

The Little  
Shop of  
Lyrics

Wig Nelson

Proprietor

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ISBN – 1450513042

EAN – 13 - 9781450513043

LCCN - TBA

Printed in the United States of America

## Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank my wife Mary and my son Cory for helping me make this book a little more technical, a little more personal and a lot more logical.



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*Author's Name*





# "The Little Shop of Lyrics"

Welcome to the Little Shop of Lyrics. This is the place to come when you are blocked or just want to throw around an idea and see if Wiggymusic can make it any better. The Little Shop of Lyrics is not for everyone, just as Wiggymusic itself is not for everyone. Let this be a warning: there is a moral obligation for those who choose to utilize this workshop. You are not required to pay for any assistance you receive with your lyrics or recognize Wiggymusic for helping you bring your project to a successful completion. Your only obligation is to try to write the best lyrics that you can - hopefully pleasing to any audience for whom you might have the good fortune to play.

If you feel that you have been treated well here at The Little Shop of Lyrics, I would be more than pleased if you would return the favor by helping someone else with his or her lyrics or directing him or her to this book.. Wiggymusic's Little Shop of Lyrics is available to anyone who is interested in writing good lyrics with a positive attitude in the interest of evoking an emotional response, either happy or sad, from your intended audience.

Thank you very much, Wig Nelson

## Introduction:

Why write song lyrics anyway? Who cares about the lyrics? Most people don't even listen to the lyrics, they just dance or groove along to the music, right? Well, maybe, but certainly not in a slow, thought provoking ballad. And some lyrics are intended to give us a good laugh, which is always just what the doctor ordered.

Lyrics deliver clichés that are familiar to us and give us the feeling that we are not alone in the world. When I can relate to the emotions or intellect in a song, it validates me as a person. It's comforting to me to hear that other people have the same beliefs, likes and dislikes that I do.

Beyond the language in which lyrics are actually written, there is a bridge formed between otherwise distant and very different cultures. Many songs are written and performed in English throughout the world. I'm not sure what the reason is; perhaps it is the easiest language in which to write rhymes. English is considered by some to be a rather clumsy language, not quite as guttural as German, but not as flowing and beautiful as French or Italian.

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So why do so many cultures write lyrics in English? Maybe it is as simple as it being the largest common denominator. After all, it's all about getting our message heard by the most people, right?

Who are we singing to? Certainly not to ourselves; why would we bother to do that? No, we are trying to communicate to others and hopefully connect our feelings. Songs lyrics can convey some feelings much better than any other medium. They take us a giant step further than prose or poetry because we have much more than the spoken word to use to express ourselves. We have a voice. We can augment the written word with the emotionality of sound. We can implore someone to hear a desperate plea or describe our observations in life while simultaneously demonstrating how we feel about them just by the emotion or melody that accompanies the message.

Song lyrics are in large part a record of our actual history. They even send them out into space; perhaps as one of the ways we define our species here on Earth. Long before there was the written word there was the lyric to pass stories down through subsequent generations. The actual word lyric comes from the reference to words or

melodies sung to a *lyre*, which is a stringed instrument from the middle ages.

Whether or not a song lyric will *have legs*, or be popular for many years into the future are anybody's guess. But the concept of communication through song lyrics will certainly never go out of style. Styles will change and lyricists and composers will come and go, but *the song* is here to stay. Song melodies will forever remain right before our ears for all time just waiting, begging for you to flesh them out with your lyrics. What are you waiting for? Your song awaits you as does your audience.

## Chapter 1: Five Basics

### 1. A good song should have movement.

**Movement is best understood as a change in attitude from the beginning of a song to the ending.**

If you write "the sky is blue" well, that's very observant of you, but so what? What else is blue? How do you feel about blue? Was it always blue? Do most people like blue? Is blue your favorite color for a sky? Is blue your favorite color for anything else? Are you feeling blue?

(Do you see a pattern emerging here?)

#### **Questions?**

A helpful trick I use constantly is asking questions. I pretend I'm the listener and I am the nosiest guy on Earth. I want to know everything. If it's a girl, what does she look like? Is she nice? Is she pretty? Does she like you? Has she always liked you? Do people like her? Can she cook? Can she sing? . . . You get the idea. Now, I know that the lyricist is not going to answer all those questions I have, but he better tell me something; anything of interest. Just give me a reason why I should care that you're singing the song in the first place. That's movement.

Fiction writing is the same, as is poetry. If you're just going to say, "This is how it is," then you're a journalist. If you say, "This is how it is," and then you go on to say, "Now, I feel differently," or "This is still how it is and this is how I feel about it," or "How come I never saw the change happening?" that's movement.

Some of my songs lack movement, and what do you want to bet they could be a lot better? Thank God for the rewrite. Remember, you better have something going on in your song or you're going to anger the person who took the time to listen to it. He won't be back.

**Basically, movement can be defined as a stated situation, a change in that situation, and with any luck, how you feel about that change in the situation.**

## 2. Avoid overworked clichés like the plague.

In the course of this workshop, I'll identify a bunch of clichés that I might have used in the past, and if I have, I should be ashamed of myself. If you say, "I love you," in a song, good for you. That's an honest, heartfelt emotion

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that anyone can have a good feeling about.

If you say, "You're the only one for me," then the next thing I'm expecting to hear is, "If you could only see - We were always meant to be - Oh gosh, oh gee" - you get the idea; don't do this. There are a hundred lines that I avoid like the plague and I intend to list them right here, eventually. I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, but trust me, I'm hurting mine, too. I'm just as guilty as you are and with any luck, and The Little Shop of Lyrics, we can all be a little better at what we're trying to accomplish here. Please avoid these phrases at all costs:

**Ships passing in the night** - ships pass for a good reason; so does gas

**Heartstrings of your soul** - just what is a heartstring and is it covered by your health insurance?

**You are the one** - yeah, until the divorce and then you were the one

**Cutting like a knife** - use the cut, but lose the simile; we all know what a knife does. How about a metaphor: "your love is a knife"

**Soaring of my heart** - this line will fowl your own nest

**Heavenly embrace** - it's a felony to use these two words in the same sentence

**My guiding light or guiding star** - come back to Earth; that's where your listeners are

**Don't break my heart** \* - unless you can say it in a unique way, don't bother. Even Achy Breaky was better than "you broke my heart"

**I can't live without you** \* - sure you can; you just don't "want" to live without her/him

The lines with asterisks are examples where I break my own rules. After all; rules are meant to be broken, especially where art is concerned, right? Here's the reason I asterisked "Break My Heart."

Well, I know this term is overused, but I tried it myself once in a song called, "Break My Heart Again." It has a little twist to it in that it says, "Isn't it sorry to hear I want to break my heart again." It's in the key of B that I never write in. All the changes are on the upbeat, which I find really fun to play on the guitar. I thought I could get away with it because I said it in a different way. The point being that we sometimes break our own heart by wanting what

we can't have. I might not have pulled it off, but here are the link and the lyrics.

“Break My Heart Again” By Wig Nelson

(Track #1)

Isn't it **crazy** - that you can break your heart on a **friend**

Isn't it **easy** - to want to go for what you can't **win**

Isn't it just **like me** - to want to sail without any **wind**

Isn't it - sorry to hear I want to break my heart **again**

(Chorus)

I didn't want to show you what you really mean to **me**

Something that you didn't want to **see**

I didn't want to trouble you with tales of love and **fear**

Something that you didn't want to **hear**

Isn't it - **lov-e-ly** - how we can love each other so **well**

Isn't it - **heav-en-ly** - whether it's really heaven **or hell**

Isn't it - **sad to see** that I will always be what I've **been**

Isn't it - sorry to hear I want to break my heart **again**

Isn't it - sorry to hear I want to break my heart **again**

(Chorus)

There are a couple of techniques in these lyrics that might be worth noting. First of all, note the **internal rhymes** as well as the **end rhymes** in each verse. Secondly, it makes the point that we ultimately break our own hearts for a number of reasons, (I won't go into that) but hopefully that deals with a broken heart in a fresh new way. No one wants to break their own heart, but it just happens sometimes. The second line supports the first by giving one of those reasons. The third line avoids clichés like "beating a dead horse" or "spinning my wheels" and, instead, describes a frustrating situation in a fresh way by giving a different example – "*to want to sail without any wind.*"

The second verse talks about staying in a bad relationship because we can't help ourselves - thus we break our own heart. The words "so well" were a really convenient rhyme for the words "or hell" and give the some strong movement. The chorus uses the senses like show you what you didn't want to see and tell you what you didn't want to hear. The more senses the better in my opinion.

Now, the reason I asterisked "I can't live without you" is this: I recently saw the band, Train, on Good Morning America. They're a really good band. Well, I'm listening to this guy singing, "I can't leave without you . . .

I can't leave without you," so naturally I think, "I can't leave without you, Baby, cause, Baby, you're my ride." Now, I know he was actually singing, "I can't live without you," but I needed the joke. I wouldn't have written the joke if it weren't for his inflection.

**This brings us to INFLECTION 101. Or Affected speech.**

3. Don't use words with affected speech that can be misinterpreted.

(Unless you own it)

**Example:**

I can't live without a ewe? "I'm sorry, Sir, but you aren't allowed to bring that animal into this hotel. . . Yes, I know who you are; I have all your records."

How about the rock star that was driving too fast. "Yaw giving me a ticket?"

The officer says, "Okay, I'll try." He bends to the left and bends to the right as he writes out the ticket for the rock star.

Before he became a rock star, he said "your" or "you're" like anybody else. Then when singing the lyric it became "yaw."

Here is this star syndrome extended to the point of the ridiculous: This is mindless entertainment that is not intended to be part of the actual Little Shop of Lyrics, but I thought I'd share it anyway. Please disregard the dialogue of the rock star's wife and parents and the baby crying.

I wrote it as a kind of story board for a skit. The music is soft and melodious in the first part and then turns to the "star" singing at the top of his lungs. The implication is that they can't turn it on and off once they become rock stars. "Sir Mick" often dances up and down the aisle of the supermarket and tears his shirt when he gets to the checkout counter kind of thing. Sorry, Mick, I know you don't do this, but I needed an example. Give my best to "Sir Charles," and "Sir, AHHHH I Fell Out Of A Palm Tree" I just knighted them, too.

The lyrics for the skit are written below, but you won't find the music on the CD. I haven't recorded it yet and may not ever get around to it. The idea just kind of tickled me, so I wrote it down.

“When Rock Stars Go Home” By Wig Nelson

Singer: “When rock stars go home, do they take their attitude along?

Are they just as cool, when you’re only trying to get through?

And do they believe they’re not the same sonny boy you knew?

I wonder if it’s true, when rock stars go home.”

Rock Star: “DON’T WANNA PASS YOU THE MASHED POTATOES!

DON’T WANNA CALL MY OLD GIRLFRIEND UP!

THERE’S NO BEER IN THE REFRIDGERA...

BY THE WAY, YOU CAN TAKE YAW OWN GARBAGE OUT!

TAKE YAW OWN GARBAGE OUT!”

Mom (spoken): “It’s okay, I can get it.

Dad (spoken): “No Dear, I’ll get it. I’m on my way out, anyway.”

Mom (spoken): “Where are you going...?”

Dad (spoken): “I have no idea.”

**Singer:** “When rock stars go home, do they have to jump around the room?

And can they behave if ever the Pastor comes to call?

I wish I was there to somehow be witness to it all.

A fly upon the wall when rock stars go home.”

**Rock Star:** “I KNOCKED A HOLE IN THE CHINA CABINET!

I PARKED MY CAR ON YOUR NEIGHBOR’S LAWN!

I THINK I MIGHTTA’ RUN OVER THE CAT...

BY THE WAY, YOU CAN TAKE YOUR OWN GARBAGE OUT

TAKE YAW OWN GARBAGE OUT!”

**Dad (spoken):** “I’ll take it Honey.”

**Rock Star:** (sung at the top of his lungs): “TAKE YOUR OWN GARBAGE OUT!”

**Dad (spoken):** “Just as soon as he gets in the can.”

**Rock Star:** (sung at the top of his lungs): “TAKE YOUR OWN GARBAGE OUT!”

**Rock Star’s wife (spoken softly):** “Would you sing the baby to sleep sweetie.”

**Rock Star:** (sung at the top of his lungs): “ROCK’A’BYE B’BEEE...”

**Baby (crying):** “WAAAAAAH!”

Rock Star (sung at the top of his lungs): "ON A TREE TOP!"

Baby (crying): "WAAAAAAH!"

Note: When the rock star went home he spoke like a rock star: "Take '*yaw*' own garbage out." Do you think that his parents taught him to speak that way? Probably not. If you can pull off some affected speech for the first time, go for it. You'll own it. That's the point, though. I'm not going to sing, "*I gottah you*," because I'd be trying to copy someone else. The Godfather of Soul, for one.

