

EPISODE 042

“Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” by Thompson Square – How to Create a Smooth and Subtle Narrative Flow

See the show notes at storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-042

[00:00:00] Hey, this is Melanie Naumann and Herzlich Willkommen, welcome, to the Stories in Songs Podcast.

In today’s episode, we’ll go through the lyrics of the song “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” by Thompson Square.

And I tell you, as I first listened to the song. I thought: Quite nice. But I didn’t give the lyrics much thought. But now, after I have studied the lyrics and their storytelling power, I must say, I’m super surprised by how well-crafted those lyrics are.

It’s like when you say: Yes, Game of Thrones by G.R.R. Martin is a nice fantasy series. When it truth, it’s an epic masterwork.

And somehow, I feel like the lyrics to this song don’t get appreciated enough. They are so well-crafted that it is a delight to take them apart and just see how well they’ve been strung together.

So if you aim to write a love song that smoothly flows through a narrative and gives your audience a fully-satisfied listening experience, I invite you to study the lyrics of “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” by Thompson Square with me.

TEASER



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The S.O.N.G. Framework

[00:01:45] So today, we will study the storytelling power of the lyrics of the song “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” by Thompson Square using the S.O.N.G.-framework.

This framework is the process I’ve come up with to find out what works in the lyrics and what does not and how to improve them.

It’s a great system to look at a song lyric, take it apart, and see if all the pieces create a consistent whole. And it also includes all the questions we need to answer when we want to find out how much a song uses the craft of storytelling to captivate the listener, hook them, engage them, and, most importantly, provide a meaningful message for their lives.

The S.O.N.G. framework consists of 4 steps: S like Summary - O like Observer - N like Narration - G like Gist.

So first, we’ll summarize the song and determine its story content genre.

After an overview of the song, we’ll get to know the song’s main character.

In the third step, we look at the key components that make a story work.

And lastly, we talk about the big takeaway the lyrics provide.

If this is your first time hearing about the S.O.N.G. framework and you want to hear more about it, you can always look at previous episodes with a song title in their name. That’s almost always a lyric study that follows the S.O.N.G. framework.

“Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” by Thompson Square

[00:03:07] But today, let’s continue our lyric study about the love story moment of the first kiss by looking at the song: “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not.”

Jim Collins and David Lee Murphy wrote the song. And the American country music duo Thompson Square recorded it. The song was released in 2010 as the second single from their self-titled debut album. Since then, the song has been certified 2× Platinum by the RIAA.



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So let's go through the lyrics. As always, I'll read them to you first.

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[[Video]]

<https://youtu.be/FDUOcHg5ijg>

Are You Gonna Kiss Me or Not lyrics © Music Of Cal Iv, Sexy Tractor Music, Spirit Catalog Holdings, S.a.r.l.,
Spirit Catalogue Holdings, S.a.r.l.

*We were sittin' up there on your momma's roof
Talkin' 'bout everything under the moon
With the smell of honeysuckle and your perfume
All I could think about was my next move*

*Oh, but you were so shy, so was I
Maybe that's why it was so hard to believe
When you smiled and said to me*

*"Are you gonna kiss me or not?
Are we gonna do this or what?
I think you know I like you a lot
But you're 'bout to miss your shot
Are you gonna kiss me or not?"*

*It was the best dang kiss that I ever had
Except for that long one after that
And I knew if I wanted this thing to last
Sooner or later I'd have to ask for your hand*

*So I took a chance
Bought a wedding band and I got down on one knee
And you smiled and said to me*

*"Are you gonna kiss me or not?
Are we gonna do this or what?
I think you know I love you a lot
I think we've got a real good shot
Are you gonna kiss me or not?"*



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*So, we planned it all out for the middle of June
From the wedding cake to the honeymoon
And your momma cried
When you walked down the aisle*

*When the preacher man said, "Say I do"
I did and you did too, then I lifted that veil
And saw your pretty smile and I said*

*"Are you gonna kiss me or not?
Are we gonna do this or what?
Look at all the love that we got
It ain't never gonna stop
Are you gonna kiss me or not?"*

*Yeah baby, I love you a lot
I really think we've got a shot
Are you gonna kiss me or not?*

Now that we have read through the lyrics of “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” by Thompson Square, let’s start taking the lyrics through the S.O.N.G. Framework to discover their storytelling power.

