

EPISODE 013

The Beatles Way to Include Your Listeners In Your Narration

See the show notes at storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-013

[00:00:00] Hey, this is Melanie Naumann, and you are listening to the Stories in Songs Podcast.

Do you want to learn how to narrate a "Love At First Sight" moment in your lyrics?

But you struggle with not knowing how to keep your listeners engaged in your narration, especially if you want to include your audience in your first-person narration.

And maybe you've already been searching for song examples that show you how to pull it off?

Well, look no further.

This episode is what you were looking for.

Because it gives you an example of how The Beatles pulled it off!

AND we use one of their famous songs ...

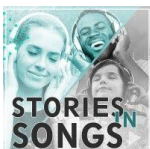
"I Saw Her Standing There" ...

To find out how to use a love story moment ...

And wrap it into a narration ...

That addresses your listeners ...

While still engaging them in what you have to say.



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Wow, incredible.

In the last podcast episodes, we have already studied three different love songs about meeting that special someone for the first time.

In John Michael Montgomery's "Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)," we witnessed a beautiful love-at-first-sight story that pulled us right into the moment. We were at the auction where our narrator called out across the room to get the attention of one amazing woman. And we even heard about their happy ending.

In Christina Aguilera's song "Ain't No Other Man," we talked about the three mistakes you should avoid if you don't want your listeners to feel left out.

And Madonna's Song "Crazy For You" showed us how to really speak to your audience's emotions by creating an enticing and irresistible attraction-at-first-sight moment.

Now to continue where we left off, I'd like to talk with you about one song similar to Madonna's song "Crazy for You." You will notice that we have a similar dance club setting, and of course, there's going to be magic in the air when our two lovebirds see each other for the very first time.

But the difference will be that it's not going to be an erotic meet-cute scene. So you can see that we can pull the listeners into our song and put them in the character's shoes without creating a hot and steamy atmosphere.

So are you ready?

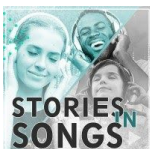
Perfect, let's start with this episode's song analysis.

"I Saw Her Standing There" by the Beatles

[00:02:57] The song we are going to analyze is "I Saw Her Standing There" by The Beatles, and of course, it's another song that shows you how you can write a love-at-first-sight song.

As already said, "I Saw Her Standing There" is the harmless option of Madonna's song "Crazy For You" because it doesn't include that erotic touch. But the magic is there nonetheless.

"I Saw Her Standing There" by the English rock band the Beatles was written by Paul McCartney and John Lennon. It is the opening track on the band's 1963 debut album 'Please



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Please Me' and was ranked No. 139 on Rolling Stone's list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time in 2004.

Now, let's get to the lyrics.

As always, I'm reading them to you first before we start analyzing the storytelling aspect.

[[Video]]

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/oxwAB3SEctc>

I Saw Her Standing There lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC

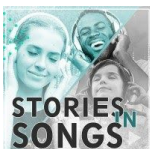
*Well, she was just seventeen
You know what I mean
And the way she looked
Was way beyond compare
So how could I dance with another
Ooh, when I saw her standing there?*

*Well, she looked at me
And I could see
That before too long
I'd fall in love with her
She wouldn't dance with another
Ooh, when I saw her standing there*

*Well, my heart went "boom"
When I crossed that room
And I held her hand in mine.*

*Oh, we danced through the night
And we held each other tight
And before too long
I fell in love with her
Now I'll never dance with another
Ooh, since I saw her standing there*

*Well, my heart went, "Boom"
When I crossed that room
And I held her hand in mine*



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*Oh, we danced through the night
And we held each other tight
And before too long
I fell in love with her
Now I'll never dance with another
Oh, since I saw her standing there
Oh, since I saw her standing there
Yeah, well since I saw her standing there*

Now that we have read through the lyrics let's start dissecting them to study the storytelling craft in this song by using the S.O.N.G. Framework again.

So are you ready?
Let's begin.

1. Summary (About)

[00:05:01] The first step of the S.O.N.G. Framework is called: Summary.
Let's answer a couple of questions that give us an overview of what the song is about.

And that's the same question we ask first.

1. What is the song generally about?

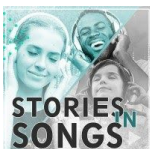
If we do not stray far in reading between the lines and just focus on what's obvious, we just sum up the situation we encounter.