**If I don't own it, I won't use it. The only time I'll sing, "I got a ewe," is if I follow it up and sing, "and a horsy and a ducky, too."**

4. Here's another taboo: Try to avoid any "of your" metaphors that sound really familiar.

Mix and match any of the following nouns with the prepositional phrase "of your," "in your," "to your" or "of the" and the result is the same. You come up with some lyrics that I'm really glad I didn't write. They are overused

clichés masquerading as insightful comparisons. Sometimes you can't avoid them, but all I ask is that you try.

Magic		smile
Laughter		life
Twinkle		eyes
Garden	"in your"	night
Rapture		hands
Splendor		touch
Wonder	"of the"	mind
Mystery		style
Caress		lips
Fervor	"of your"	push
Loving		nudge
Touching		soul
Kissing	"to your"	love
Humping		dog
Licking . . .	let's just stop here, shall we? You get the idea	
. . .		

The point I'm trying to make here is there are things that you can write that will actually make people throw up. You might find a use for such lyrics in the poison control sector of your local hospital, but that's not what this book is about. Just because a cliché is a useful tool, you can also water them down to the point where they are just vanilla.

Now would be a good time to say that the cliché is

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actually the backbone of all good lyric writing. It's something we've heard time and again, and that familiarity makes us comfortable. I'm all for using a cliché in lyrics when it is fresh in the medium. Andy Warhol had some success painting a Campbell's soup can. Let's see someone do that again. Hmmm . . . something's wrong. Why isn't it cool when you do it? Because it already got it's fifteen minutes of fame. If I ever get famous, I'm going to ask if we can maybe shorten it to five or six minutes. Now why did I say that? There's always a point, it's here somewhere . . . Oh, yes, instead of saying that fame is overrated (not that I'd know) or that there is a price to pay for fame, i.e. - lack of privacy, stalkers, etc., I said I'd like to be famous for five or six minutes. It's not a particularly good example but it demonstrates saying something in a different way.

Back to lyrics and the cliché. The lovely Bonnie Raitt wrote a very good song called, "Nick of Time."

Where would we be without her wonderful music and such a terrific use of a cliché? It was the title song of a wonderful CD of some of the best rhythm and blues music of all time. But don't use that line again. It belongs to her. I'll never use the phrase "nick of time" because it will never carry the same weight or message as when she used it.

So, let's review: A cliché is a good thing and can provide a really solid anchor for a song lyric. Probably 90% of all good lyrical hooks are clichés; however, an overused cliché can kill an otherwise good lyric faster than you can say, "the sands of time."

But let's get back to lyrics. How about point of view? (POV)

## 5. Don't limit your point of view.

I live a pretty ordinary life, but my songs are anything but ordinary. Why? Because I lie. That's right, I lie. Lyric writing or "fiction," which is all lyrics really are, is the only acceptable circumstance where a lie is appropriate. Was Mick Jagger really born in a crossfire hurricane? Probably not. So we can lie. If you don't like that term, let's just say that we can represent something other than ourselves.

James Taylor once wrote a song that began, "I'm a lonely lighthouse . . ." I thought, Hmmmm, I thought you were a singer songwriter. Then it dawned on me, "Wow, I can be someone else." John Prine wrote, "I'm an old woman - named after my mother - my old man is another - child that's grown old." Man I wish I wrote that. Do I

think that John Prine is really an old woman, like dressed in drag or something? No, I feel that he is an artist presenting a part of life that is not his own. Bingo! That's what we all should aspire to. Don't limit yourself. Here's a POV that I used with some success.

## The Ghost Ship's Parade

By Wig Nelson c.1992 (Track #2)

I am an old clipper – best of the day  
Off on a holiday cruise up the bay  
Wind in the rigging – flags in the sky  
If I were a man there'd be tears in my eye  
Once I had a sister and faster was she  
A half day behind her was all I could be  
A great reef down under ripped through her keel  
A night when a fool took his turn at the wheel  
(Chorus)

All of the blue sea – always been a friend to me  
All of the blue sea – always been a friend to me

Once I knew a runner – guns for the war  
The British were dealing him fire from their bore  
It's sad when I think of the difference we've made  
Here at the head of the ghost ship's parade

*Wig Nelson*

Once I knew a captain – born on the sea  
Eyes for the pretty maid – soul to be free  
Here's to the battles he fought at my side  
And one to his health as he's off on the tide  
(Chorus)

Once I knew a slaver – and many men died  
A black hearted tally man counted their cries  
The soul of the trader is lost to the waves  
The devil might sing to you those were the days

I've seen all the kingdoms rise up and fall  
There must be a reason I've lived through it all  
Send me the children and raise up the sail  
And gather 'round close as I whisper the tale  
(Chorus)

All of the blue . . .

Incidentally, those lyrics are a very good example of **rhyming couplets** or the rhyme scheme – AA, BB, CC, DD, etc. The meter is very precise in that the lines have the same number of beats and similar accents. The chorus is a rhyming couplet, also, although it deviates from the meter of the verses.

Certain words I choose to call grace words are “and” and “there.” They can be omitted and nothing about the song really changes. It’s all a matter of personal taste to use them or not.

## **But back to POV:**

Do you think that I thought for a minute that I was an old ship telling a story? Nope, didn't think so. So, you see you can be whatever you want to be. Be a crack whore who wants to get straight for the sake of her children. Be a soldier in a war who wishes well of his enemy. His weapon for peace is to wish his enemy a grandchild that he can bounce upon his knee. The obvious implication is that you wish the safety of the innocents, if there are any innocents. Be Mick Jagger born in a crossfire hurricane. It's theater.

Let's face it, very few people really sing about what is closest to their heart. Most people are more private than that. Forgive me if I'm wrong, but I've written over a hundred songs, (thrown away over two hundred) and never wrote a song about my wife who I love more than anyone. You know why? My wife is real, and my art is theater. Oh, gosh darn it, I've let the cat out of the bag and now I'm in for it. I'm not saying that there aren't a lot of sincere, heart-felt love songs out there, but, trust me, the majority

are fiction. I've been married for over 20 years, so if I write a love song about a young girl, it better be fiction or my wife will shoot me. Sometimes I write a song in a "chick voice" or female point of view. One example of that is *Taxi Whore* on page 91. It's sung by a girl who is heart-broken because the man she loves is running around with a cheap woman who sleeps around. Some people are a bit put off by the subject matter and the title, but hey, not all art is pretty. My wife likes the song so I'm sticking to my guns. On the CD, it's sung by me, which is kind of strange. A woman on a writer's forum asked me if I was gay man after I posted it. Sheese! But that's what you run into as a lyricist. Not everybody is going to get what you're trying to put across. Your reward is the people who do. I'm not going to limit myself to an overweight man in his fifties with thinning hair. The point I'm trying to make is that for the most part, lyrics are fiction. I'll probably never write a song about my wife. If I do, I'll either be dying or it's because I need a really big favor. But you probably won't ever hear it.

## Chapter I Review: Five Basics

- 1. Always try to have movement by answering questions.**
- 2. Avoid overused clichés like the plague.**
- 3. Try not to use "effected speech" unless you own it.**
- 4. Watch out for those masquerading metaphors, for instance: "the graveyard of your song."**
- 5. Don't limit your point of view - be yourself, but someone else, too.**

## Chapter 2: Rhyme Schemes

### 1. Reach for that rhyme you shameless hussy.

The Curse of, "The Moon in June."

Back in the late 70's, I wrote radio copy for KOIT in San Francisco. (BM or Beautiful Music station) It had its ups and downs. (Elevator music, LOL)

Anyway, the station director was named Constantine Grab, really nice guy, and he had a brother-in-law who was a talent agent. He listened to some of my songs and offered to give me a letter of introduction, but he warned me that I had a lot of "moon in June" rhymes. He was right. I told him, "Thanks, Mr. Grab, but I guess I'm not ready yet." It's been nearly 30 years and I'm still not ready, but I'm getting closer because I rewrite.

It's easy to reach for the rhyme. In a nutshell, that means using the first rhyme that comes into your head and shaping the words of the line to fit it. Sometimes this works out fine, but other times you can do much better. Even after a song is finished, it doesn't hurt to take a hard

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look at it and think if you can say the same thing, but in a different way. A lot of the time you will replace (not throw out) what you've written with a fresh idea that works much better. What you've replaced can be used later in another song. I find that a portfolio is kind of like a huge puzzle where you have to move lines or ideas around to see where they fit the best. A bit of advice that's always been helpful to me is to shelve the work for about a week or so and come back to it. You will work on it in your subconscious mind, which is probably a better lyricist than you'll ever be.

You may find that a song just unfolds in front of you in about five minutes and you'll ask yourself, "Man, where did that come from?" It probably came from your subconscious mind. You didn't even know that you were working on it, maybe even in your sleep. I've written songs in dreams.

As far as reaching for the rhyme, I say go for it. Write it wrong and then write it right. Getting it down is more than half the battle.

## 2. A Few Thoughts on Rhyme Scheme

There are many different rhyme schemes and they are basically shaped according to the "needs" of the lyrics. Some songs are very straight forward and need only a rhyming vowel sound at the end of the line, usually in pairs. As mentioned above in "Ghost Ship's Parade," we would call this rhyme scheme *rhyming couplets*.

The following song, "The Counting House," is also written in rhyming couplets, but I'd like to introduce another lyrical device that I call ***parallel internal rhymes***.

I'm not sure what other lyricists call them but that term seems to best describe what's going on. Notice in the first verse below that it starts with a rhyming couplet, but also the word "house" in the first line rhymes with the word "loud" in the second line.

Look for the ***parallel internal rhymes*** in ***bold face italics*** and the **end rhymes** in plain **bold face** in the following songs.

“The Counting House” By Wig Nelson c. 2007

(Track #3)

The queen is in her counting **house** –  
the princesses can't **sleep**.

They hear the counting very **loud** –  
and pray the gold to **reap**.

Can she buy her way to **heaven?** Has she lied way to **hell?**  
Will she ever be **forgiven?** I can only wish her **well?**

The princesses are **bargaining** –  
their heels are digging **deep**.  
Soon they'll lose the **only thing**  
they're better off to **keep**.

Can they buy their way to **freedom?** Have they lied their way to **hell?**  
Will the queen be there to **lead them** with another mother's **spell?**

The jingle jangle **echoes** as  
the hungry babies **cry**.  
The **counting** drowning **out** the **sound**  
of mother's milk run **dry**.

Will she need a soul to **borrow** or another lie to **tell?**  
Will she ever feel the **sorrow** of the ones who served her **well?**

The queen is building barricades –  
a **legacy** of **lies**.

Hoping to allude them as  
the evil arrow **flies**.

Will she buy her way to **heaven**? Has she lied her way to **hell**?  
Shall she ever be **forgiven**? I can only wish her **well**.

The princesses are **circling**  
above the queen **below**.  
They may not leave her **anything**  
to pay the boatman's **toll**?

Can they buy their way to **freedom**? Have lied their way to **hell**?  
Will the queen be there to **feed them**? I can only wish them **well**.

The queen has nearly **counted out**  
and soon will lock **away** –  
The coffers of her **counting house**  
to count another **day**.

Will she buy her way to **Heaven**? Has she lied her way to **hell**?  
Shall she ever be **forgiven**? I can only wish her **well**.

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Notice that the last two lines in every verse have *the parallel internal rhymes*. I'll list them here in the order they occur:

*heaven - hell - forgiven - well*

*freedom - hell - lead them - spell*

*borrow - tell - sorrow - well*

*heaven - hell - forgiven - well*

*freedom - hell - feed them - well*

*heaven - hell - forgiven - well*

I'm not trying to make this more complicated than it is, but notice that "heaven" almost rhymes with "forgiven." Actually "heaven" and "forgiven" are called a **false rhyme**, **slant rhyme**, **near rhyme** or **off rhyme** rather than a **perfect rhyme** because the end consonants are the same, but the vowel sounds are slightly different.

Using parallel internal rhymes can be an effective lyrical device because the listener becomes accustomed to hearing them occur in the middle of the lines and are rewarded with a *payoff* when anticipating them as well as establishing a rhythmic pattern that is pleasing to the ear.

As far as the subject of the song goes, I was obviously shooting for the medieval minstrel's take on the evil queen who is oblivious to the needs of her people. Her daughters are chips off the old block, so to speak, and cannot see past their greed. The queen gets her reward for her cruelty by the daughters not leaving her coins to be placed on her eyes to pay the boatman's toll.

Note: Why did I say that the princesses are circling?

What else circles?

Sharks circle it's true, but the end of the line says *above the queen below*.

So what else circles above us when we are nearing death?  
Vultures.