1. Summary (About)

[00:05:22] Let’s start with getting an overview of what the song is about. This first step is laying the groundwork for our lyric study.

So the first question is:

1. What is the song about?

Well, that’s not hard. We just have to look at the title of the song. It’s called “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not,” so it must be about a kiss, so it’s probably a love song. Because that moment of the first kiss is a must-have moment of every good love story, and with that title, we immediately feel that the lyrics probably revolve around that first-kiss moment.



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So there's absolutely no doubt what the story's content genre is. It's a love story.

The second question is:

2. Do the song's first lines set the expectations of what the song will be about. Do they give a promise to the audience that they'll hear about a love story or the first kiss moment?

The first lines of your lyrics play an essential part because they have to hook and engage your audience. They must make them want to keep listening to the rest of the song.

So you can partly achieve that by either ...

- setting expectations to what the song will be about
- creating intrigue by opening a narrative gap or creating a question in the listener's mind
- creating tension by referring to a problem that needs solving

If you are not sure how you can create an attention-grabbing opening line, I have already revealed two amazing ways to do just that in my previous episodes. So ensure to check them out. Links are included in the show notes.

When we look at the first line of "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" by Thompson Square, the line establishes the love story.

They sing: "*We were sittin' up there on your momma's roof*"

So basically, the first lines create the setup for the rest of the song. It's the foundation. Everything else you add has to build on top of your lyric's beginning.

Added to that, the line gives us some first insights:

1. It lets us know that it's gonna be a love song.
2. They set up the point of view of Direct Address, which lets us know that the singer takes on the role of the song's main character, and he's right in the action. And we're right in the unfolding event with them.

BUT that first line, even though it's establishing a love story, does not grab our attention.

We were sittin' up there on your momma's roof



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I mean, we have two characters just sitting around. The setting is the only thing that's kinda interesting. It's the only thing that makes us wonder a little why they are sitting on a roof.

But it's not a powerful opening line. The chosen verb is very passive. Nothing is going on. Compare it to having said:

We were dancing up there on your mamma's roof

That's at least a little more compelling because we can watch the characters in action. It's not just a standstill image.

But still, it's no line that is a strong attention-grabbing opening line. And it also does not hint at a problem, but more about that in step 3 of the framework.

For now, let's continue by looking at some further love story must-haves.

3. Does the song use conventions of the love story genre?

Conventions are the conditions that set up those expected must-have moments of a love story. They refer to the setting, character, and the catalysts to create the conditions for conflict.

So love story conventions are different character roles like a rival, helpers, and harmers.

Furthermore, conventions can also refer to the way the story moves forward.

For example, by including

- an external need
- opposing forces to overcome,
- secrets
- rituals,
- moral weight

In the song "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" by Thompson Square, we encounter a love story convention that has been set up as the refrain line. The couple teases each other by saying:

"Are you gonna kiss me or not?"

What do you think: What love story convention is at play here?



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Yes, that line is a ritual between those two. It's something they say to each other in those life-changing moments that define their relationship.

Other than that convention of the ritual, we don't have any other conventions mentioned. Some might say the preacher and the mother are helpers. But I don't see how they've helped their relationship. They are in support of it, yes. They agree to it, but it doesn't seem like that couple had to overcome anything that they would have needed external support. They seem to have figured it out pretty well.

If you want to look at a song that uses more love story conventions in its lyrics and that fits very well together, check out our lyric study of "Rumor" by Lee Brice. That's [episode 24](#), and I'll include the link in the show notes.

Now the next question in the first step of the S.O.N.G. framework is:

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

This question is important because it reveals ...

- if the song's story moment has already happened and therefore is just a retelling of events that might have led to a certain situation or used to build a bridge to the present,
- or if the song pulls the listener right into an unfolding event
- or if the song is about an imagined, anticipated, or feared future event

In the song "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" by Thompson Square, the song is told in the past tense, including three flashback moments until it ends in the present moment.

Those flashback moments are the couple's first kiss, engagement, and wedding. Then, after the wedding, we arrive in the here and now when the song's main character confesses his love to her by saying: *"Yeah baby, I love you a lot"*.

Of course, yes, the chorus is written in the present tense as well. That's because when the song's main character tells us about those moments, they quote what they said to each other. So that's why it's in the present tense.

