

Songwriting Workshop

Reference Notes



Meet Your Instructors

Adam Labeaux:

Multi-instrumentalist, Adam Labeaux has been a professional performing musician and songwriter for 25 years. Adam's music, once aptly dubbed "Heartland Soul" by a fan, draws from a wide array of interests and influences. At any time you may find the juxtaposition of folk, soul, pop, country, funk, jazz, and rock. A founding member of the Ragbirds, Adam now tours regionally a solo singer/songwriter.

www.adamlabeaux.com

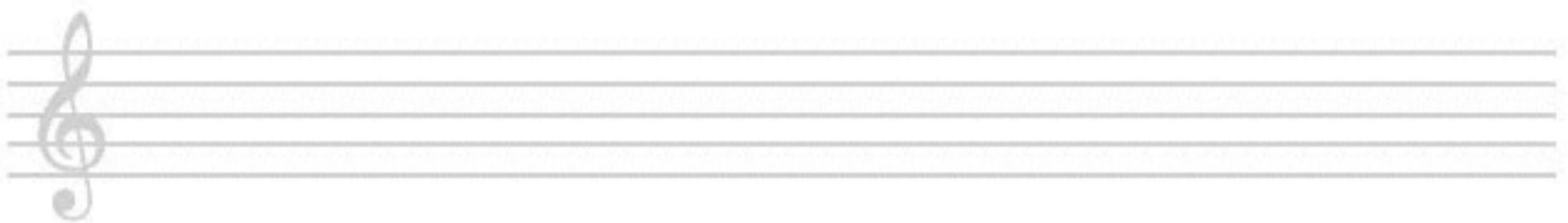
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Dan Ripke: bio

Dan Ripke has been studying and playing guitar for more than 30 years. He has been teaching guitar and music classes for 23 years. His academic studies include Classical Guitar, Music Education, and Music Theory and Composition at Delta College and Central Michigan University. He has an Associates degree from Delta college and BS from Central Michigan University. Dan is the owner of Ripke Studio, a private guitar lesson and music studio in Brighton Michigan. Dan has performed with many groups over the past 23 years. For 12 years he toured with the rock bluegrass group he founded called Back Forty. He Currently teaches at Ripke Studio in Brighton, the Ann Arbor Music Center, and runs children's music programs at local schools. Along with Sumkali, Dan performs with eclectic electric music ensemble, CattleDog Orchestra.

www.ripkestudio.com

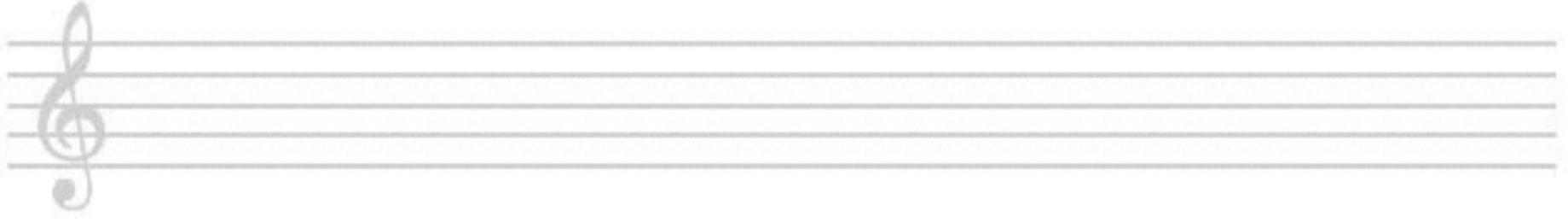
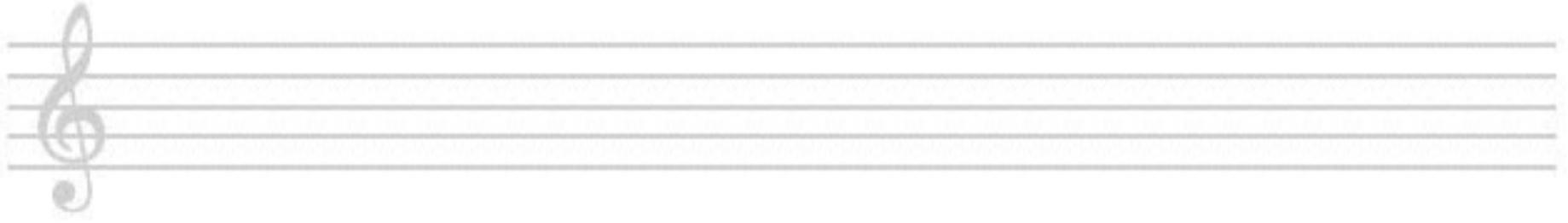
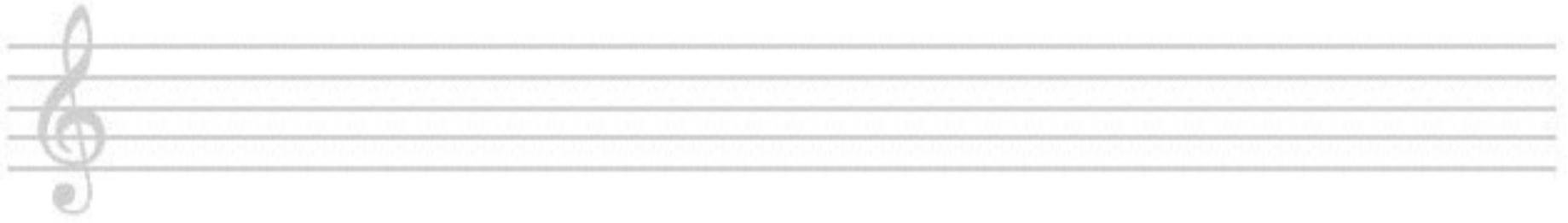
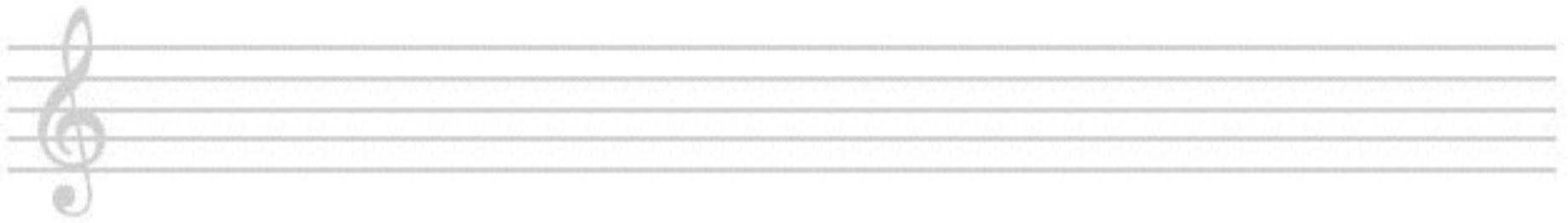
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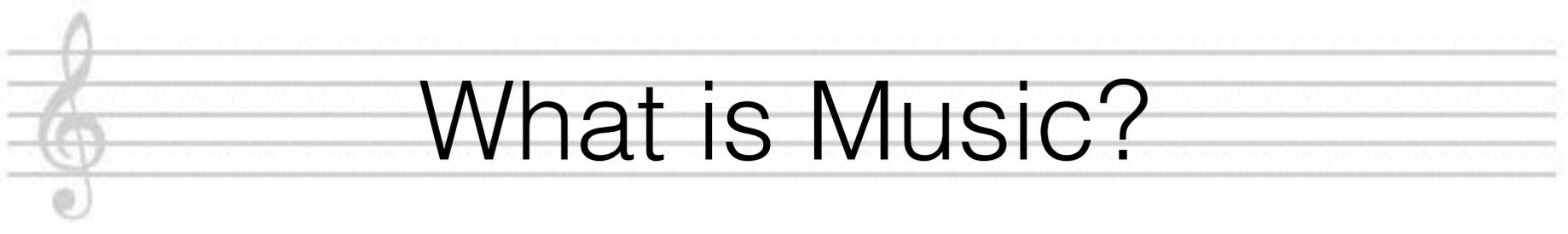