I called the princesses a couple of vultures without ever saying the word.

This is known as a metaphor, which I believe is the bread and butter of any good song lyrics.

So much for the A A, B B rhyme scheme or rhyming couplets. Now I'd like to draw attention to a lyrical device where the **same vowel sound** is used in every

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verse to set up what I choose to call a **tag line**. I'm sure there is a more technical term for this device, but here's how I see it: Lets say that we're writing a song called, "Got Ta' Set Me Free." That would be the tag line. It also happens to be the title, but it doesn't have to be. Okay so we write a few rhyming couplets, or AA, BB lines – something like:

"I know that you're no good for me with all your runnin'

**round** = 7 beats

N' now I'm everybody's fool when I'm out on the **town**

= 7 beats

My heart was lying to my eyes, but now I finally **see**

= 7 beats

Come on Babe, you got ta' set me **free**"

= 5 beats

Note how this song is taking shape: The first three lines have 7 beats and the last one 5. The third line is what I would call the "**set up line**" that has to rhyme with the word "**free**" in every verse. Also, I feel that it is very important to stick to a strict meter in that I want to hear 7 beats in the first three lines and every fourth line 5 beats with the tag line.

What words do you think should appear at the end of the third or "**set up**" line?

How about: **Me, Be, Eventually, Agony, Fantasy, Sea, Plea . . .**

Any and all of those words will work. In the event that you use a word with many syllables, like eventually, you have to fit them into the amount of feet in the line, in this case 7 beats. Here's an example:

“You know that what we have will surely fade **eventually**  
I'm beggin' you, you got **ta' set me free.**”

Note that I altered the tag line slightly using, “I'm beggin' you” instead of “come on, Babe”; however, you could just as easily sing the same last line to every verse. The first two beats of the last line can vary as long as the last three are the “**tag line**” or “**you got ta' set me free.**”

Please excuse the sophomoric example of the lyrics; I just use them as a tool to make a point. You're welcome to use them, but if you are reading this workshop, you will certainly be able to come up with something better.

So, if you will allow me to label this lyrical device a **tag line**, we can see that it opens up a wealth of possibilities. I have heard this rhyme scheme called the Y Y Y Y. I know that sounds strange, but I didn't question it at the

time. Until I can discover the correct term, let's just call it that, shall we?

At this point I'll include one of my songs that also has a Y Y Y Y rhyme scheme and then I'll shut up about it. The song is called Mr. Middle of the Road. The basic structure is the same as the fictitious example above. It starts with a rhyming couplet, or two lines that have an end rhyme, and then the third line is the “**set up**” line and the last line is the “**tag line.**” As I mentioned above, the **tag line** is often the title of the song, which is the case with this one.

Note the end rhymes in **bold face** type and the “**set up**” and “**tag line**” rhymes in *bold face italics*.

“Mr. Middle of the Road” By Wig Nelson c. 1992  
(Track #4)

Words have double meanings - I guess that I can, **too**  
I won't make a decision cause I'm so afraid of **you**  
You may not accept me if I let my feelings **show**  
I'm Mr. Middle Of The **Road**

I might have opinions - I'll never let you **know**  
I don't set the buttons on my AM **radio**

There's a line of broken yellow runnin' up and down my  
**clothes**

I'm Mr. Middle Of The **Road**

I'll never let you near me if there's liquor on my **breath**  
Sometimes I'm afraid that I might bore myself to **death**  
You'll find the latest fashion from my shoulders to my **toes**  
I'm Mr. Middle Of The **Road**

I like to see the sunshine, but I guess we need the **rain**  
I don't look for pleasure - I'm afraid I'd miss the **pain**  
And if I might offend you, then I'll pack my things and **go**  
I'm Mr. Middle Of The **Road**

I'd like to make confession, but there isn't much to **say**  
I don't have a religion - I don't know where to **pray**  
They don't want me in heaven or the fiery hell **below**  
I'm Mr. Middle Of The **Road**

### 3. Bookends

Now that I've talked briefly about the Y Y Y Y rhyme scheme, I'd like to display another device that I call "**circ-ular**" or "**bookends.**"

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When a line of lyrics makes a statement in the beginning of a song and then ends the song with the same statement, I call that, bookends. Bookends can be a simple phrase or the song structure as well. Here is an example of structure:

I've always loved James Taylor's music. He has been an influence in my music for many years. In fact, I wrote a tribute to him that is in one of my music volumes. I think I copyrighted it in 1992, which speaks to the fact that he has long been an influence. It's called Sweeter Than James.

The lyrical point that I refer to as “**bookends**” is the fact that the chorus begins and ends with the same exact line.

“**Sweeter Than James**” By Wig Nelson c. 1992

(Track #5)

(Chorus)

Ain't nobody gonna' sing sweeter than James

I bought a phonograph and I went me through the names

He can play a guitar just like a little boy playin' games

Ain't nobody gonna' sing sweeter than James

(Refrain)

Sweeter than James on a box guitar

Sweeter than James no one will ever get that far

*Wig Nelson*

(1<sup>st</sup> Verse)

I was about twelve or thirteen when he caught my ear

He was just a young man but the best I'll ever hear

When I heard his music come across the radio

It didn't take me twenty bars or thirty words to know

(Chorus) (Refrain)

(2<sup>nd</sup> Verse)

And now it's been ten years and I'm stummin' along

And sometimes it seems that he helped me write my songs

Maybe in my life I'll get a chance to shake his hand

Cause anyone who likes to sing would like to meet the man

(Chorus)

(Refrain)

(Break)

(Chorus)

(Refrain)

Note: Another example of what I would call “*bookends*” is the fact that the song begins with a *chorus* and *refrain* and ends the same way, which surrounds the two verses in between. So, not only are the lyrics bookends, but the structure of the song could be viewed as “*bookends*” also.

## Chapter 3:

### An Examination of Scat

#### 1. The Chicken or the Egg – Or The Scat Omelet

I've been asked a few times what I like to do best: write lyrics to music or write music to lyrics. Definitely the former. As far as which I do best, I'm not sure, but it's a ton easier to write the music first, at least for me. Here's why:

I usually write on guitar, but it doesn't matter what your instrument is. It starts with a progression of chords or pattern of notes. Maybe even just a lick, at first, but eventually a series of chords will fill in around it. Some of my friends call it "noodling." Well, I call it trancing. I'll play a repetitious chord pattern over and over until it takes a little shape and then spread it out with what usually becomes the chorus or bridge. When I say "shape" I mean certain notes are accented differently from the rest.

Take, for instance, a major chord on any instrument. You've got the tonic, say, C - then the 3rd - E, and the 5th - G. You might throw in the 8th or C again an octave up.

Now this is hardly rocket science, or even basic music theory, but obviously those notes sound different. Well, say you have 4 or 5 chords in the progression; if you play it over and over 100 times (about 15 minutes) you'll hear different notes standing out and then you'll try to play it the same way over and over and all of a sudden you have the suggestion of a melody.

Next comes scat. Doo bee doo bee - la la la , you know . . . sounding like an idiot. Sounding like an idiot is a big part of song writing. Fortunately, I can do it in my mind now so I don't have to be alone. But if you write out loud, alone is good. Then you won't be self conscious. Some people can't even scat in front of themselves. I pity them. I don't think I've ever embarrassed myself to myself. I embarrass myself strictly to other people. Otherwise, I usually give myself a break.

So now you're scattng. You might want to move right to vowel sounds from there. Certain vowel sounds will usually work better with certain chords depending on where they fall in the progression. I don't know why this is so, but I know that it is. It might be something as simple as the sound of the chord name itself. When you play an E, your mind might be leaning toward the long "e" vowel

sound. The same may be true with long the "a" vowel sound. You may as well start there when you scat and then change the sound when you flesh out the meaning of the song. I remember when I was back in college and a friend was showing me the chords to Bob Dylan's North Country Blues, the **A minor chord** (Am) was struck precisely when the lyrics went, "to marry John Thomas **a miner.**" I'm sure that was just a coincidence, right? One time I wrote a song about a man who fences hot jewelry called, Ace, The Iceman of Diamonds. The chords to the chorus were A – C – E. Just a coincidence, I'm sure.

## Back to Scat:

Now you've got a (suggestion of a) melody and some scat going on and it's time to move on to phrasing. Phrasing will pretty much determine the size and rhythm of the words that you use to replace the scat. You might find the "need" for a three syllable word in a certain part of a line. What do I mean by that? Let me demonstrate with the lyrics to one of my songs called "The Holy Man."

Notice that in each line there is a word or group of words that contain the same rhythm or accents. The listener anticipates this pattern and expects a payoff. Now I'll list the words or phrases and italicize them in the lyrics below.

They are:

***water they'll***

***fallen down***

***miracles***

***believe in the***

***sinner who***

***courage to***

***Sunday school***

***all the way***

***better life***

***butterflies***

***make it there***

***center of***

***holly man***

***message and***

***story has***

***God of him.***

Say all of the words or phrases aloud. They should roll off the tongue with very little effort. The one exception might be the words, believe in the, but notice that the first two letters in the word believe are not bold faced and italicized. This is for a reason. The syllable “lieve” gets the accent. This will become clearer when you read the lyrics aloud with triplets in mind.

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Each line contains three triplets and then a single syllable with two “syllable rests” or silence where the others might otherwise be. The result is something like this: One two three, one two three, one two three, one --- --- one two three, one two three, one two three, one --- --- .

The waltz time melody is what directed me to the conclusion that I “needed” a three syllable word or phrase for some, if not all, of the triplets. Working this way can almost "allow" a song to write itself.

You will probably get a feeling for what the song is about just by listening to the melody as you sing scat. Usually a minor key is sad or thoughtful, but it doesn't have to be. In this case I just started scatting la da da - la da da - la da da - dee over and over. I wanted to write a song about Jesus, or some other holy man. It could be about Buddha or Lao Tsu or any other holy man, but Jesus most naturally comes to mind.

There is no hard and fast rule regarding whether or not the meter should be consistent throughout a song. Many songs change meter and rhyme scheme in the mid-

dle of the song. My songs are usually less complicated than that.

Note:

As soon as you run across a "rule" in song or lyric writing, break it.

What I am outlining in this workshop are guidelines. Feel free to break any rule that you suspect I am writing in stone, and by all means work outside the guidelines you find herein. I'm just stating what works easiest for me.

I generally write the music first and then scat to the suggestion of a melody and then replace the scat syllables with words. The whole process happens rather quickly. Honing and fine tuning the lyrics are what usually takes the most time.

"Yesterday" by Lennon and McCartney started as "Scrambled Eggs" and "Eleanor Rigby" was "Miss Daisy Hawkins." The rewrite is the backbone of most successful songwriters.

Here are the lyrics to "The Holy Man" with the numbers of the triplets above the words. Note the 10 beats or accents in each line. Accent aloud the syllables below

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the numbers. You will get a sense of the  $\frac{3}{4}$  rhythm driving the song along. The phrasing isn't really as mechanical as it appears below. It's just an example. What I hope to show is that my hand was directed to place the syllables on accents at the same place or nearly the same place in each line.

“The Holy Man” By Wig Nelson (Track #6)

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

He walks on the water they'll have us believe

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

And searches for fallen down souls to relieve

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

The Lord lends him miracles to pass through his hand

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

And I want to believe in the poor holy man

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

But I'm just a sinner who stands in his way

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

I haven't the courage to love him today

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

I know that a Sunday school can't break my fall

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

Cause I must go it all the way if I go at all

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

*Wig Nelson*

They say there's a better life with food on the trees

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

And fields full of butterflies and stingerless bees

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

I know I won't make it there and never be free

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

Cause I can't walk the center of a road I can't see

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

If you see the holy man ask him to tea

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

Send off a message and show him to me

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

I'm glad that his story has passed through the land

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1

But if you make a God of him you take from the man

## Another Example of Writing to Scat:

A collaborator named David recently sent me this song. The genre is southern rock, which is no real stretch for me because I grew up (well, almost) going to concerts like Atlanta Rhythm Section and The Allman Brothers. David's song reminded me of Lynard Skynard. It also reminded me of The Almond Joys, who, of course, became The Allman Brothers. Anyway, David sends me this song and I listen and like what I hear. It's a really cool song. I'm thinking, man, this song can write its own lyrics if I just get out of the way.