Also, when it comes to the chorus, you wanna make it universal. Past tense wouldn't work because it would just take the magic out of those words and out of the love story moments they've used in the different lyric sections.



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So just imagine, they would have said:

*"Were you gonna kiss me or not?
 Were we gonna do this or what?
 I thought you know I loved you a lot
 I thought we had a real good shot
 Were you gonna kiss me or not?"*

This seems totally off, right? And it doesn't seem that positive anymore. When you say: "I thought..." that always seems like you have been proven wrong.

So all I'm saying is that it was a really good move to lead up to the chorus by making it sound like a quote of what they had said to each other in the current moment. Having the chorus in the present tense, even though the rest is in the past tense, makes the lines more compelling and more positive.

5. And lastly, what's the point of view?

This question helps us know how intimate the relationship is between the listener and the song's main character. It tells us how far the audience is away from the world of the song.

It also defines the relationship between the singer and the audience and sets the context for the ideas.

And "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" by Thompson Square uses "Direct Address". That's the most intimate point of view.

The singer is talking directly to someone they refer to as "You".

And by now, because we have talked about Point of View before, there are actually three technical choices we gotta make. We have talked about two of them already. The first one was the tense, and the second one was the person. So we have the song in the past and present tense, and the person is first person because our song's main character is saying "I".

And lastly, the point of view also includes the storytelling mode. That's either showing or telling. So showing refers to an objective viewpoint, and telling refers to a subjective viewpoint. Since we know the song is written in Direct Address, that's the most intimate viewpoint. It's all about feelings and not facts. So the storytelling mode is telling because the song's main character tells us about his experience and feelings.



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And watch out here: the storytelling mode does not refer to the writing advice of “Show, don’t Tell”. The mode belongs to an objective or subjective viewpoint. So when the character is telling us about his feelings and experiences, he can do so with words that show how he felt or he can use words that call that feeling out by name.

I just wanna be clear about this.

Summary Step 1 - Summary

Okay, now we’ve finished the first step of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:

1. The song is about a couple’s first kiss and highlights important relationship moments
2. It’s obvious the song is about love.
3. And especially about the lover’s first kiss.
4. And the song’s first line sets up the expectation of a love song, or at least one about friendship because we have two characters spending time together in a very special place.
5. The song uses the love story convention of rituals.
6. The character is speaking in past tense and quotes a certain line that has become their ritual in present tense.
7. And he is using Direct Address. So the narrative distance is very intimate.

2. Observer

[00:15:13] Now that we have an overview of the song’s moment, let’s talk about the main character. As you know, a character and their actions make a story. So we must have a clear picture of who the person is at the center of our song.

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

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

This helps us determine if the singer is taking on the main character’s role in the song, whether he’s just a bystander or an unidentified presence. But, again, this ties back to narrative distance and how closely connected we feel to the song’s characters.



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As we've already said as we talked about point of view, the connection between I and you in Direct Address is for communicating feelings and not facts. And "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" is a Love song. So the singer takes on the role of the song's main character.

2. Is the singer referring to another person?

This question serves to list all the characters present in the song. In addition, it's to have an overview of who else is taking part in that scene.

So the song's main character is talking directly to his girl.

Other characters are only mentioned: the preacher and the girl's mother.

Now let's talk about our song's main character in more detail:

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

As we've discovered in [episode 29](#), your song's main character should be pursuing something they consciously want. They need an active goal, and something must be at stake if they don't try to get it. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a story and no reason for us to root for the song's character to get what they are after.

So what is it that the character in "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" wants?

Well, we just have to look at the story's content genre. It's a love song. And love stories are about the universal human value of love.

Again, if you want to learn more about universal human values, check out [episode 23](#) of the Stories in Songs podcast.

So in love stories, the main character wants to love or be loved. Or they try to get away from love. But their goal is always connected to love.

In "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not", the song's character wants to kiss the girl he loves. And he wants to share a kiss with her over and over again... and that is shown by taking the listener through their important relationship moments, from their first kiss to their engagement and wedding. And this serves to show a much bigger want or goal: He wants to make their relationship last, as also stated in the second verse: "[And I knew if I wanted this thing to last](#)"



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Now some might say: Is that kiss a valid object of desire? Is that a compelling goal state? Did that goal arise from an inciting incident that threw the character's life out of balance? Shouldn't there be something at stake? The character easily gets what he wants without much trouble... so is that goal okay or interesting enough?

