

## SELECTING A SONG

*“When you hear a song and you get the gut feeling that that’s the song I want to record, that’s a good indicator to me. I go with my gut.”*

—Reba McEntire

### SUBCHAPTERS

- The Importance of Selecting a Song
- Working With Songwriters
- Give It a Verse and a Chorus
- Find Relatability
- Focus on Melody and Lyrics
- Take Your Mood Into Account
- Case Study:  
“Whoever’s in New England”
- Trust Your Instincts

### CHAPTER REVIEW

It all begins with a song. Selecting the right song for you may be one of the most important decisions you make in your career as a musician and performer. Not everyone is a songwriter, however. Some of the greatest songs in music history were the result of writing collaborations between artists and songwriters or brought to life by an artist who created great relationships with talented songwriters, like Reba has done throughout her career.

Whatever your path to finding a song, one thing has remained the same: a great song needs to have relatability, have great melody, and have memorable lyrics. Think about the people you know in your life or the potential audience you hope to reach with your music. What’s going on in their lives? What kinds of stories, situations, and feelings would they relate to if described in a song? Do the lyrics in a potential song paint a vivid picture, and does the melody stick in your brain? These are the ingredients to a great song.

When listening to songs, focus on finding songs that make an impact in the first verse and chorus. Take into account your own personal moods when assessing a song. It never hurts to get another opinion on a song, but ultimately trust your gut instinct.

### TAKE IT FURTHER

- Listen to the song “Carolyn”, by Merle Haggard, one of Reba’s favorite songs. What image and feeling do the opening chords and melody provoke in you? What picture do the opening lyrics paint in your mind?
- Read the lyrics to Reba’s song “[Is There Life Out There](#)” and “[Whoever’s in New England](#)”. When reading them, think about how the story unfolds in each of the songs and how the lyrics paint a very specific picture of the woman in each. What feelings and sentiments are in each song that make it very relatable?

2.

## **SELECTING A SONG**

---

### ASSIGNMENT

- Be a diagnostician for your favorite songs to understand why you like them. Compile three lists: songs that have your favorite melodies, songs that have your favorite lyrics, and songs that have relatability to your own life or touch your heart (you can mention a song more than once for each list). As you compile each list, start to look for patterns. What commonalities do your favorite lyrics have? What kinds of stories within songs resonate the most with you? Use Spotify to create and share your lists with your fellow classmates to discover other themes that work well for great songs. Keep these themes in mind when you begin to write or select songs for yourself.

2.  
NOTES

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---