### “Magnolia” (Old Blue) By Campbell & Nelson (Track #7)

Old Blue why don't you make up your move  
Unless you think she's just teasin'  
All night long she's been lookin' at you  
And givin' you a good reason

I know a lot has changed since you've been out here  
The role reversals aren't always so clear  
Come on Blue why don't you ask her to dance  
Sometimes December gets September romance

*Wig Nelson*

Come on Blue now bust out that move  
Unless you think she's just teasin'  
All night long she's been lookin' at you  
So now you've got a good reason

I know a lot has changed since you've been out here  
The role reversal isn't always so clear  
Come on Blue why don't you ask her to dance  
Sometimes December gets September romance

(Refrain)

Don't look now I think she's walkin' this way  
I think maybe she may have something to say  
I'm gonna' step out back for a while

Old Blue I'm glad you made your move  
I guess she wasn't teasin'  
She's been all night long givin' you a reason  
I seen you headin' for the door  
I guess we won't be seein' you around no more  
Old Blue I'm glad you made up your move  
And that she wasn't just teasin'  
It must feel good to back in the groove

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I know it's got to be pleasin'  
Old Blue I'm glad you made up your move  
And that she wasn't just teasin'

When I first heard this song by David Campbell I was thinking that the first three notes are "grace notes" or "lead in" notes in that it's all just a set up, kind of like anticipating someone saying something but there's nothing there. So, I first scat: Blah dah dah for the lead in notes. Now Blah dah dah may not sound like something Earth shattering to you, but let's all remember that a lot of good lyrics begin their life as mindless sounds searching for some kind of similarity to actual words.

So, here I am with, Blah dah dah. I naturally followed that up with some rocket science: Do do - dah dah - do do dah do . . . dah dah dah do do dah do dah. Now, you must think I am from Mars, (which is true) but there was actually something unfolding here rather quickly. I said to myself, "Old Blue - why don't you make up your move - unless you think she's just teasin'." Well, now the whole song kind of unfolds before me in about three or four minutes. I envision a guy in his late forties or fifties back in the dating scene, for one reason or another, (a widower or divorced) who is like a fish out of water.

(Note that at this point this is just fiction like any other fiction - I intend to tell a short story - a very short story)

Naturally, there's a young guy on the scene, (it could as well be a young girl who is his friend although not a love interest- little sister kind of thing, or little brother) the younger one says to the older one, "Old Blue why don't you make up your move - unless you think she's just teasin'. All night long she's been lookin' at you – and givin' you a good reason."

Do you see where this is going? It all happens because the music inspires the scat, which directs the meter of the lines. A good song melody can almost write your lyrics for you, but I'm not sure the reverse is true. If I write a good poem or song lyric, there's no guarantee that it will be easy to write music to it.

I was lucky in this instance in that David gave me a very solid pallet from which to take my paint. Anyone who writes lyrics on a regular basis could have written lyrics to Magnolia in about ten minutes. It's that good of a song. He may not decide to use my lyrics (or story board - because that's actually what prospective lyrics are; a story board), which doesn't phase me one way or the other as a

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lyricist. You have to have thick skin and an understanding that you can always use your rejected lyrics for another project.

I think the premise of the lyrics for Magnolia is sound. If David doesn't use them, then I surely will with another rock song. But he is welcome to them because that is what The Little Shop of Lyrics is for.

Guess what David has to pay for the lyrics? You guessed it, nada. Anyone who seeks lyrics from this workshop will never be charged a single penny. Of course, if you start selling your music and are making some big bucks off the lyrics or melodies of Wiggymusic, then I trust that you will do the right thing; pay me \$.04 cents per song copy for my lyrics. (Assuming that you wrote the music and the standard royalty rate for authorship is \$.08 cents per song)

Hmmm, I guess I better rethink ordering that Lexus any-time soon.

But you get the idea; it's not about the money. It's about playing the music for your friends and putting smiles on some faces. How do you put a price tag on that?

Now let's talk briefly about the message of this song. It's not too complicated - just like about 99% of all songs. We're all lonely on one plane or another. We're looking for something or someone to make us feel less lonely. Money doesn't matter. Power comes from having people who think that you're worth a damn. That source of power could come from a three year old sitting on your knee, or a beautiful 20 year old co-ed who likes older men - or women.

The point is that we are seeking something. Therein are the meat and potatoes of 90% of all song lyrics. The payoff is the movement. In the case of this paltry little example of lyric writing, the Old Blue is seen walking toward the door with the younger woman who was looking at him all night long. The Old Blue won. He took the advice of the younger man. The younger man is glad he did; he won, too. The young woman who liked him is happy to be leaving the bar or restaurant with the older man. She wins, too. It's a win - win - win situation.

So there's the movement; (sounds of a dead horse being beaten in the background) the Old Blue overcame his jitters about being back in the dating scene after so many

years. David put a nice bridge in the song, which lent itself to the change in mood. (Don't look now - I think she's walkin' this way) I love it when a song is changing tempo and mood because it broadens the medium for the message. There is the change in meter and rhyme scheme I mentioned earlier.

As far as the choice of words I might just mention that the term, "bust a move" was once used by William Shattner on television. I didn't like using that line in the second chorus, because it is old news. It's always a bad idea in my opinion to use a term which dates your work. If the term dies out, so does your work.

Anything from "bust a move" to "shake your booty" is a sure way to turn off your listening audience. I think I used the words, "bust out that move," and that's just as bad. I should be ashamed of myself. So, I said to myself, *'How can you say this with a fresh voice?'* I came up with the term, "Make up your move." The meaning of this term is evolving as we speak. It means that you're not sure that you want to make a move - you're not sure that you have a move - you're not sure that you have the guts to make a move - (busting it out or otherwise) so you are forced to swallow your fear and, "make up your move."

Obviously, it's a combination of "make up your mind" and "make your move." Notice that I didn't have to say, "make up your mind" to get the message of hesitation or indecision across. That cliché was good to me in these lyrics even though I never really used it. I thought "make up your move" was a really nice line and it will stand along with David's work until you "ahem" . . . borrow it.

Another device that worked well in this song was the metaphor, "Sometimes December gets September romance." That's another way of saying that there are no hard and fast rules about age differences. Especially in today's society. "I could have said, "Sometimes the old guys get the young good looking girls," but that sounds like something that Beaver Cleaver might write, especially at his age.

## 2. Another Example of Scat Following a Melody

(Scatting with an Instrument)

Here is another song that I wrote some lyrics to for a man who lives in Pittsburgh, PA. His name is Tony

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Faiola and he lost his dog to cancer, which is always sad. Tony wrote this beautiful song and finished it right when his dog passed away. His dog always liked to ride in the car with him so he named the song, "The Last Ride."

Well, I listened to the song and heard the story and it really moved me. I lost my dog after twelve and a half years, so I said to my wife, *'I won't be able to get straight until I write some lyrics for this song.'* I found myself thinking about my dog and getting all choked up. All of a sudden my closure undid itself and I was a mess.

Long story short (sure) I wrote the song from the point of view (POV) of the dog in heaven trying to comfort the owner. As far as where the phrasing of the words came from, I followed the scat. In this instance, the scat followed the flute. I started playing the flute to Tony's beautiful song and the "suggestion" of a melody unfolded.

If you don't play a melody instrument, then you scat with your voice - just like Mel Torme, "The Golden Fog" did. Trini Lopez did also, but some say it's just because he forgot the words. In the case below, the lyric phrases followed the music phrases. As I mentioned earlier, this is always easiest for me.

Note: This was written from the POV of a dog in heaven, but it never alludes to a dog, but merely a relationship. It could easily be sung by passed lover or a passed cowboy to his partner on the range. That is the beauty of being vague.

**“The Last Ride”** Faiola & Nelson (Track #8)

(Intro) (1<sup>st</sup> Verse)

In my way I tried to show you  
How good it was to know you  
And how it felt to ride by your side

(2<sup>nd</sup> Verse)

In my way I told you not to hurry  
I told you not to worry  
Everybody cries on the last ride

(Repeat 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Verse)

(Refrain)

There’s something more that I wanted to say  
Here’s to our dreams when we’re back in the day  
Now dry those tears from your eye  
I’ve got a place I can wait for my ride

(Repeat 1<sup>st</sup> Verse)

There, I finally got my closure back and I could stop crying. It was okay. My dog was in heaven reflecting on the good times we had and is waiting patiently for us to hook up again. (Waiting for his ride)

Music is a wonderful medium for sorting out your emotions. It's like therapy with noise.

### 3. A Brief Examination Of The Multi-syllabic Rhyme

Another song by Tony Faiola that I wrote lyrics to is a little more spiritual than emotional. (Maybe both for some people) He had some lyrics in mind and they were from the POV of Jesus. I thought, well, there's a stretch, but I'll give it a shot. I mean, what's the worst that could happen? (Sounds of thunder & lightning in the background)

Anyway, I'm still here. I'd like to talk about the structure of the rhyme scheme for a minute. I used what I call a multi-syllabic rhyme.

The song is pretty straight forward in that it begins with rhyming couplets for the verses. Then the chorus uses an-

other device called alternate rhymes. When I display the lyrics below, I'll italicize the rhyming words so you'll see what I am calling a multi-syllabic rhyme.

In the chorus I rhymed "the heavens" and "forever." You might say, hey wait a minute you charlatan, what are you trying to pull, here? Those words don't really rhyme. Well, if they appear far enough away from each other, you can get away with it. As I mentioned earlier, it is called a slant rhyme or near rhyme. Here are the lyrics below the link to the song. I sure hope Jesus likes this song. Some critics are more consequential than others, if you get my drift.

“Walk With Me” By Nelson & Faiola (Track # 9)

(First Verse)

If you saw me walk on water  
Could you place your trust in **me**  
If you saw me heal a blind man  
Would it help you to **believe**

If you think that you're **above her**  
Be the first to cast the **stone**  
If you find the will to **love her**  
Then she doesn't stand **alone**

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(Chorus)

When the sun no longer sails **the heavens**

When the moon falls helpless to the **sea**

Would you like to carry on **forever**

All I ask is that you walk with **me**

On the many roads to heaven

You can find me on them **all**

On the castle built on evil

Is a tower bound to **fall**

When you pass along the **story**

How the water changed to **wine**

Will you sing about the **glory**

That was never really **mine**

(Chorus)

When the sky was full of fury

It was I who calmed the **sea**

That a ship of faithful sailors

Could forever walk with **me**

Notice that every other line rhymes in the chorus. This is a very common practice and, as mentioned above, is called alternate rhyme. The lyrics in the five verses are

monosyllabic rhymes and have the very basic AA, BB scheme, or are called, rhyming couplets. The second and fourth verses also contain *parallel internal rhymes*, which have been *italicized* in bold **face type**. It just so happened that the rhymes “*above her – love her*” and “*story - glory*” kind of wrote themselves into those particular rhyming couplets.

## 4. Imperatives and Suggestions

The next tune I'd like to discuss was written by a really cool cat named Clay Gittens. You can find his work over on Songramp under the name, BigDaddyC. He wrote this song called Bolero that I really liked so I asked him if I could write some lyrics to it and maybe put some flute in, too. He said yes. I tried not to step on it. Now the point I'd like to make about this song is the chorus only rhymes with itself. What are you talking about, Wig? How can you get away with that? No really, the chorus just says, "How does that sound to you, Baby?" and then repeats, "How does that sound?" It's just a hook that repeats.

Well, just think about the possibilities with a set up like that. That's a cliché, "How does that sound?" Okay, so far, so good. Now who is saying it?

*Ahh, I get it. This guy is saying it to his girlfriend.*

This leads to literally hundreds of different possibilities for content. How many times in your life have you said to someone, "Hey, why don't we. . ."

(You fill in the blank)

The guy can suggest anything pleasurable and then follow it up with an imperative phrase, like, "How does that sound?" I think you should write some lyrics using this technique, just for an exercise. Let's call it your homework. How does that sound? No, wait, that's been used already by Wig. So how about a nice list of imperatives to use following your suggestions:

"Wouldn't that make your day?"

"Couldn't you just taste a night like that?"

"Would you like that, at all?"

"Sound good to you?"

"Wouldn't that ring your bell?"

"Wasn't that worth waiting for?"

"You can share the dream with me?"

"Have you got a better idea?"

"I told you I'd make it worth your while."

"What do you say?"

"Make it come true."

"I won't take no for an answer."

"You owe it to me, if not you."

"Don't make me ask you again."

"I shouldn't have to ask you at all."

"We might not get the chance again."

I'm sure you get the idea. If you just repeated any one of those lines at the end of your verse lines (that are hopefully rhyming couplets) then you can repeat the same pattern throughout the whole song.

Here's an example: "Hey, Mama - I just got the **notion** . . . let's go to the beach and I'll cover you with . . . **suntan oil**" (just kidding . . . "**lotion**" of course)

Then you use the imperative: "I won't take no for an answer."

You see? The imperative followed up the suggestion.

Those "**imperatives**" for lack of a better term all serve to support any number of "**suggestions**."

Now I've only used up a few suggestions, so that leaves hundreds more.