I had those concerns at first too. But when I listened to the song, I enjoyed the lyrics. And it didn't feel like something was off.

So when we look at those things like the inciting incident, the problem, what's at stake, ... it's all in the lyrics, but in a very subtle and soft way. And we're gonna talk about them when we get to the song's narrative, so just hang in there.

For now, let's just stay with: the character wants to kiss the woman he loves.

So let's talk about his NEED.

4. What is the main character's NEED? What is his internal desire?

Needs refer to a character's thought, fortune, or character. Or speaking in storytelling terms of internal content genres: Needs refer to a character's status, worldview, or morality.

When we look at the character in "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not", same as when we talked about what he wants, what he needs is also very subtle and soft. Sorry, I don't know any other words that express how the character's "wants and needs" feel to me.

They are recognizable, but they are not treated with flashing lights. They are not sticking out, because the smooth narrative flow is what's important for this song.

So, when we looked at what the character wanted, it got repeated throughout the three verses or the stages in their relationship. Because if you truly love someone, you long for the touch of their lips over and over again. So having that want repeated illustrates how much in love those two people are. So it's a subtle want, yes, but it serves the purpose of this song.

And now, when it comes to what the character needs ... then as already said, a character's needs concerns their status, worldview, or morality. And in this song, the need is also hardly noticeable. But it's there nonetheless, and because it has been incorporated in such a smooth and soft way, listening to the lyrics creates a delightful listening experience.



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So, where can we find that need? And was that one satisfied? And did the character change as a person?

So when we look at the first verse, we get to know the song's character. And he says that he was very shy. He sings: "Oh, but you were so shy, so was I"

So that's who they once were.

But the beauty of those lyrics is that we follow the character along as they get older.

And so, we can see that this first kiss has clearly changed him.

Let's look at the second verse. He sings:

*It was the best dang kiss that I ever had
Except for that long one after that
And I knew if I wanted this thing to last
Sooner or later I'd have to ask for your hand*

*So I took a chance
Bought a wedding band and I got down on one knee*

The character has overcome his shyness which was holding him back initially, and now he takes his chance without her having to ask him for it. He takes up the initiative. He's become more confident. And that means he has overcome his shyness and, most of all, his insecurity.

So that confidence is what the character needed, and he got it.

Let's continue with the next question:

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?

This question aims at understanding how we feel about the song's main character. Do we like him? Or don't we? If we don't like that person, we'll keep our distance from the song's message. Who listens to someone they don't respect, right? But, on the other hand, if we like that character, we are more likely to take the song's message and apply it to our own lives.



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Or see it like this: If we had a whiny and selfish character who doesn't care about the people around them, we would probably not identify with them, which means we'd keep our distance from them, their situation, and what's going on. If they somehow managed to overcome their external problem but didn't become a better person in the process, we wouldn't see that solution to the problem as valid because that person is still whiny and selfish. So, especially in love songs, you should really pay attention to your song's main character and how you present him to your audience. Even if they have flaws, you can't do anything wrong as long as they can overcome those flaws and change for the better.

I like the song's main character in "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" because I can feel his gratitude. I can feel how much he loves that one person. And I love their ritual that makes me smile every time I hear them say: "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not".

So the character in the song is someone we can like.

Summary Step 2 - Observer

Okay, now we've finished the second step of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:

1. The singer takes on the role of the main character,
2. and he talks to his love interest
3. He wants love, and more precisely, he wants to kiss her again and again and make their relationship last.
4. And he needed to overcome his insecurity. And he did by getting what he wanted, which made him more confident.
5. And the song's main character is someone we like because we can feel his love and gratitude.

Alright, now we've got a solid understanding of what the song is about, and we are aware of who the main character is, what he wants and needs, and to whom he's talking.

3. Narration

[00:23:51] Now, let's study the storytelling power of the lyrics.

The first and easiest question is:



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1. What are the characters literally doing?

You might recognize this question. It's one of the three steps that help us develop our controlling idea that can serve as a compass point in our lyric writing process.