In the Beatles' song, we imagine a ball, and our main character of the song looks across the room and sees a fascinating girl standing there. It's love at first sight, and it's once again the well-known love story moment of when the lovers first meet. So to say, another wonderful meet-cute scene that is a very typical first encounter in the '60s since people went out to dance to meet someone.

The next question is:

2. Do the first lines of the song set the expectations of what the song will be about? Is it a promise to what kind of story moment the audience can expect?

Here's a reminder, the first lines of the song are:



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*Well, she was just seventeen
You know what I mean
And the way she looked
Was way beyond compare*

The beginning of the song introduces us to the narrator, who tells us about a seventeen-year-old girl. Since he refers to the way she looks and that she's beyond compare, we can assume he thinks she's beautiful.

And how do you feel?
Do those first lines of the song hook you?

I feel like I'm being told a story, and I want to know what happens next. He has seen this girl now that he finds attractive, but what will he do about it?

That's the question that keeps me listening to the song.

Before we dive deeper into the storytelling aspect, let's talk about:

3. If the song was a scene taken out of a movie, under what genre would you promote the movie? What is the story's genre?

Now we look at the lyrics of the entire song again.

The lovers meet scene is entirely in the foreground of everything that's happening in the song. We do not get any backstory that would make us suspect there's something else going on. It's a straight-out love scene that grows from love at first sight to the commitment of an everlasting relationship.

4. So we can say with absolute certainty that the song refers to a specific moment that we expect to see in the love story.

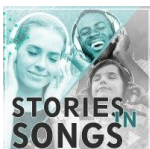
It's: the lovers meet.

5. Does the song use conventions of the love story genre as well?

Here's a reminder: There are different conventions between the different story genres. For example, a crime story has a different set of conventions as the horror genre. And the love genre certainly has a bunch of its own conventions that uniquely identify the characters' roles in a particular story or how the story moves forward.

For a complete love story, those conventions are having a

- rival
- including helpers and harmers,
- an external need,



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- opposing forces,
- secrets,
- rituals
- as well as moral weight.

If you need those conventions explained, please check out episode 6 of the Stories in Songs podcast, where I'll introduce you to the love story genre.

Now the question is: Did you find one of those love story conventions in The Beatles' song "I Saw Her Standing There"?

We are able to find a mention of a possible rival who are basically all the other men she could ever dance with, as well as all the other women that he could ever dance with:

The narrator is singing:

She wouldn't dance with another

as well as

Now I'll never dance with another

Since rivals are completely out of the picture for both of our lovers, we get the sense that they have found eternal love.

This assumption is confirmed by the image created in our heads. Both of them will never dance with another person.

That means, if they dance, they dance with each other.

And that's another love story genre convention fulfilled: they have their own ritual.

Last but not least, ...

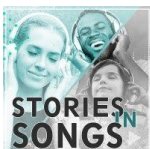
6. Is the song's character talking about the distant past, their current state of mind, or an imagined future?

The narrator is using past tense to tell the story of how he first met his love.

But since we have the line in there:

Now I'll never dance with another.

The narrator has built a bridge that connects the past with the present and even the future.



He will never dance with another.

By sticking to the action, the song is mainly about – the dancing – the songwriters McCartney and Lennon have beautifully shown the love story’s progression.

We know those two are still together even though we don’t know how much time has passed since then. The narrator could be talking to his kids or grandchildren, who knows. But considering the point of view, which we will talk about later, he is addressing someone by asking the questions:

*So how could I dance with another
Ooh, when I saw her standing there?*

or saying:

*Well, she was just seventeen.
You know what I mean.*

But the feeling of everlasting love stays with us, and that’s what makes the song so beautiful.

The last question of the first step of the S.O.N.G. framework is:

7. Are we hearing someone’s inner monologue, someone narrating a story, or a conversation between two or more people?

I’ve already called the main character of the song: the narrator.

Because he is narrating the story of how he first met his special someone.

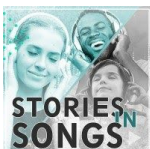
In contrast to Montgomery’s song "Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)," the narrator does not give us any insights into what he was exactly thinking or feeling in that very moment as he met her for the very first time. The only clue we get is that his heart went "Boom."