A quick note about the rhyme scheme of the song: You'll find what I call internal rhymes (rhymes contained within the lines) like, "beautiful, as usual" and "you and me on an ocean, so free." (More on internal rhymes in chapter 4) I'll **bold face and italicize** the rhyming words and phrases so you can note their position.

“Bolero” By Nelson & Gittens c.2006 (Track # 10)

I just got a really cool idea -  
from a dream I had **last night**  
You were looking **beautiful, as usual** -  
and so I had to hold you **so tight**  
It was only **you and me** –  
on an **ocean so free**  
And the sails were oh so full -  
of a **warm summer breeze**  
(Chorus)  
How does that sound ta' you, baby?  
How does that sound?  
How does that sound ta' you, baby?  
How does that sound?

We were **sailing away** -  
on a **so lazy day**  
We were finding each other **again**  
And the birds **in the air**  
sang a song **for us there**  
But you see the dream didn't really have **to end**

(Chorus) (Refrain)

Hey look, there's a dolphin off the **starboard bow**  
If I wasn't dreaming, I'd swear - he's tryin' to talk to **us**  
**somehow**

Maybe he knows of an **island somewhere**  
Maybe he wants us to **follow him there**

(Chorus)

One final note about the lyrics that I wrote for Bolerio: I was matching the beats or accents in the meter of the lines as well as the words.

**birds in the air = song for us there**

**beautiful = usual = oh so full**

**ocean so free = warm summer breeze**

***sailing away = so lazy day***

***again = to end***

***birds in the air = song for us there***

***off the starboard bow = talk to us somehow***

***he knows of an island somewhere = he'd like us to follow him there.***

You see? They all have exactly the same number of syllables in the rhyming phrases. It's not critical but I think it helps the flow of the song and develops a rhythm that the listeners anticipate.

Then they are rewarded by the expected rhythm once it becomes familiar and a pattern is detected.

## Chapter 4: Internal Rhymes

Internal rhymes serve a lot of purposes. They add to the rhythm of the phrasing and generally keep the song going as a "page turner." I use the term page turner, because I don't know the term that applies to music. What I'm trying to say is that an internal rhyme can boost the energy of a song and keep it moving at a nice pace. The listener says, "Hey, I can play this game," and starts listening for the internal rhyme. They anticipate what the words will be and are rewarded when they're right, and intrigued when they're wrong.

Here's an example of where I used an internal rhyme for one of my songs. Click on the link and come back to the lyrics. I'll bold **face and italicize** the internal rhymes within the lines. Hey, did I just do an internal rhyme there?

Note that the first two lines in the chorus have both **end rhymes** and **internal rhymes**. Then the next two lines are a **rhyming couplet**, and finally, the last line of the chorus is a repeat of the first line, which is another example of what I referred to earlier as **bookends**.

**“Lady Who Sings”** By Wig Nelson (Track # 11)

(First Verse)

Tell ya’ boy you can’t go **wrong**

Find a voice to sing your **song**

More than meter; more than **rhyme**

You can write your name in **time . . .** with a

(Chorus)

Lady who **sings** – dancin’ on the **strings** of a seasoned  
old Martin **guitar**

Look in my **jeans** – all them flashy **queens** took the  
money that I had for **your jar**

An old guitar pick was all I **could find** – still I thought I  
ought to leave it **behind**

For the lady who **sings** – dancin’ on the **strings** of a sea-  
soned old Martin **guitar**

(Second Verse)

I saw her on a stage one **night**

Her eyes were cool – her hair was **light**

When she filled the room with **sound**

Then I knew I’d finally **found . . .** me a

(Chorus) (Break)

(Third Verse)

I thought that I could trace the **fame**

I looked around to find her **name**

She was gone before I **knew**

I'd be thinkin' lonely **blue** . . . bout a (Chorus)

There are a ton of other examples of internal rhymes and this is as good a time as any to slip in another one of mine.

The reason why I'm using this example is because I took the technique and did what I do to most techniques and devices: beat it to death.

Again, I'll **bold face and italicize** the **end rhymes** and the **internal rhymes**. The **repetition of like sounds within a line** is also called **assonance** and is found in a lot of poetry. I've always found it a very strong and useful device for writing song lyrics. Sometimes the words are like puzzle pieces and the listener gets a feeling of satisfaction when they fall neatly into place.

“Song For Cain” By Wig Nelson (Track # 12)

I know you're not **pleased** with the **deed** that you've done  
You don't want to live with the **dead**  
It **seems** that the **means** for living your **dreams**  
Have taken over your **head**  
Taken over your **head**

The people that **know you** they **show you** you're **old**  
And all of the work left to **do**  
But **I** for a **while** will sit with a **smile**  
And think of Abel and **you**  
Think of Abel and **you**

You wouldn't let love of the self bring you 'round  
With grain in the palm of your **hand**  
And when **you** were **through** the brother you **knew**  
Was just another dead **man**  
Just another dead **man**

I don't mean to say that you shouldn't be here  
And do what you know must be **done**  
But keep this in **mind** for the good of **mankind**  
You'll back away when you've **won**  
Back away when you've **won**

See what I mean by beating it to death? I wrote that song in my twenties, about thirty years ago, right after I went to see the movie "Jesus Christ, Superstar" by Andrew Lloyd Weber. I guess that musical first put me in the mood to write songs with biblical influences. Since then I've written "The Holy Man," "Walk With Me," "All There Is" and "Get There," not to mention one I haven't produced called "Get Thee Behind Me, Satan." I guess you could say I was influenced.

## I'm back, with Chapter 4: "Continued"

Why is it continued? Because it's my book, not yours. Just kidding. No, really I haven't said all I want to say about internal rhymes yet. There's another really cool example that I'd like to share. It's a song called "Glittery Ho." Now there's a really nice sentiment, isn't it. What it means, of course is glittery whore. I guess if I want to get on someone's good side, all I have to do is call them a glittery whore. Sorry.

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But sometimes, lyrics are not pretty. Any art is not pretty in some cases. I've had some wines that were real dogs, but I'm sure the jerk who put it in a bottle and charged me too much money thought he was an artist.

This brings us back to "Glittery Ho." In my not so humble opinion, it may be the best song I've ever written. It's kind of like theater, which a lot of my songs lend themselves to. I've always loved songs that tell a story. When you can write a nice melody or chord progression and also write some interesting lyrics that tell a story you've covered all the bases and hit a home run, in my opinion.

The POV (point of view) is from a mother who is critical of her daughter because she is a rich man's mistress and plays second fiddle to the wife. She may not actually play a fiddle, but you know what I mean. The song has so many cool internal rhymes that I felt I would be remiss if I didn't point them out. Here are the lyrics to "Glittery Ho." Look for the ***bold faced italicized*** words.

“Glittery Ho” By Wig Nelson c. 2006 (Track #13)

(Intro Chorus)

Too many **mirrors** - too many lies to be **told**

So many **windows** - shining a light on her **soul**

(1st verse)

I don't know who **she is** it's a shame how **she lives** since  
she changed her **name**

She's got an older man that **she sees** and **now he's** got  
her locked **away**

(Refrain)

And now she's takin' all her holidays **alone**

Waitin' on a bleedin' tele**phone**

Wishin' for a lover of her **own**

Out to make a rich man's second **home**

(Repeat Intro Chorus)

(2nd Verse)

He wishes he was able to steal her the time to come back  
for **more**

So she could have a **taste** such a **waste** what she's savin'  
the moonlight **for**

(Repeat Refrain W/ “hemorrhagin' phone” instead of  
“bleedin' telephone”)

(Repeat Intro Chorus)

(3rd Verse)

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Her momma told her, "***Girl***, you're a fool if you give it  
away for ***love***

Now that's the only thing in the ***world*** that she's ***steam-  
ily dreamin' of***

(Repeat Refrain – Repeat Glittery Ho’ - End)

Notice that the internal rhyme “Girl” and “world” appear in different beats of their respective lines. Internal rhymes can often get away with that. As mentioned above, the words have the same vowel sounds within the same line, that is usually referred to as assonance. Examples of assonance in the song above are:

***she is = she lives / sees = he’s / taste = waste /  
give it away for love = steamily dreamin’ of***

Alliteration is also a handy tool to make your lyrics get attention. It is defined as a succession of similar sounds. That definition sounds like itself, doesn’t it? You remember Peter who picked all those pickled peppers and what Sally does with all those shells at the seashore. These devices are not only used in poetry, you’ll find them in a lot of song lyrics as well.

I'd like to close this chapter with one more example of internal rhyme. (I promise) This is a song by a

very talented artist in Victoria Australia named Ian Sproul. He is a member of The MarshIan Project. Marsh is the name of another member, hence the name. He wrote a song called “Wasted” and was looking for some lyrics. After hearing the music, the following lyrics came to me pretty quickly. Like David Campbell's “Magnolia,” “Wasted” is a good song and as I've said before, a good song can almost write itself.

In this case Ian gave me a head start with the title. A one word title was all that was needed to speak volumes to me. I didn't write volumes, but only a few lines in the interest of word economy and keeping it vague.

Vague is a good thing sometimes where lyrics are concerned because the listener can fill in the blanks and relate it to his or her own life experiences.

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“Wasted” By Sproul & Nelson c. 2007

(Track # 14)

(Chorus #1)

Oh how we **mourn** . . . what was almost **born**

Oh how we **lose** . . . what we did not **choose**

Oh how we almost **tasted** . . . what was **wasted**

(Verse #1)

It was **freedom** and we let it slip **away**

What we **needed** and we polished off that **day**

We were **reeling** and were **feeling** none the **pain**

We were **stealing** what we can't bring back **again**

(Chorus # 2)

Oh how we **mourn** . . . what was almost **born**

Oh how we **lose** . . . what we did not **choose**

Oh how we **cry** . . . when we say **goodbye**

Oh how we almost **tasted** . . . what was **wasted**

(Refrain)

**Ode** to a **lost** idea . . . **ode** to a **lost** idea . . .

**Ode** to a **lost** idea . . . **ode** to a **lost** idea . . .

(Instrumental break)

It was **freedom** . . .

What we **needed** . . .

We were **reeling** . . .

We were **stealing** . . .

What was wasted . . .

This song has a lot of assonance in that the long "o" sound is used in the first line of the chorus and the refrain at the end. The line "ode to a lost idea" makes good use of the vowel sound. It is a song of woe. It is a song of regrets. It is a song of reflection. All of this was spoken to me with one word, the title. A strong title makes a statement which begs for understanding and explanation.

If you remember my remark about answering questions in chapter I, you will get the idea of how these lyrics came to me. I asked myself what Ian was talking about. I hadn't talked to him, in fact, we've never met or even talked on the phone, but I wanted to **know - what** was wasted? **How** did that feel? That brought me to the

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internal rhymes, namely, "**mourn**" & "**born**" and "**lose**" & "**choose**" for the first chorus. Ian's music varied a little bit in the second chorus and needed another line.

Along the same line of thinking I chose the line, "Oh how we **cry** when we say **goodbye**." These lines all have internal rhymes. Enough said.

## Chapter 5: What You Don't Say

So many times in lyrics we get pictures in our mind that wouldn't be possible if someone was trying to describe them to us. Often, I've gotten a whole lot more out of lyrics than what the writer has intended for me. That may or may not be by design, but it facilitates the magic of music. Songs mean different things to different people. With that in mind, there's certainly no crime in being cryptic and letting the listener fill in the blanks.

Way back when I was a gleam in my father's eye, a sci-fi writer wrote the world's shortest book. It read: "The last man on Earth sat in a chair. There was a knock on the door." The End

How cool is that? If he's the last man on Earth, who knocked on the door? The implication is that it must have been an alien. Songs do that, too.

Sometimes a minimalist approach can speak volumes.

Case in point: This song is by Bob Wheatley AKA Manslick.

**“Post Card”** By Bob Wheatley c.2006 (Track # 15)

When you look outside your window  
And you see a bird in a tree  
Are you pleased?

As if you see your name on a post card?

When you make your first cool million.  
And you see a bird in a tree  
Are you pleased?

As if you see your name on a post card?

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Now, what didn't Mr. Wheatley say? How does it feel to see your name on a post card? Someone took the time to remember you in their travels and wrote your name and licked a stamp and put it in a post box to communicate with you. Mr. Wheatley seems to think this is a pleasurable experience and I'd have to agree with him. I can count the post cards I've gotten on one hand. They are always enjoyable.

Now what else didn't Mr. Wheatley say? Come on . . . there's gonna' be a test on this so you'd better pay attention. What did he say by not saying? That is the real question. He starts by saying, "When you look outside your window and you see a bird in a tree." How do you feel about that? (I'm paraphrasing here) Then he goes on to say, "When you make your first cool million and you see a bird in a tree." How does that make you feel? (Again I'm paraphrasing) But it begs the question: Are we something else or someone else when we make our first cool million? Is it worth it? You might say, hell yes, but think about it for a minute as I'm sure Mr. Wheatley did: You don't know, do you?