We have talked about a character's literal action in [episodes 38](#) and [40](#) of the Stories in Songs Podcast. If you haven't listened to it yet, check out those two episodes. We specifically look at the song "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor.

Now when it comes to a character's literal action, we just imagine we are a camera only observing what we can watch the characters literally do. So we think of this in terms of activities.

So in the song "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not," our literal action differs with the verses and the chorus.

So just list it all:

1. in verse 1, the characters are sitting on a roof
2. in verse 2, the song's main character gets down on his knee. He proposes.
3. in verse 3, the love interest walks down the aisle, and the song's main character is lifting her veil. The momma's crying, and the preacher asks a question.
4. And in the chorus, the characters ask each other a question.

That's what they literally do.

Of course, when we look at this step, we can also look at the cast size and the character's environment. So the cast consists of the song's main character, their love interest, her mother, and the preacher.

And the environment seems very stable. They feel comfortable with where they are. It's not threatening.

So, the purpose of looking at a character's literal action is because we want to make sure that the characters show the actions that help them get what they want. And what they want is also overcoming a problem that arose from the inciting incident that threw their life out of balance. So with that problem in mind, it helps to decide what's relevant and what's not.

In [episode 36](#), we talked about the problem in the context of relevancy. So listen to that episode if you want to hear more about how the problem can help you decide what to keep or include in your lyrics and what to leave out.



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Let's move on to the second question of step 3.

2. What is the essential tactic of what the character is doing in the scene? What is he trying to achieve?

The second step moves from what we can literally observe the characters do into their internal state of mind. Now it's all about WHY are they acting the way they do?

So we think about things from our characters' perspectives. We think about what they want to accomplish, what they are thinking, and what their goal state is.

And what our character thinks and wants, their goal, and how they perceive the world around them ... that all decide how they will act to accomplish what they want. So their actions will be an expression of their essential tactic.

So the essential tactic is what the characters are doing
...because of what they want
... and because of the way they see the world.

So our song's main character kisses that girl – that's one of his literal actions – because of what he wants: and that's making this relationship last. He doesn't wanna miss his shot. So he kisses her, he proposes to her, and he marries her ... he does all of those things because of what he wants. And all those actions refer to his essential tactic: make their love last.

Let's move on to the next 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?

As we have already mentioned a couple of times, the problem arises from the inciting incident of the narrative. In "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not," the inciting incident refers to their initial situation: They are sitting on her momma's roof. And they didn't just appear there out of thin air. They must have agreed to meet there or go up there together. So that's the inciting incident. And the problem that arises is that our song's main character really likes that girl, and his problem concerns making the next move, but how.

So that's what he's facing through the different verses: how to take the next step or make the next move to make his relationship last with her.



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And when we think about what's at stake: it's just that. Missing his shot. And they talk about that in the chorus. So we also know what's at stake if he misses making his move.

But again, as the character's wants and needs, the stakes are also very subtle. But they are included, and it all contributes... I mean, how everything is connected, it just fits so well together and creates that smooth listening experience. Everything in a great narrative is included, and at the same time, all those things don't compete for the audience's attention. They are like the beautiful flavors of an amazing wine that let you experience the taste of the wine as a unique experience, but you can't say what made that wine so great because it was the combination and balance of it all. That's how those lyrics feel to me.

Now let's see if this problem was already used at the song's beginning.

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

The first lines go like this:

*We were sittin' up there on your mamma's roof
Talkin' 'bout everything under the moon*

As we've already said, the first lines aren't that compelling. They neither use one of the nine powerful ways of attention-grabbing opening lines nor do they indicate the problem. It's just a setting description. And so when we start listening to the song, we don't really care about those two characters at first. There's nothing that creates an instant connection with us, engages us, or awakens our interest. We just get the setting.

Analyzing the scene told in the song.

[00:30:25] Okay, now that we know what the character wants, needs, and the problem he's dealing with, let's look at the five commandments of storytelling. Those five commandments are the key elements that we need to call a story a working story.

Just a note, in upcoming episodes, we'll talk about each of those commandments in more detail. For now, I'll try to wrap them up as best I can so that you can see what the purpose of each of them is. Just know that those five commandments are the pillars of a working narrative. They are the foundational storytelling principle and are responsible for showing a change in a narrative.



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The first question is:

5. What is the inciting incident?

An inciting incident is an event – either causal or coincidental – that thrusts the song’s character into the story’s main action.