But we don’t feel like we are put into the narrator’s shoes.

As said, we feel like we are just being told a story.

That’s nothing bad, even though you might wonder since we talked about how to engage the audience by letting them become part of the story themselves in the last two episodes.

But not every story needs to have your listeners taking on the role of your main character.



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Sometimes, we just enjoy a good story that confirms the things we'd like to believe in and hearing it from someone who has experienced it – like in this case: love at first sight that lasts.

2. Observer

[00:12:13] Okay, now that we have a general overview of the story, let's talk about the song's characters.

1. What is the role the singer takes on in the song?

The singer is the main character of the love story moment and takes on the narrator's role.

2. Is there another person the singer, refers to?

Yes, he is talking about that seventeen-year-old girl across the room.

3. What does the main character in the song consciously WANT? What is his goal?

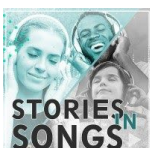
The narrator wants to dance with her because he knows it won't take long before he'd fall in love with her. So that's what he will try to achieve.

4. Now that we know what the character WANTS, do we also find out what they unconsciously NEED? What is their internal desire?

As you already know by now, a story is more captivating when we have three-dimensional characters. They are just more believable because they are torn between what they seek to achieve and what they unconsciously need - which sometimes could be the complete opposite of what they want.

How many people want success only to find out that they are looking for love and connection? But it's lonely at the top, right?

And in a love story, the characters have to recognize what would benefit them the most. But this happens way into the love story. Since we are just talking about a moment in time now that refers to how the two lovers meet for the first time, it's unnecessary to show or hint at the personal development the main character needs to undergo.



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And as already said, this song does not give us any backstory. And we don't know much about the main character. It could be everyone. So we can't assume what he might need.

The next question is:

5. Do we like the main character of the song? Does he have positive character traits? Or is it someone we despise and can't consider a role model?

We don't get many clues about the narrator.

But since we like listening to his story that tells us about everlasting love, we also look at the narrator as someone we can trust.

And that is because he is an honest man, and that's something very positive.

By saying:

Now I'll never dance with another.

We know there will never be another girl for him. He would never cheat on his love.

And that's why we like him.

The last question of the second step of the S.O.N.G. framework is:

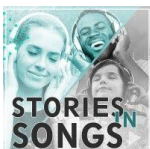
6. What is the point of view?

As always, I refer to the book "Great Songwriting Techniques" by Jack Perricone to decide on what point of view was used.

In "I Saw Her Standing There," the songwriters McCartney and Lennon used primarily first-person narrative because of the pronoun "I" and addressing the person he is talking about in the third person.

The exciting thing is that in order not only to tell his story but to make it feel like he is telling his story to his audience, the songwriters included direct address as well. They are talking to their listeners by asking the rhetorical question:

*So how could I dance with another
Ooh, when I saw her standing there?*



Alright, two of four steps of the S.O.N.G. framework are completed. We got a bird's eye view of what the song is about, and we are aware of who is telling us about that lovers' meet scene.

3. Narration

[00:15:45] Now it's time to study the storytelling power of the lyrics.

The first question is:

1. What are the characters literally doing?

That's easy, right?

They are at a dance ball.

But let's take a closer look:

**2. What is the essential action of what the characters are doing in the scene?
What is on their secret agenda? What are they trying to achieve?**

Well, I don't think there's a secret agenda to what our narrator wants.

He just wants to dance with that girl.

The only thing underneath what's happening is that he is falling in love. And that is the main reason why he has to approach her.

But here comes the million-dollar question:

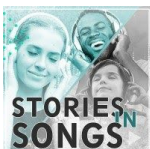
**3. Is there a problem the character is facing? Does something challenge him? Or
is there some kind of conflict that he has to solve? If so, what is the central
conflict the main character in the song has to deal with?**

Falling in love with someone cannot be considered to be a real problem, now can it?

But in this song, it's actually the cause of why the main character has to act.

He's singing:

*And I could see
That before too long
I'd fall in love with her.*



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It's not just that he sees a beautiful girl, but it is the one. And that's what complicates matters. Because suddenly he is aware there's a room full of other candidates. And that's a problem for sure.