What if the simple things that brought you joy are smothered in a lot of yiddy yaddy? What if trying to make sure you don't lose the precious wealth that you have newly acquired sucks up the life that you ordinarily would have had? Was it worth it? I've got an itch to join another bowling league. I remember when I was on a team, when I worked as a bookkeeper for a hospital, I thought the season was much too long, but I had a sense that I was completely in the moment in that kind of activity. In conclusion, I'm thankful for Mr. Wheatley for giving us a

minimalist message which is always good for the soul. Life is too short, let's not make it too complicated.

## More About What You Don't Say

One of the great things about writing is how a message can be delivered on many different levels. The following song is a straight forward account about how a driver's coach was robbed on the way back to the castle and the lady in his charge was molested. Or is it? You decide:

**“The Hooded Rider”** By Wig Nelson (Track # 16)

(Driver)

I've just come through the keeper's gate  
and from an awful spell  
And now I must deliver you -  
a bitter tale to tell - a bitter tale to tell

There was a hooded rider -  
he came up like the wind  
I closed the curtains on the coach -  
your Lady hid within - your Lady hid within

*Wig Nelson*

He motioned to the strong box  
that was nestled at my side  
Demand, he did, I hand it down –  
a mask he hid behind  
(Driver and Her Lady) - a mask he hid behind  
(Driver)

And suddenly there came a cry  
though softened by her lace  
And though he had his wicked way -  
she never saw his face  
(Driver and The Her Lady) - we never saw his face  
He was a hooded rider that left us in disgrace –  
and though he had his wicked way –  
we never saw his face - we never saw his face  
(Driver)

We tracked him back along the road  
and to the river's shore  
And there the trail ran cold again -  
and showed the way no more –  
and showed the way no more

When the next sun rises  
and the drawbridge lowers down  
I'll then be on my way again -  
for business in the town – for business in the town

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And when your supper table's set  
with goblets full of wine  
Perhaps you'd have me bring to you –  
a barrel full and fine – a barrel full and fine.

But first another box of coins -  
the other to replace  
He was a hooded rider -  
we never saw his face  
(Driver and Her Lady) - we never saw his face  
(Driver)

Perhaps my Lady cares to go -  
a dress is on her mind  
The one she wears has got a tear -  
a new one she could find - a new one she could find  
(Refrain by Her Lady)

He was a hooded rider and gone without a trace –  
he made off with your box of gold - we never saw his face  
(Driver and The Lady) - we never saw his face  
He was a hooded rider that left us in disgrace -  
and though he had his wicked way - we never saw his face -  
we never saw his face

If you ask me, the driver and Her Ladyship doth protest too much, wouldn't you agree? If they stated once that the bandit wore a mask I might buy their story. But to insist over and over that they never saw his face makes me wonder.

Perhaps the lady's husband wasn't taking very good care of her, although her chauffer was. It's an old story that bears repeating so I gave it a shot. I might not have pulled it off; however, my intention was to plant a question in the mind of the listener as to whether or not Her Ladyship was about to run away with her driver.

On with more about what you don't say. A metaphor is basically what you don't say - the comparison of two different things without the use of like or as.

I've always said that I have a love affair with the English language and enjoy a menage a trois with the metaphor. Think about that statement for a moment. There is an irony there somewhere. So let's talk about the metaphor.

There are a few different types of metaphors by virtue of the way they are used. A long phrase can be a metaphor like - "When she takes her aim with those dangerous eyes - I pity the apple when the arrow flies." What does that line

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allude to? Well, I'm not really sure, I just made it up. But, it gives me an impression of a sharp stare by the use of the word arrow, and it gives me the impression that she used her eyes as a weapon by the suggestion that the arrow is splitting the apple like in the tale of William Tell. Also Cupid uses arrows, too.

Here is another collaboration I had with a talented guitar player named Max Goldston. Max plays finger-picking style guitar in many styles, some of which are his own invention. He posted a song on an internet forum that we both frequent called "Next." It was in the style of Mississippi Delta Blues, which I love and I wanted to write some lyrics for it. I asked Max if I could give it a shot and he agreed. I had been wanting to write a song called "Shape of a Woman" for a while celebrating a man's appreciation for and preoccupation with the shape of a woman.

I'm including this song in this section because I feel that it compares the woman's eyes to the sky by use of a metaphor. Here's what I came up with:

“Shape of a Woman” By Goldston & Nelson

(Track # 17)

(First Verse)

Well, it was just the other morning -

I was a lookin' in her eyes

And it occurred to me - what a nice reflection of the sky

Her eyes in the mornin' were a beautiful thing

Beautiful enough to make a caged bird sing

(Chorus)

Oh, I thank God for the shape of a woman

Oh, how I thank God

Oh, I thank God for the shape of a woman

Oh, how I thank God

(Bridge)

Oh, but I digress – I beg your forgiveness

What I came to say is how she fills out that dress

Not just the rubi-ness of kissable lips (strawberry lips = 2<sup>nd</sup>  
and 3<sup>rd</sup> time)

It's every bite of cherry pie that lands on her hips

(Second Verse)

It was just the other evenin' she was a walkin' –

I was a walkin' just behind

I'll let you guess at the depiction of the picture that was  
fillin' up my mind

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Picture in my mind was a beautiful thing  
Beautiful enough to make a caged bird sing  
(Chorus) (Bridge and repeat last two lines)

I'd like to briefly point out here the use of a lyrical device whereby a phrase is repeated in each verse and then the observation that it is a beautiful thing. Finally the line, "Beautiful enough to make a caged bird sing." Why do you suppose that I used that line? Is there any other kind of metaphor going on here that makes a statement about a man's observations? "Look, but don't touch" perhaps?

Then there are metaphors used as adjectives. This type can be pretty helpful when you only have a few beats in a line and you want to give an impression without coming right out and saying it. One that comes to mind from one of my songs is "bottled up lady, been aged for a while" from the song "Fools You Bet On." Doesn't that give you an impression of the woman? The impression that I was trying for is a woman who's been around the block a few times and is much the better for it. She has kept herself "bottled up" for a while which I meant to imply that she is careful with whom she exposes her inner self to. The line, "been aged for a while" is intended to bring to mind what else is

aged in bottles, namely wine. Doesn't wine improve with age? People may also.

Below is an exercise that might give you a better idea of just how a metaphor works. Let me list a few metaphors and see if you can figure out what I mean:

(Try to match the number with the corresponding letter)

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Eye candy                   | A. A woman with a lot of kids     |
| 2. Ice Queen                   | B. The one who understands me     |
| 3. Nucular personality         | C. A promiscuous woman            |
| 4. Ticking temper              | D. No facial expression           |
| 5. Nuclear family              | E. Makes cutting remarks          |
| 6. President ostrich           | F. Will stab you in the back      |
| 7. A rock on two shoulders     | G. A woman who needs a shave      |
| 8. Meltdown Mama               | H. A person who likes auto racing |
| 9. 100 watt smile              | I. A very attractive woman        |
| 10. Walking shot of penicillin | J. A woman coming undone          |
| 11. OJ school of etiquette     | K. Your parents and siblings      |
| 12. A great white lamb         | L. Gives stupid a bad name        |
| 13. A Brutus buddy             | M. A very unfriendly woman        |
| 14. Steel trap mind            | N. A good looking person          |
| 15. She's a black hole         | O. A person who is simple         |
| 16. Hilton flea                | P. Someone who is confused        |
| 17. My operating manual        | Q. Someone homicidal              |
| 18. A smoking comment          | R. Has a very good figure         |
| 19. A lamp post lady           | S. Has very white teeth           |

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- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 20. Mind of fog            | T. Has a very good memory   |
| 21. Motor head             | U. A social climber         |
| 22. She's a brick house    | V. An indifferent leader    |
| 23. Sister Ernest Borgnine | W. A person quick to anger  |
| 24. Madam rabbit           | X. Is deceptively dangerous |
| 25. Pieman fodder          | Y. An inflammatory remark   |
| 26. Saber tongue           | Z. Don't take her home      |

## More About The Metaphor

A metaphor is as cool as a moose. But that's a simile. Simile is a cool word because at first glance it looks like smile. I guess it is smile with an i in it. But if you smile with your eyes, that's a metaphor. Now, I'm really confused. I suppose I should have said a metaphor is a moose. That would have been a metaphor. It's a little ambiguous because you don't really know how I feel about moose. I think they are as cool as a metaphor. That's another simile. A simile is a comparison using the words "like" or "as." In my opinion, the metaphor is a lot stronger. It conveys a message in a glance and usually in a big way.

When you say something in a big way, English teachers, like my wife, call that hyperbole. A hyperbole is a

gross exaggeration. Remember Lionel Ritchie's "Brick House?" What a great line! Now, we all know that the lady wasn't actually a house or made of bricks. Mr. Ritchie got his point across, though, didn't he? He told us that the woman was built very well, or had a great body. In the matching exercise above I used the term, "She's a black hole." That's a gross exaggeration. What does a black hole do? It is a force of attraction so great that nothing can escape it, not even light. That metaphor is intended to be matched to the letter I above or "A very attractive woman."

I'd like to take this opportunity to list some metaphors that you might find useful. If they have been used before, they may still have a little life left in them. There is a fine line where something clever and recognizable becomes cliché. When it is overused, it should be avoided at all costs as mentioned in Chapter 1.

A wonderful woman who lives in England is a friend and fellow songwriter. She called me "china" recently. She explained that the English use the word "china" as an expression of affection. It means "my good friend." Now isn't that a wonderful metaphor. What do you think of when you hear the word "china"? To me it means something precious or delicate that you treasure. Something that you are sure not to misuse or treat too roughly or else

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you might break it. When you think of a relationship in those terms, the word opens up into a number of possibilities. I thank Gilly Slinn for sharing that phrase. She's a true china.

So, you see how we can use words to say things in interesting ways? 99% of the time there will be a metaphor in there somewhere, so let's take some particulars:

What is another word for fragile? Let's suppose we're talking about a person or a person's heart. What words can we use in place of fragile as a metaphor?

Mix and match the adjectives on the following page with the nouns - heart - soul - mind - fire and flame and you will get a very short phrase that has a lot to say.

*China - Crumpled - Trampled - Well worn - Threadbare  
- Traveled - Hanging*

heart / soul / mind / fire / flame

*Falling - Phoenix - Troubled - Busied - Harried -  
Slender - Paper - Dusty*

heart / soul / mind / fire / flame

*Rusted - Folded - Guarded - Feathered - Wounded -  
Shattered - Wasted*

heart / soul / mind / fire / flame

*Wig Nelson*

*Ravaged – Withered - Doormat – Target – Melting –  
Screaming – Crying*

heart / soul / mind / fire / flame

*Dying – Weathered – Shriveled - Shredded – Crushed –  
Iron - Diamond*

heart / soul / mind / fire / flame

## Aren't Metaphors Fun?

Here's a country song I wrote that I just thought I'd throw in for no good reason I can think of except for the fact that some metaphors are not pretty. This song makes the point that one can be guilty by association. This is from the POV of a woman who is frustrated by watching a man she cares for running with the wrong kind of woman.

The male version of this song is about him being frustrated by watching a woman he cares for associating with the wrong kind of girl. I like the female POV best for this. See what you think.

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“TAXI Whore” By Wig Nelson (Track # 18)

(First Verse)

I saw your truck this morning –  
It was out at The Hideaway  
Struck me as kinda’ curious cause -  
I know they’re closed today  
I guess you had a good time –  
Weren’t in no shape to drive  
You were out on the run –  
havin’ some fun – just to prove you were still alive

(Second Verse)

I was wonderin’ if you missed me –  
And if you knew I called  
I’m not really sure if you’re still out there –  
Or if you still care at all  
Now I don’t mean to crowd your lifestyle –  
Or work you up in a fight  
But I thought you should hear – after all that beer  
The way you got home last night

(First Chorus)

Ridin’ with ‘at TAXI whore  
I guess that you don’t need me anymore  
Go back to your social scene of the crime  
We all know what she does at closing time

(Third Verse)

I know I called you crazy –  
When you ended up in jail  
With the young bucks from the rodeo –  
And no one could make bail  
I paid for all your freedom –  
You didn't have to sell your souls  
Now to my surprise – you get the no bell prize  
Cause you don't know for whom the bell tolls

(Second Chorus)

Ridin' with 'at TAXI whore  
Every time you step behind her door  
My heartache has to take another hit  
But that was then and now I'm over it

(Instrumental Break)

(Third Chorus)

Ridin' with 'at TAXI whore  
I hoped you were the man I was lookin' for  
But now I see the company you keep  
Will end up causin' me to losin' sleep

(Fourth Verse)

I know that you are a good man -  
That's always been easy to tell  
You're always there to lean upon

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And hear a sad tale as well  
I know that she's gonna' bring you down  
And I have to watch you fall  
It brings tears to my eyes – when I realize  
Where you're goin' after last call

(Fourth Chorus)

Ridin' with 'at TAXI whore  
Your reputation's bound to hit the floor  
But if you stop and call me up instead  
You'll never be too late to get me out of bed

## Chapter 6: Personification

Personification can best be described as giving a personality or human personal traits to otherwise inhuman objects. This goes well beyond calling your car, “she.” Consider the poem put to music called, “Suzanne,” by Leonard Cohen. It’s a great poem and song with lots of imagery about a beautiful woman with a perfect body and you have a perfect body when you’re with her and how she feeds you tea and oranges that come all the way from China, and how you want to travel with her and you want to travel blind because she’s touched your perfect body with her mind. Isn’t that beautiful? Well, it’s not about a woman, it’s about faith. You might well ask, “Why didn’t he just name the song, “Faith?” That’s a woman’s name, too.” I think you know the reason: He is an artist. He wants you to consider that it might be about a woman first and then like all good art, it keeps on giving. A good poem or song lyric reveals itself like the layers of an onion. When you peel one away, there’s something else to be found below.

