Structure: \_\_\_\_\_

#3 *What's the crisis?*  Best Bad Choice  Irreconcilable Goods

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Position in Lyric Structure: \_\_\_\_\_

#4 *What's the decision?*

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Position in Lyric Structure: \_\_\_\_\_

#5 *What's the resolution?*

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Position in Lyric Structure: \_\_\_\_\_