This event is a stimulus that your character gets. It’s something unexpected that they did not see coming and don’t know how to deal with it, OR they are so focused on achieving a particular goal that they are blind to everything that is going on around them. They just don’t see what that particular event means to them. Or they ignore it completely.

In “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not,” the inciting incident is them agreeing to meet or go up to that roof. Sitting together in such a romantic place where they can just enjoy their twosomeness throws the character’s life out of balance.

We can’t be really sure about it since that incident happened off-page. For their global love story, his life got turned upside down by meeting her. That’s the inciting incident of every love story. But for that moment when we just look at the scene or that day when they go up to that roof, the inciting incident was agreeing to go up there.

So that’s a causal event. They agreed on it.

6. What is the turning point?

The turning point is the most important essential element of storytelling. It is why a character has to face a dilemma and make a choice to be able to move on. Because at that moment, the character realizes the true nature of the inciting incident. They were blind, but now they see what that incident truly means.

In the case of “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not”, we experience with him the moment that changes everything. She asks him: “Are you gonna kiss me or not?”, and with those words, she puts him at a crossroads. She throws him into a dilemma because her question is also the crisis that he’s facing.

So let’s talk more about the crisis, which makes our third commandment.

7. What is the dilemma that the character has to face? What are his options?



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“Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not”, that’s the crisis. Will he kiss her or not?

But a crisis is more than just a Yes or No scenario.

In a good crisis, there’s always something at stake.

So if he would not kiss her, he’d miss his shot, and he might repel her. If he doesn’t muster the courage to overcome his shyness and go for it, he might lose her.

If he does kiss her, it could turn out that she was only joking, and he makes a fool out of himself. He could blow it. He could ruin their fragile relationship.

So that’s the crisis. And that crisis forces him to make a decision.

Otherwise, he will never come closer to what he wants.

Because achieving a goal is never a straight path from A to B. There are always crossroad moments included that force you to make a choice first.

And his crisis is: Will he kiss her or not.

8. What's the decision the character makes?

Now the fourth commandment of storytelling is the decision. We, as the audience, must be able to observe clearly what choice the character made. That means they have to turn their decision into a motor action or words.

And we get their decision presented in the first line of the second verse.
He sings:

It was the best dang kiss that I ever had

9. What's the resolution?

The last commandment is the resolution. So what are the consequences of the character’s decision?

And that resolution comes straight after the decision. So he sings:



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*It was the best dang kiss that I ever had
Except for that long one after that*

And from that point forward, we get to witness how their relationship turns into an engagement and final to their wedding vows. We get a beautifully painted resolution that shows us the reward of having overcome one's insecurities and using one's shot.

Change

[00:35:20] Alright, let's look at how the turning point led to a change in the character's situation or the way they look at the world. After all, stories are all about change. That's why it's good to look at the change in more detail.

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

How a character changes internally is tied to his Need.

So as we've already mentioned, the character needed to overcome his shyness or his insecurity. And he did so. He grew more confident. The kiss gave him that confidence.

So he has changed as a person from almost missing his shot due to his shyness to making the next move on his own as he decided to ask her to marry him. So yes, he has changed as a person.

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

Well, his entire situation changed from attraction to commitment to intimacy. Those are all values on the spectrum that we use to pinpoint how love evolves to a place more positive or how it can decrease into negative feelings like repulsion or hate.

But this song, as we said, takes us through different stages of their relationship. So we move from attraction to commitment to intimacy. That's very well done.

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



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Okay, here's how it started:

We were sittin' up there on your momma's roof

And the song ended like this:

Are you gonna kiss me or not?

The song doesn't show a change between the first and last lines. At least, on the surface, we might say so. Because it seems like the question has not yet been answered. But we must also take into account the context inbetween. And we know that the refrain line has become a ritual between the lovers. So their relationship has changed from not being together to being together. So by knowing this line is a ritual, everything has changed between the two of them... but like the rest of the song, it's subtle, and we hardly notice that change. But it's there nonetheless.

Writing Techniques

[00:37:41] Lastly, let's talk about some of the writing techniques used in this song. This just helps us talk about some additional things we could apply or avoid in our songwriting.