Let’s write a song together right now using this lyrical device called personification. I promise that I have not written anything before about this particular subject mat-

ter or used any of the subsequent lines found herein before. I am writing this song as I am writing this book.

I stated before that I usually write the music first and then the melody guides me through the development of the lyrics, but this time I'm going to do it the other way: lyrics first, then the music. Okay, now I have to decide what the song is to be about. I choose youth. I could have easily chosen Ruth, which is kindness, or Hope or even my golf bag. I could have taken the point that everything that I need for an absolutely stellar round of golf is contained right there in my golf bag. My conflict would have been then why am I disappointed by my performance when I have been supplied with all the necessary tools to shoot under par. The fault lies in me and my performance, not the golf bag and all the clubs. The movement of the song would have been the epiphany in the moment when I realize that the clubs never let me down, that they were there all along, cheering me on and that the fault lies with my golf game.

But I chose youth. I'm going to give youth a personality. I'm going to describe youth and actually give it a name. Since I am a male and tend to gravitate toward the opposite sex, I'm going to give it a female name, say, Mary.

Now the actual name is not written in stone at this point and during a rewrite I might stumble across a name that carries a stronger association with the subject matter. There might be a female name that screams youth, but I just can't think of it right now so I don't want to get bogged down with that. The important thing is to move forward and, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, write it wrong and then write it right.

Okay, now Mary is youth. What are her characteristics?

1. She's beautiful
2. Everyone is looking for her
3. Some people look in the wrong places
4. She never goes out of style
5. She can break your heart if you're not careful
6. She can break up your marriage if you're not careful
7. She is dangerous in that you would do anything to get her
8. She is alluring and you can't help yourself yearning for her
9. She is a siren that can lead you to make the wrong decisions
10. She is temporary and you know in the end she will leave you
11. She is a promise never kept

A promise never kept, hmmm, I think I like that. Mary is a promise never kept.

By listing the characteristics of this “**human condition**,” or “**youth**,” I just happened to come up with a line that I like. It may even end up being the title of the song, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves at this point. Do you see how it happened? Many times an idea or phrase will just pop into your head and give you goose bumps or at least trigger some kind of emotional response. It’s not magic or even genius at work, just a bit of making lists and answering questions.

Now we have personification in that youth is Mary and we have a metaphor that Mary is a broken promise. If I said Mary is like a promise never kept, that would be a simile instead of a metaphor. I think metaphors are stronger.

Well now, Mary’s got a lot going on, doesn’t she? I have no idea where I am going with this exercise, but just bare with me. I wish this was a two way conversation so you could help. Oh, well, I’ve got to start somewhere, so here goes:

When you came into my **life**, I didn’t know your name . . . and didn’t ever dream that I could **have you**.

When your innocence was **mine** I was careless with the  
flame . . . and knew I couldn't win you but I **had to**.

As I **slept** . . . you were a promise never **kept**.

I Always **slept** . . . upon a promise never **kept**.

Author's Note: Man, that was a bit of a stretch finding a rhyme for "have you." I might have pulled it off, but if not, there's always the re-write, right? I kind of like where this is going, stating that I didn't recognize youth when it was of no consequence in the first line. When we are young, we're always trying to get older so we can drive a car, go to college or maybe buy a drink. Little did we know! The second line kind of says to me that I thought I'd never grow old, but knew in the back of my mind that I would. I also like the internal rhyme with the words, "slept" and "kept." Granted, I'm reaching for rhymes here because I've just begun to write this song. I can always change things around, especially when there is a melody happening. I think this might be a good time to insert the name of our hero, Mary, lest our listeners think that we're talking about something intangible or inanimate or ethereal, which we actually are. We need a line here saying something, or directly posing a question, to Mary. What would I ask youth

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if I could get an answer? Something about teasing or pleasing or being fleeting. How about . . .

Deadly Mary . . . teasing someone crashing on the **rocks**.

Deadly Mary . . . You won't ever help me wind the **clocks**.

Deadly Mary . . . no one finds you looking in the **light**.

Deadly Mary . . . you must be the thief that steals the **night**.

I kind of like that. How about you? Now we have a pattern if not some earth shattering lyrics. The first two lines have 14 beats with two whole rests at the end. (4 measures of common time) Note the assonance with the words, “life and “I” and “Mind” and “I.” They seem to lend themselves to a heavy accent falling on the beat as they do, but I won't really know for sure until the music takes shape. Note also the internal rhyme with the words, “name” and “flame.” The “as I slept” lines are 8 beats (2 measures) and could be called assonance also. The Deadly Mary chorus is 8 beats also (2 measures) and is two rhyming couplets. The fact that the beats fall neatly into 4/4 time should give us a solid rhythm on which to build the music. Now I'll identify where I see the beats falling on the lyrics.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8

When you came into my life,    I didn't know your **name**

9            10            11            12            13            14            15    16

... and didn't ever dream that I could **have you**

1            2            3            4            5            6            7

When your innocence was mine, I was careless with the

8            9            10            11            12            13            14            15    16

**flame** ... and knew I couldn't win you but I **had to**.

1    2    3    4            5    6            7    8

As I **slept** ... you were just a promise never **kept**.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8

I Always **slept** ... upon a promise that you never **kept**.

1    2    3    4            5    6            7    8

As I **slept** ... you were just a promise never **kept**.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8

I Always **slept** ... upon a promise that you never **kept**.

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The chorus is also 8 beats so at this point I'm pretty sure that what I'm writing here is in 4/4 or common time. That means that there are four beats per measure and a quarter note gets one beat. Understanding that is not critical from a lyricist's point of view, but if you are going to write the music also, it helps to keep the time signature in mind. Most songs are in 4/4 or common time.

1    2    3    4        5        6    7    8  
Deadly Mary . . . teasing someone crashing on the **rocks**.

1    2    3    4        5    6        7        8  
Deadly Mary . . . You won't ever help me wind the **clocks**

1    2    3    4        5        6        7    8  
Deadly Mary . . . no one finds you looking in the **light**

1    2    3    4        5        6        7        8  
Deadly Mary . . . you must be the thief that steals the **night**

Now that we have the pattern set, all we have to do is write a few more verses dealing with personality traits we listed in the beginning of this exercise.

(Verse #2)

When the others try to find you do you hear them call your **name** . . . and do you then reward them with your **laugh-ter**

When they sell their soul to have you and they have to take the **blame** . . . then do you ever give them what they're **af-ter**

At this point in the song, I would repeat the refrain or the “as I slept” lines then repeat the chorus.

Well, that should just about do it. We don't want to hand feed the listener, do we? We have to leave something to the imagination. I think now might be a good time to consider other names, or perhaps not a name at all but just a noun. We have the adjective Deadly. I think Deadly Lady kind of has a nice sound to it. I get a bit of alliteration from the “I” sounds. What do you think?

Besides, my wife's name is Mary and I'm trying to stay on her good side. Obviously this song has nothing to do with her and she knows that my songs are mostly fiction where people are concerned. The only non-fiction lyrics that I write are about issues like pollution and man's inhumanity to man.

## I'm Back With More On Chapter 6:

After a round of golf, I'm back. Now that I've written the beginning of this song lyric I have had some time to reflect upon the message and how I may or may not have given it a fair chance. I have since come to the conclusion that "Deadly Lady" is too one sided an expression to reflect youth. It is too negative. Naturally, I meant the term to reflect the irony of the situation. Youth means young and close to birth. By saying Deadly Lady, I used irony to state the unintentional antithesis. By chasing youth and ways to make ourselves feel or appear young, we might miss the beauty of growing old gracefully or any number of other things in life because of our obsession to stay young. Looking for the fountain of youth might actually steal our life.

That's all very well and good for an ironic song lyric, but to be fair, I now feel that the other side of youth should be presented as well. I feel that it is necessary to mention the untainted beauty and very special feeling that we take from youth. It's true that "*all that glitters is not gold*" but it is also true that, "*gold does in fact glitter.*" With that in mind, I think we need a first chorus that only mentions the positive attributes of youth. How about this:

Graceful Lady . . . you place a precious face upon the world  
Graceful Lady . . . you'll always be a very pretty girl  
Graceful Lady . . . don't ever buy a jealous lover's soul  
Graceful Lady . . . don't let us see the fire growing cold

There, maybe that might do the trick. It's two rhyming couplets just like the Deadly Lady chorus, and naturally they should occur after the first refrain, which is what I would call the "as I slept" lines. There's nothing to negative about those lyrics. She isn't the thief yet who steals our sleep, or our otherwise God given right to enjoy our old age and embrace death as a natural progression of everything that ever comes alive in the first place. But life and youth are hard things to let go of.

Faith can do a lot for a situation like that, but that's another book. It's one that I am categorically unqualified to write. I feel that I am as spiritual as the next guy; however, you could do a lot better than me regarding someone to discuss faith. Perhaps you could contact Leonard Cohen.

Now the song lyrics are complete in my opinion. It is also my opinion that it is not a particularly good song. Oh, well, maybe it will grow on me in time. So here are the lyrics of the completed song awaiting a corresponding melody:

“Lady?” Lyrics by Wig Nelson

*When you came into my life, I didn't know your name . . .  
and didn't ever dream that I could have you.*

*When your innocence was mine I was careless with the  
flame . . . and knew I couldn't win you but I had to.*

*(Refrain)*

*As I slept . . . you were a promise never kept.*

*I Always slept . . . upon a promise never kept.*

*(Chorus)*

*Graceful Lady . . . you place a precious face upon the  
world*

*Graceful Lady . . . you'll always be a very pretty girl*

*Graceful Lady . . . don't ever buy a jealous lover's soul*

*Graceful Lady . . . don't let us see the fire growing cold*

*(Second Verse)*

*When the others try to find you do you hear them call  
your name . . . and do you then reward them with your  
laughter*

*When they sell their soul to have you and they have to  
take the blame . . . then do you ever give them what  
they're after*

*(Refrain) (2<sup>nd</sup> Chorus)*

*Deadly Lady . . . teasing someone crashing on the rocks.*

*Deadly Lady . . . You won't ever help me wind the clocks*

*Deadly Lady . . . no one finds you looking in the light*

*Deadly Lady . . . you must be the thief that steals the night*

I suppose the song needs a name so let's give it one.

"Graceful Lady" presents one side of the picture we are trying to paint with words here. "Deadly Lady" presents another side. Hmm, what do those two titles have in common?

It seems pretty obvious to me that the title should just be, "Lady." Earlier I said I was going to call it "Mary." Now I'm thinking "Lady." I'm not really sure about that and it may be later changed to "Ladies" or something else entirely different. Remember, there's always the rewrite.

So we now have used personification to describe a characteristic of humans, but not an actual human. Our "Lady" is the personification of youth. How did we go about it? What were the nuts and bolts of this exercise? Well, it all started with a series of questions, didn't it? I highly recommend this approach to writing lyrics. To me, it's all about answering questions.

I hope I have shown you that this approach is fairly simple to understand and that it is easy to get something down on paper and worry about the fine details later. During a rewrite, you may find that some words can be

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replaced with stronger ones, or that a completely different phrase will say the same thing or answer the same question, but from a different angle.

## Chapter 7: Rhyming Words

How hard can it be, right? Well, that all depends on you. In the exercise before, I sort of backed myself into a corner in the first line by ending with the words, “have you.” Think about how many words rhyme with that. Not the word, “you” specifically, there are dozens of words that rhyme with “you.” However, I used it with a rhythm of a feminine rhyme, or multi-syllable rhyme, which gave the accent to the word before “you.” Therefore, I had to come up with a word phrase or multi-syllable word like, “nephew” to complete the rhyme or couplet.