But he never explicitly mentions that fear of losing her to someone else. But by having the love story convention of the rival in the song, it's just enough to make us understand that there could have been trouble, and things could have turned out differently.

Let's continue with the next question:

4. Do the first lines introduce the problem the character in the song will have to deal with? And thus hook us and spark our interest?

Let's look at the first lines again.

The narrator says:

*Well, she was just seventeen
You know what I mean
And the way she looked
Was way beyond compare*

Again, it's not really a problem until you consider the rivalry aspect.

So I wouldn't say that we are hooked by the challenge that gets slightly introduced to us, but much more by knowing that we are told a story that is accomplished by directly addressing the listener.

By saying: "*You know what I mean*," we immediately start thinking about: What is he referring to? Is there a problem with their age difference? Is she a young and beautiful girl he can't get out of his head? What is it?

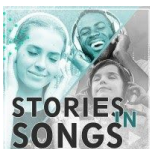
And that's why we are hooked.

Are you keeping up?

Perfect, let's start with the Story Grid's five commandments to evaluate and analyze the lovers' meet moment.

Analyzing the scene told in the song.

[00:18:29] What were the Story Grid's five commandments again?



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And have I told you about what the Story Grid is?
I'm sorry if I was throwing around with story terms without explaining them to you.

So let's talk about what the Story Grid is:

The Story Grid is a methodology developed by editor Shawn Coyne to analyze stories and provide helpful editorial comments. It's a diagnostic that tells the editor or writer what is working in the story, what is not, and what must be done to make what works better and fix what's not.

The Story Grid was created for evaluating fiction and nonfiction books. I became a Story Grid Certified Editor in 2019 because I am convinced of the tools and the complete methodology of the Story Grid to analyze and evaluate stories. I'm just the one applying that knowledge to songwriting.

So that's the Story Grid. It's not just a framework or a set of tools, but for me, the best way to get a bird's view on a story as well as seeing all the details so that I am able to help any storyteller, especially songwriters, to tell that what is working in their story, what is not, and how they can improve their lyrics.

Now, don't worry if you still need time to get a grasp on the Story Grid's five commandments.

For now, it's just important that you remember that those commandments refer to the five essential elements of every scene or story. And you find them in the overarching plot of every good story as well as in every story unit - be it a scene, chapter, or a song.

Okay, let's start with the first commandment:

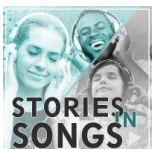
5. What is the inciting incident?

Similar to Madonna's song "Crazy for You," we don't get any information as to why the main character went to the dance. Probably, and since going to a dance in the '60s included dancing with someone and not just by yourself, his intention could well have been wanting to meet someone.

Considering the time the song was written and just encountering the narrator on the dance floor, we can assume he anticipated to find someone he can dance with there.

His decision to go to the dance was a causal inciting incident because he didn't coincidentally stumble onto the dance floor. Well, we don't know. Maybe he did?

Whatever the cause was, if anticipated, causal, or coincidental, was the inciting incident. It leaves room for interpretation.



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And we don't need to include the answer to WHY the narrator is there. Our assumption that he just wanted to go dancing is enough.

And the most important thing is: that he is there. Otherwise, he would not have a story to tell.

Are you with me?

Okay, perfect.

Let's move on to the second commandment.

6. What is the unexpected event that turned the tables?

The unexpected event is called "the turning point progressive complication."

Now see, with establishing your character's inciting incident, we know what they are up to. Our narrator came to the dance expecting to dance with someone. Anyone.

But did he expect to meet the love of his life?

No.

That is what surprises him and comes completely unexpected.

Now suddenly, there's something at stake for the narrator.

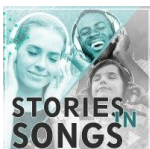
At first, it was just being there alone and maybe not dancing with some girl. But now the stakes are even higher.

He's seen the one for him, and he's about to fall in love with this girl. It's love at first sight. And he needs to do something so that he does not lose her. Otherwise, he would go home devastated.

So that's why meeting her is the turning point in his love life, and it pushes him right into a crisis:

7. What's the dilemma the main character has to face now that he has seen that seventeen-year-old girl? What are his options?

The narrator's crisis at that particular moment of his life is whether to go and dance with her risking to be denied the privilege to dance with her but at least having no regrets OR to wait and see to come up with a plan but risking someone else will start dancing with her.