The first question is:

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

As a rule of thumb, it's always good if your lyrics answer the following questions:

- Where is the scene taking place?
- When is the scene happening?
- What is happening? How do the characters move over our imaginary stage?

So we get the where and when in the first and third verses.

In the first verse, he tells us they are sitting under the moon on her momma's roof.

In the third verse, they have planned their wedding for the middle of June and are at their wedding, probably standing at an altar because the preacher asks them to say, "I do."

So that's very specific. Added to that, knowing the character's literal actions also help to add more flavor. We can see how the characters move over the stage in our mind's eye.



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Another question about the writing technique considering the storytelling aspect is:

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

Imagery refers to figurative language to evoke a sensory experience or create a picture with words for your audience.

In “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not,” the songwriters addressed our sense of smell. They talk about “[the smell of honeysuckle](#) and her [perfume](#).”

But other than that, the song is not much about any poetic descriptions or painting images with words. Instead, the words stay on a surface level, showing us what’s going on without much fancy dressing. But that’s okay. It makes their love story feel more real and down to earth.

Summary Step 3 - Narration

Okay, now let’s quickly summarize part 3 of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:

1. The literal action of the characters is included. We can watch them in three different situations, from their first kiss to their engagement and their wedding.
2. And the character’s essential tactic is making their love last.
3. The problem is that he had to overcome his shyness, which initially held him back.
4. The inciting incident was agreeing to go up on that roof, even though it happened off-page.
5. The turning point progressive complication was her asking him to kiss her.
6. The crisis was deciding whether to kiss her or not.
7. He decided to kiss her and did so.
8. We get the resolution by watching how their relationship moves from attraction to commitment and finally to intimacy.

4. Gist

[00:40:15] Alright, now let’s talk about the song’s message and if it provides a takeaway for the listener.



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

If you want to figure out the message of your lyrics, it's best to concentrate on the problem first and check if the character has overcome it or if he failed.

Because, after all, if we want our lyrics to make an impact on someone, then the lyrics need to include a problem that the character in the song faces that also mirrors a problem the listener might have.

And the purpose of every single line of the lyric is to shed light on that problem or show how it's dealt with, solved, or what the outcome can look like.

So knowing if the problem was solved will give us a great clue to what the song's message could be.

In the case of "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not," the problem or challenge our character faced was that he only thought about his next move, but he was too shy just to do it.

Since the character experienced that kiss, he has grown more confident to the effect that he was, later in life and concerning their relationship, able to make the next move without being shy or insecure about it. So the initial problem was solved.

Now that we know he was able to solve the problem, we can focus on the lyric's message.

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

We know our song is about the universal human value of love. Love is at stake for our song's character. So that value is what we'll include in our message.

And our song's situation is very positive. It even changes from attraction to commitment to intimacy. So when we assign valence to it, it moves from a positive place to a more positive place. So that means it's gonna be a prescriptive message.

So the takeaway is along the lines of "Love triumphs when we overcome insecurities and dare to make the next move to not miss our shot."

The last question is:



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

If your song's title and your message are connected, it's easier for your audience to remember your song. Once they hear the title, they'll think of the takeaway. And since the lyrics paint such a great emotional experience, the title of "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" immediately reminds the audience of that great narrative in the lyrics and the way the couple teased each other with that line as their relationship evolved.

Summary Step 4 - Gist

Okay, now we've finished the fourth and last step of the S.O.N.G. framework.

We now know:

1. The character solved the problem he faced.
2. So the song's message is: "Love triumphs when we overcome insecurities and dare to make the next move to not miss our shot."
3. And that message refers to the song's title, "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not," because that line was not only the crisis the character faced, but it has also become a ritual for the lovers to say that line whenever they face a relationship-defining moment.

What we've learned in this episode:

[00:43:16] Great. We've now talked about the four steps of the S.O.N.G.-framework and the analysis of the lyrics of the song "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" by Thompson Square.

What stands out the most about those lyrics is how well-crafted they are in the sense of providing a smooth listening experience where everything seems to be perfectly in balance without having anything that competes for our attention. It's like everything is so fine-tuned. It's like all those different parts have come together into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The narrative flow runs softly while also fulfilling the necessary requirements of a story that works.