This process is as easy or as hard as you make it. Masculine rhymes like, ball, fall, small, tall, all, crawl, stall, shawl, brawl, pall, mall, call, etc. are easy. But some words are hard to find a rhyme for. In those cases, you might want to look for a near rhyme or slant rhyme. The word “call” doesn’t rhyme with “doll” in the strictest sense, but it *kind of* works. Especially because the rhymes appear at the end of the lines and are far enough apart to fool the ear. Some believe that slant rhymes are more effective in some cases because the listener has to think a little to make the connection. If you happen to back yourself into a corner with a difficult rhyme, my advice is to walk right over that wet

paint and then just clean the bottom of your shoes. (Don't forget to paint the floor on the way out) Now, what am I talking about? I'm making the point with a metaphor that trying to work with a difficult rhyme is like painting yourself into a corner. It's like in golf: if you get yourself in trouble, just get out of trouble and carry on. Sure you wasted a little time with a hard rhyme – it was a tough climb, but you stopped on a dime and that was no crime and the result was sublime. Sorry about that, I got carried away.

But anyway, remember that you can choose easy rhymes or tough ones. How many words rhyme with “wife”? I can think of, strife, life, knife, and uhh . . . umm . . . ah . . . let me see, there must be more than that. I'm wracking my brain now, so I'm sure to come up with some more. Oh, never mind.

In that situation, I might try for a near rhyme; for instance:

*When times are tough I know I have the comfort of my  
**wife.***

*It helps to ease the pain when someone's there to share the  
**laugh.***

Did I get away with it? Maybe, maybe not. I tried to give it a little more color in the second line by using the assonance or internal rhyme, “there to share.” The words “*wife*” and “*laugh*” are just far enough apart that some people might say I pulled it off. A lot depends on the tone of the song, also. You might get away with a near rhyme in a light hearted song, where the same might not be true of something more heavy or consequential. The jury’s still out on that one.

Here’s one of my favorite limericks:

*A crafty old bird is the pelican  
Whose mouth can hold more than his belly can  
He can keep in his beak enough food for a week  
I’ll be damned if I know how the hell he can*

Why do I think that’s so much fun? Because of the multi-syllable rhyme.

I also feel that the rhyme is impeccable. Some rhymes are not nearly so precise. There is a free, online, rhyming dictionary on the internet that is easily accessible. Just for kicks I typed in the word, “*eleven*” and I’ve included below the multi-syllable rhymes that came up. Some of them are a real stretch, in my opinion. However, for a slant rhyme or near rhyme used at the end of a sentence they might

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work just fine. When I thought to myself what words might come up, I thought of, *seven, heaven, leaven*, for perfect rhymes and, *haven, raven, graven* for near rhymes. Imagine my surprise when all of these words came up. Sheese!

aaron, action, airman, akron, alan, allen, almsman,  
ammon, apron, arson, ashen, ashton, asian, aspen,  
auction, axman, bacon, bailsman, balkan, bandsman,  
banyan, bargain, barman, baron, barren, baseman,  
basin, bastian, bastion, batsman, batten, beacon, beaten,  
beckon, bedouin, beechen, begun, belgian, bellman,  
bergman, bidden, billion, birchen, bison, bitten, blacken,  
blazon, blowgun, bludgeon, boatman, boatswain, bobbin,  
bodkin, bondman, bondsman, boston, boughten, bourbon,  
bowman, bracken, brahman, brahmin, brakeman,  
brazen, brethren, breton, brian, brighten, brisbane,  
britain, briton, broaden, brogan, broken, brooklyn, bruin,  
bullion, bun, bunion, bunsen, bunyan, burden, burgeon,  
burton, bushman, button, byron, cabin, caisson, cajun,  
caldron, calvin, canaan, cannon, canon, canyon, capstan,  
captain, caption, carson, carton, cauldron, caution,  
certain, chainman, chairman, chaplain, chaplin,  
charleston, chasten, cheapen, chevron, chicken, chieftain,  
children, chitin, chosen, christen, christian, churchman,  
citron, clansman, cloven, coachman, coarsen, coffin,

cohen, colon, common, cordon, corpsman, cotton, cousin,  
cowman, coxswain, cracksman, craftsman, craven,  
crayon, cretin, crewman, crimson, croton, cuban, cumin,  
curtain, cushion, dampen, damson, darken, darwin,  
datsum, dauphin, dayton, deacon, deaden, deafen, deepen,  
demon, dentin, destine, devon, diction, dobbin, doctrine,  
dolman, dolmen, dolphin, done, doorman, dozen,  
draftsman, dragon, driven, drunken, dublin, dudgeon,  
dun, dungeon, dutchman, earthen, earthman, eastman,  
eaten, eden, elfin, ellen, engine, ensign, erin, ermine, even,  
faction, falcon, fallen, famine, fashion, fasten, fatten,  
felon, fiction, finespun, fireman, fission, flacon, flagon,  
flatten, flaxen, flection, flexion, floorman, foeman,  
footman, foreign, foreman, forerun, fortune, fountain,  
fraction, franklin, freeman, frenchman, freshen,  
freshman, friction, frighten, frisian, frozen, fun, function,  
fusion, gallon, gamin, gammon, garden, gawain, german,  
gherkin, gibbon, gibson, given, gladden, glisten, gluten,  
glutton, gnomon, goblin, godson, golden, goodman,  
gordon, gorgon, goshen, gotten, gownsmen, grandson,  
grantsman, gratin, graven, grecian, gremlin, griffin,  
grunion, guardsman, gudgeon, gulden, gumption, gun,  
gunman, hackman, haitian, handgun, hangman, happen,  
harden, harken, harshen, hasten, haven, haydn,  
headsman, hearken, hearten, heathen, heaven, heighten,

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helen, hellion, helmsman, hemin, hempen, henchman,  
herdsman, heron, hidden, hoarsen, hodgkin, holden,  
homespun, horseman, houseman, houston, hoyden,  
hudson, human, hun, huntsman, huron, hymen, hyphen,  
ibsen, ion, jackson, jargon, jasmine, jason, javelin, jerkin,  
jimpson, johnson, jordan, junction, kinsman, kitchen,  
kitten, klansman, kremlin, kuchen, laden, latin, layman,  
leaden, leaven, legion, lemon, lengthen, lenin, lenten,  
lesion, lessen, lesson, lichen, ligan, lighten, lignin, liken,  
limen, lincoln, linden, lineman, linen, linesman, linin, lion,  
lisbon, listen, liven, logan, london, loosen, lotion, lumen,  
luncheon, lupine, lyon, lysin, macron, madden, magsman,  
maiden, mammon, mandrin, mansion, margin,  
marksman, marlin, marten, martian, martin, mason,  
matron, maudlin, mayan, meccan, mellon, melon, melvin,  
mention, merlin, merman, midden, million, milton,  
minion, misdone, mission, mitten, mizzen, moisten,  
molten, mormon, morton, motion, mountain, muffin,  
mullein, mullion, murrain, muslin, mutton, nation,  
neaten, newsman, newton, nightman, nippon, noggin,  
nomen, none, norman, norseman, norton, notion, nubbin,  
nun, oaken, oarsman, oaten, ocean, often, olden, omen,  
one, onion, open, opsin, option, organ, orphan, outdone,  
outgun, outrun, oven, oxen, paeon, pagan, pardon,  
parson, passion, patron, patten, pecten, pectin, penguin,

penman, pension, pepsin, persian, person, pidgin, pigeon,  
pillion, pinion, pinon, pippin, piston, pitchman,  
plainsman, plankton, platen, plenum, ploughman,  
plowman, poison, pollen, popgun, poplin, portion,  
postman, potion, pressman, princeton, prison, proven,  
prussian, puffin, pullman, pun, purslane, pylon, python,  
question, quicken, quintan, raglan, raisin, ramsden,  
ranchman, rapine, ration, ratline, raven, reagan, reason,  
reckon, redden, redone, region, reinsman, rennin, rerun,  
resin, ribbon, richen, ridden, ripen, risen, riven, robin,  
roentgen, roman, rotten, roughen, ruin, run, ruskin,  
russian, sabin, sadden, saffron, salesman, salmon,  
sanction, sanguine, satan, satin, saxon, saxton, scaleman,  
scallion, scansion, scion, scission, scotchman, scotian,  
scotsman, scullion, scutcheon, seaman, season, section,  
seisin, semen, sequin, sermon, session, seven, sexton,  
shaken, shaman, sharpen, shaven, shetland, shiftman,  
shipman, shogun, shorten, shotgun, showman, shrunk,  
shun, sicken, silken, simon, siphon, siren, slacken, sleeken,  
slogan, sloven, smarten, smidgen, smidgeon, smidgin,  
smitten, sodden, soften, solon, someone, son, sovereign,  
spaceman, spartan, spavin, spoilsman, spoken,  
spokesman, spong, sponsion, sportsman, spun,  
squadron, stalin, stallion, stamen, stanchion, staten,  
statesman, station, steepen, steersman, steinmann,

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stephen, stepson, stetson, steven, stiffen, stockman, stolen,  
straighten, straiten, strengthen, stricken, stridden,  
striven, strychnine, stun, sturgeon, suasion, suction,  
sudden, sullen, sultan, summon, sun, sunken, surgeon,  
suzerain, sweden, sweeten, switchman, swollen,  
swordsman, syphon, tacksman, taction, taken, talesman,  
talon, tannin, tartan, tarzan, tauten, tendon, tension,  
terpin, tertian, teuton, texan, thicken, thompson, threaten,  
thriven, tighten, titan, token, tollman, ton, torsion,  
toughen, townsman, toxin, trackman, traction,  
tradesman, trainman, treason, trenton, tribesman,  
trillion, trodden, trojan, truckman, truman, truncheon,  
trunnion, trypsin, tungsten, turban, turbine, tuscan, un,  
unction, undone, union, urban, urchin, urine, vegan,  
vermin, version, villain, virgin, vision, vixen, vulcan,  
wagon, waken, wanton, warden, watchman, waxen,  
weaken, weapon, weighman, welshman, wheaten,  
whiten, whoreson, widen, widgeon, wireman, wizen,  
woken, woman, women, won, wonton, wooden,  
woodman, woodsman, woolen, woollen, workman,  
worsen, woven, written, xanthin, yachtsman, yardman,  
yeggman, yeoman, yuan, zeeman, zein, zillion, zion

Can you believe all those near rhymes, slant rhymes, false rhymes, off rhymes or imperfect rhymes? I'm having a hard time swallowing some of them myself, but there they are in all their glory. Sheesh!

So if you need a rhyme for a word, the rhyming dictionary is a valuable resource, to say the least. Here are the words they came up with that rhyme with "*wife*:"  
*alewife, fife, fishwife, goodwife, housewife, jackknife, knife, life, lowlife, midwife, nightlife, penknife, rife, strife, wife, wildlife*

It seems as though they may have painted themselves into a corner, as well. The point I'm trying to make here is; don't feel bad if you do it, too. What I'd like you to remember is not to spend too much time getting out. Just do it.

Always remember: Do it wrong, and then, do it right. If you're lucky, you may do it right in the first place, but don't count on it. Many successful songwriters average about one really good song in 42. That's probably pretty accurate in my case as well, not that I'm calling myself successful. At the very least, I am prolific. I'm not afraid to

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get back up on that horse that threw me and give it another shot. That is the beauty of the rewrite.

I like to sometimes say, “the paint is never dry.” That is a metaphor about songwriting comparing lyricists to oil color artists. It takes a long time for oil paint to dry, and perhaps where the art and craft of the wordsmith is concerned it never really does.

## Conclusion:

Well, I hope you've had a good time here at the "*Little Shop of Lyrics*." It's been fun for me sharing my approach to writing lyrics and pointing out what I feel are the effective and artistic qualities I have found in the works of some other lyricists. I used my own lyrics herein as examples of lyrical devices and I hope you feel that they were good ones.

People usually have a favorite lyricist or songwriter that they identify with or were entertained by as they were growing up. For me it was The Moody Blues, yet I never even mentioned them here at *The Little Shop*. We all have influences in our art; whatever our medium. If your medium is song lyrics, perhaps this little book has given you a little insight into *why* they are your influences and will help you create your own work as you stand on their shoulders.

Let's face it, we all build the foundation of our work "*on the shoulders of giants*," to borrow the title from a book with a forward by the great physicist Stephen Hawking. Writing good song lyrics is not rocket science or quantum physics either, but it's not easy if you plan to do a good job of it. Just remember that with a little bit of hard work, determination and most importantly the rewrite, we get better.

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## The Beginning

(Of Your Lyrics)