We don't witness his crisis.

We only get his constant thought that pushes him into action:

*So how could I dance with another
Ooh, when I saw her standing there?*

8. What's the decision the character makes?

I don't think you had any trouble finding out what his decision is.

He sings:

*Well, my heart went "boom"
When I crossed that room*

That's all we need to know. The character takes action, and he is super excited.

And lastly, we just want to know:

9. How does it all turn out?

The resolution is the fifth and last commandment.

It tells us how making that decision turned out for the protagonist.

He sings:

*And I held her hand in mine
Oh, we danced through the night.
And we held each other tight.
And before too long
I fell in love with her.
Now I'll never dance with another.*

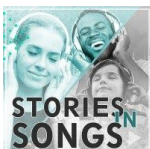
How beautiful are those lines?

They transport us from that moment in time further along.

*And before too long
I fell in love with her.*

He knew he would fall in love with this girl, and indeed he did.

And they are still together to this day - to the day that he is telling us, the listeners, about his "Love At First Sight" moment of his life.



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Change

[00:24:12] So when we consider the beginning and the ending of the song, we can talk about the most significant indicator that proves that we heard a narration that we can claim to be a story moment that works. And that indicator is: There needs to be change.

So let's just look at the next question:

10. Did the song's main character change his perception of the world around him after going through that situation?

Since we do not have an unconscious need revealed in that song, we don't know if the song's main character changes to become a better version of himself. And if they recognize their need and go after what affects their personal development.

We just know that the narrator is faithful to this day by only wanting to dance with her. And this translates to everything else we can say about their love.

But what we do have is a change in the situation.

11. So to wrap it up, how did the situation change for the main character in the song?

In a nutshell, he was single when he came to this ball, and after having met her, he is in a relationship. That is a positive change because we notice how happy he is by telling us about the moment that changed his life for the better.

12. Another interesting way to observe if the song is about change is to compare the first and the last sentence of the song. Can we see a difference between how the song started and how it ended?

Okay, here's how it started:

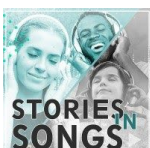
*Well, she was just seventeen.
You know what I mean.*

And the song ended like this:

*Now I'll never dance with another.
Oh, since I saw her standing there*

So when we compare the beginning with the ending of the song, the positive change from being single to being in a relationship is evident.

The last two lines sum up beautifully what the song is about:



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*Now I'll never dance with another.
Oh, since I saw her standing there*

Those two lines tell us exactly that we were told about a lovers' first meet scene that has positively impacted the narrator's life. It changed his life. He is committed to that girl to this day, and that's what we want to believe true love should be about. It should be about being together with that special person to the end of your days and still feeling like they are the one.

Lastly, let's quickly talk about the writing techniques used in this song.

Writing Techniques

[00:26:30] The first question is:

13. Is the singer only revealing some general information, or does he go into the specifics?

We don't get any backstory. He's not saying: "I was a lonely guy going to a dance." Instead, the narrator's focus is solely fixed on her. She is the center of his attention, but by saying: "You know what I mean," he leaves it up to us to imagine how that girl looks. We only know she's seventeen.

He is also not telling us anything about the setting or the people around them, or about his feelings. He just says his heart went "Boom," and that's enough for us to feel the impact that meeting her had on him.

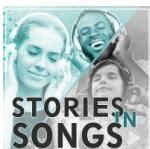
So even though the song doesn't go into the specifics, we are still invested in the story because the narrator addresses us. So we feel like we're part of his life because he entrusts us with his story.

Another writing technique question considering the storytelling aspect is:

14. Is the song evoking specific pictures in the audience's mind by using imagery?

No, unfortunately, there are no specific pictures that help us imagine where the narrator is or how that girl looks.

We only see her across the room, looking at the narrator, then he crosses the room and is holding her hand while they keep on dancing and dancing until the end of the time.



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And that's exactly what evokes a picture in our heads. We see the action in a chronological and linear progression of time take place.

Although the pictures are not painted with metaphors, similes, unique or sensory descriptions, the actions speak to us.

4. Gist

[00:28:19] Okay, now let's sum up the song by talking about its big takeaway.

Does that sound good?