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More specifically, we have the five commandments of storytelling that provide our narrative – or our song’s main character’s journey. We see how their situation and their mindset change. We know the character’s problems and what they wanted and needed. We have an almost complete love story that shows us how the relationship moves from the level of attraction to commitment to intimacy. We have the lovers’ ritual, which is also the title of the song, and the first and last line of the chorus – which are two very important lyric positions. And the songwriters have found a great way to put those words from the chorus into the present tense while referring to past events.

The only thing that could have been done differently is the lyric’s beginning. The first line does not hook us. It’s not grabbing our attention and making us want to pay our undistracted attention to the words. It’s just a setting description. But again, this also flows smoothly into the narrative. What do you think about that beginning? Feel free to leave a reply.

Now lastly, I also wanna go with you through the three boxes that Pat Pattison uses to develop the verses. You have something like:

1. Two people are attracted to each other and about to share their first kiss – “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not.”
2. Lovers get engaged. – “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not.”
3. Lovers get married. – “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not.”

You can see how each box gains more meaning and weight and adds to the chorus. That’s why we stay engaged until the end of the song. We’re just right in the moment with the song’s characters, and we enjoy seeing how their relationship evolves and how they still tease each other with that one line.

I love the lyric writing of this song.
What do you think about them?

Song Exercise - The First Kiss

[00:45:43] Lastly, let’s talk about how you can use “Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not” as an inspiration to write your lyrics about the first kiss that takes the listener through the couple’s most important relationship moments.

You don’t need to take any notes. You can find a transcript of this episode in the show notes on storiesinsongs.com/podcast. You’ll also find a PDF there that you can download with this week’s exercise.



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And here's what the exercise looks like:

I want you to write your original lyrics about how a relationship evolves by taking into account that their first kiss got the ball rolling.

Use the following criteria as a guideline:

1. Use **past** tense for the verses.
2. Use **present** tense for the chorus. Remember, you can turn the chorus into a quote they refer to.
3. Give your lovers a **ritual** that makes the title of the song and gets mentioned in the first and/or last line of your chorus... or the last line of your verses.
4. Use the **three boxes** to develop your verses by focusing on three important stages of your couple's relationship.
 - a. Ensure that each stage moves to a better place in their relationship when you look at the love story **value spectrum**. In the PDF, you'll find an image of the love-to-hate spectrum with the different values along that spectrum.
5. Without too much emphasizing, include what your character
 - a. wants
 - b. show how they change as a person by getting what they need
 - c. name what's at stake
 - d. give the audience a sense of the problem
6. Ensure you include the **five commandments** of storytelling
 - a. Inciting Incident: Can happen off-page, but the listener must be able to say what must have led to the characters' initial situation
 - b. Turning Point Progressive Complication: Please include the moment that throws your song's main character into a crisis.
 - c. Crisis/Climax: You can say it out loud like "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not", or jump straight ahead to the character's decision but the listener needs to be able to assume what the crisis must have looked like.
 - d. Resolution: Show how your character's love story has evolved to a better place.
7. To make this exercise easier, I'll also include a lyric commentary to "Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not" so that you can see where the different storytelling aspects appear in the lyrics. That lyric commentary is included in the exercise.

I hope you enjoy this task.



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If you have any questions or want to show me what you've come up with, feel free to write me an email at write@storiesinsongs.com.

Next time, we talk about what we have to say, how it matters, and how we can effectively communicate it in our lyrics so that it matters to other people as well.

Sound good?

So if you don't want to miss any of the upcoming episodes, subscribe to the Stories in Songs Podcast right now.

Thanks for listening. I appreciate you.

Bis bald und auf Wiedersehen, Melanie

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- Are You Gonna Kiss Me or Not lyrics © Music Of Cal Iv, Sexy Tractor Music, Spirit Catalog Holdings, S.a.r.l., Spirit Catalogue Holdings, S.a.r.l.
- "Rumor" by Lee Brice – Using Multiple Love Story Conventions
<https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-024>
- Every Character WANTS something. But how do you figure out WHAT that is?
<https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-029>
- Knowing Which Lyric Lines & Ideas To Keep Or Throw Out – How To Answer The Question Of Relevancy – <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-036>
- The First Step to Creating A One-Sentence Lyric Outline To Guide Your Writing Process – <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-038>
- Steps Two and Three to Creating A One-Sentence Lyric Outline To Guide Your Writing Process – <https://storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-040>
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