

EPISODE 041

041 - Attention Grabbing Opening Lines – Part 3 – The Intriguing Question

See the show notes at storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-041

[00:00:00] Hi, this is Melanie from Stories in Songs - Writing the Lyrics.

Welcome to part 3 of our mini-series of Attention-Grabbing Opening Lines.

Today, I'm gonna throw a lot of questions at you.

Why?

Well, stick around and you're about to find out.

TEASER

The Intriguing Question

[00:00:53] "Tell me, do you know ...?"

...*Crickets*...

"Hey, I asked you a question! It's rude if you don't answer me!"

And that's exactly why throwing a question at your audience is another powerful way to get someone's attention. It's in the humans' nature, as the Germans say, dass wir unseren Senf dazugeben wollen (literally: add our mustard to something, meaning: put in one's two cents).

We love to show off with the answer and give our opinion.

So just exploit that natural way of how people behave and ask your audience a question.



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And the great thing is: we all know it's impolite not to answer when someone asks us a question. So what a nice little cheeky way to wiggle our way into the consciousness of our listeners, pull their attention to our question, and let them find an answer to our Intriguing Question while we elaborate on what's going on.

After all, even if people want to help out and put in their two cents, they don't want to look bad or stupid by giving the wrong answer. So if they are unsure of what's the right or wrong answer, they will keep listening to better understand the context of what's going on.

And that's your chance – now that you have hooked them – to keep them engaged (through the power of storytelling in your lyrics!) and provide a meaningful takeaway – that is, surprisingly, the answer to the question you asked them.

You don't have to state it explicitly, but you will either let them come up with the answer that feels right to them or – what they take away from the song – is a nagging feeling that they should really think about what you said and reflect it on their own life.

Cool, right?

Two amazing ways to impact their lives and give them a nudge to rethink a certain part/situation in their lives.

So when using the Intriguing Question as an attention-grabbing opening line technique, start your lyrics by asking your audience a question. It's in our nature to want to put in our two cents.

Different Types of Questions to ask:

[00:03:37] And here are some more ways how you can ask an Intriguing Question in your lyrics beginning.

- You can ask a **rhetorical question**. The Key is, that the listener should have some doubt if the answer (they want to give) is truly the answer they should give.
 - “Well she was just seventeen, you know what I mean?” – 'I Saw Her Standing There' by The Beatles
- You can ask a **provoking question** in which you question the answer people would normally give.
 - “So you think you can tell heaven from hell?” – 'Wish You Were Here' by Pink Floyd



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- You can ask something very **specific**. Since people don't know what you are referring to right away, they are very inclined to listen to you tell them more about that specific date/occasion/place/... you mentioned.
 - "Do you remember the 21st night of September?" – 'September' by Earth, Wind & Fire
- You can also ask a very **broad question**. Same as having no information, sometimes having too much insight into something, can also keep us from answering straight away. We need some guidance to better understand the specificity of the broad topic.
 - "Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?" – 'Bohemian Rhapsody' by Queen
- You can ask a question that **no earthly being** can truly answer and prove to be correct.
 - "I sit and wait, does an angel contemplate my fate?" – 'Angel' by Robbie Williams
- You can ask a question that does not have a right or wrong answer and only allows an **opinion**.
 - "How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?" – 'Times they are a changing' by Bob Dylan

Watch out: In order to make your question truly intriguing, you should combine it with one of the other powerful ways to grab your audience's attention. After all, a question that promises something more, is WHY we are inclined to hear more about WHY that question was asked.

Song Examples that start with a question:

[00:07:13] Here are some more song examples that start with an Intriguing Question.

1. "Do you have the time to listen to me whine?"
 - 'Basket Case' by Green Day
2. "Am I loud and clear, or am I breaking up?"
 - 'Swing Life Away' by Rise Against
3. "Hello? Is there anybody in there?"
 - 'Comfortably Numb' by Pink Floyd
4. "Please allow me to introduce myself."
 - 'Sympathy for the Devil' by the Rolling Stones
5. "Do I attract you, do I repulse you, with my queasy smile?"
 - 'Grace Kelly' by Mika
6. "Am I more than you bargained for yet?"
 - 'Sugar, We're Goin Down' by Fall Out Boy
7. "He was a boy. She was a girl. Can I make it any more obvious?"



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- 'Sk8er Boi' by Avril Lavigne
- 8. "How can I just let you walk away?"
 - 'Against All Odds (Take A Look At Me Now)' by Phil Collins
- 9. "If I leave here tomorrow would you still remember me?" – 'Free Bird' by Lynyrd Skynyrd
- 10. "Question, tell me what you think about me?" – 'Independent Women' by Destiny's Child
- 11. "Why do birds suddenly appear every time you are near?" – 'Close to you' by The Carpenters
- 12. "Where can I find the city of shining light in an ordinary world?" – 'Ordinary World' by Green Day

The Intriguing Question – Wrapup

[00:09:49] Now, as we have gone through some possible ways of attention-grabbing opening line techniques in this mini-series, we have discovered the beginning of a lyric is designed to grab the audience's attention and make them interested in what we have to say.

We have to make them curious and so involved in the song's character's situation that they want to keep listening until the song's end to find out how that one thing (with which we hooked them) is resolved.

So we have to start strong. The song's beginning does not only have to hook our audience and pull them into our song's character's situation.

We also have to make it clear to our audience what kind of story they are being told or what kind of universal human need our character's situation belongs to.

Therefore, the hook at the beginning lets the listener know what kind of story they will experience in the song. Engaging a listener means involving them emotionally in the narrative that will follow. They must be interested in the main character and the adventure they are about to embark on. And the audience must be curious about whether the main character will get what they want or need.

As a reminder, the beginning of a lyric narrative should, therefore:

- establish the point of view and empathy for the main character
- reveal the story's content genre and the core value of the chosen genre
- introduce the main character and their world, give them a goal and a strong reason WHY
- Place a question in the audience's mind to keep them interested



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- hint at or show forces of antagonism that stand in the character's way

And by starting with an Intriguing Question, you immediately place that question in your audience's mind.

You can do that by...

- asking a **rhetorical question**
- asking a **provoking question** in which you question the answer people would normally give.
- asking something very **specific**. Since people don't know what you are referring to right away, they are very inclined to listen to you tell them more about that specific date/occasion/place/... you mentioned.
- asking a very **broad question**. Same as having no information, sometimes having too much insight into something, can also keep us from answering straight away. We need some guidance to better understand the specificity of the broad topic.
- asking a question that **no earthly being** can truly answer and prove to be correct.
- asking a question that does not have a right or wrong answer and only allows an **opinion**.
- or ask a simple yes or no question where the listener can't be really sure what answer to give

Now, lastly, if you're enjoying this mini-series of attention-grabbing opening lines, I have a favor to ask. If you like the show, it's safe to assume there are others out there like you who would also enjoy the show. Help them find it. So please rate and review the show on your favorite podcasting platform. Those people will appreciate it.

P.S. There are six more powerful ways of attention-grabbing opening lines left. If you help me reach 20 reviews, I'll share with you two more attention-grabbing opening line techniques.

Thank you so much for your support.

Now if you have a minute, please rate and review the podcast on your podcast app now.

Thanks!

I appreciate this!

Melanie



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Show Notes

- Attention Grabbing Opening Lines – Part 1 – The Powerful Problem
<https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-037/>
- Attention Grabbing Opening Lines – Part 2 – The Shocking Statement
<https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-039/>



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