1. Looking back at the problem the character had to deal with in this song, did he solve it?

The problem that we defined for him was approaching that girl before anyone else would dance with her.

And yes, he saw her, and he took action right away. He crossed the room to get to her even though his heart felt like it was exploding. But he managed to take her hand in his and dance with her.

Mission accomplished.

2. What is the message of the song? What can the audience take away from it?

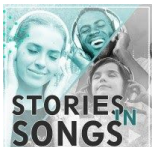
Since the narrator wants us to know that for him, "Love at First Sight" existed, he wants us to believe that it can happen to us too. We will probably not be expecting it, but when we are hit by the same intense feeling like he was back in the day, we should listen to his advice and take action.

So the message is: Love wins if you approach it when you find it.

That's a positive takeaway, and therefore this song can be considered a prescriptive little tale.

3. Does the title refer to the message of the song?

The song's title is "I Saw Her Standing There," which is repeated throughout the song.



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The title does not refer to the message, but it gives us a general understanding of what the song will be about because it hints at when the lovers meet for the first time.

Now we have gone through the 4-step-framework of analyzing the storytelling in the lyrics of a song.

I hope you have a better understanding of how you can use a love story moment and wrap it into a narration that addresses your listeners while still engaging them in what you have to say.

Just use a first-person narrator that directly addresses the audience and makes it all seem like he's talking directly to them by using rhetorical questions or addressing them with known phrases like "You know what I mean" that look for a simple Yes/No confirmation.

There's nothing more to it, except focusing on the story you want to tell or on the moment you want to share with your listeners.

Song Exercise - The Lovers Meet

[00:30:30] Now we're left with the task of applying what we've learned to our own songwriting.

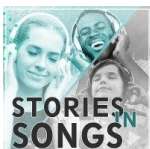
So here's the exercise I want you to do.

I want you to write your own original lyrics about looking back at the "Love At First Sight" moment that changed your narrator's life for the better.

As always, in the show notes of this episode, you can download the PDF with all the instructions.

But here's a short overview.

1. Use **past tense** to show that the moment happened in the past, but build a bridge to the present by including how something from then is still valid.
2. Use **first-person narrative** (pronoun "I") to talk about that special person, but also include direct address to let your listeners know they are being told a story.
3. Put the **focus** of your telling on meeting that special person. You are free to include a little backstory or inner monologue.



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4. Include all **five commandments**. But they do not have to be in order. You can switch them up between your verses, chorus, and pre-chorus.
 - a. You can either include the inciting incident (causal, anticipated, coincidental) explicitly or leave it open for interpretation. Just make sure you place your character in the vicinity of the person they are about to meet.
 - b. The turning point will be meeting that special girl or boy for the very first time.
 - c. The crisis can be only hinted at like “*So how could I dance with another?*” or you can underline what’s at stake.
 - d. Show the character’s decision.
 - e. Include a resolution letting your audience know how it all turned out. Remember, you are writing from the point of view of a narrator who tells someone about that special moment. Is the couple still together? How does the “now” look like?
5. Include the love story conventions of at least a **rival** or something that points at a challenge that the narrator had to overcome.

For further inspiration and to read over the guidelines, download the exercise PDF in the show notes of this episode.

Do the exercise because the more you study the lyrics of other songwriters, the easier it will be to write your own lyrics and tell captivating stories in your songs.

Sound good?

Alright, now we’ve come to the end of today’s show.

If you liked it, please leave a rating and review and let me know what you think.

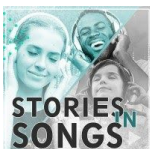
In the next episode, we will continue by analyzing the moment when the lovers first meet.

Therefore, we will analyze a song that was used at the end of the movie “Shrek” to sum up the story of how that green Oger found his love.

Do you know which song that is?

If you don’t want to miss the next episode, subscribe to my podcast.

Thanks a lot and see you next time.

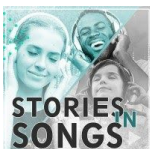


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Show notes:

Find out more about love songs in those episodes:

- How to write a powerful love song?
<https://storiesinsongs.com/transcripts/ep-006>
- How to write a heartbreaking love song to get over someone?
<https://storiesinsongs.com/transcripts/ep-007>
- Introduction to the Love Story and the Lover's Meet Scene:
<https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-010/>



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