Word Game

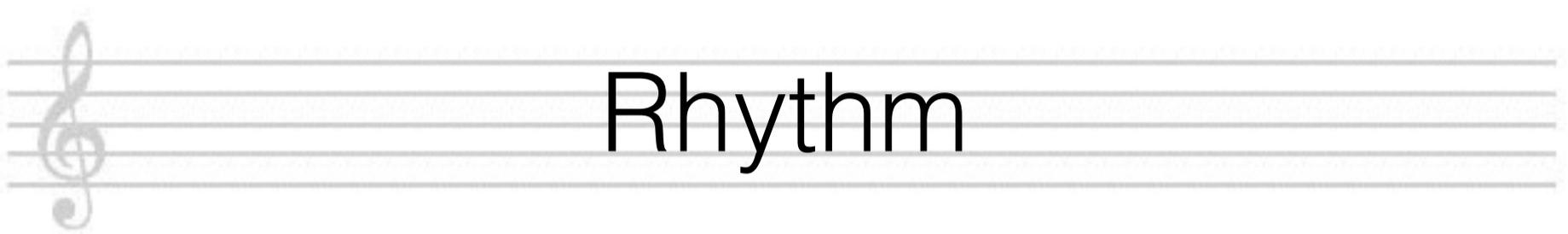


Noun:
Verb:
Adjective(?):

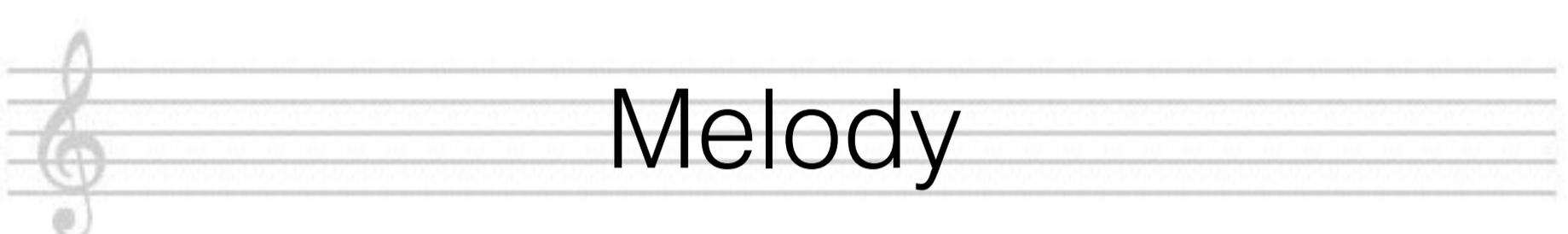




What is Music?



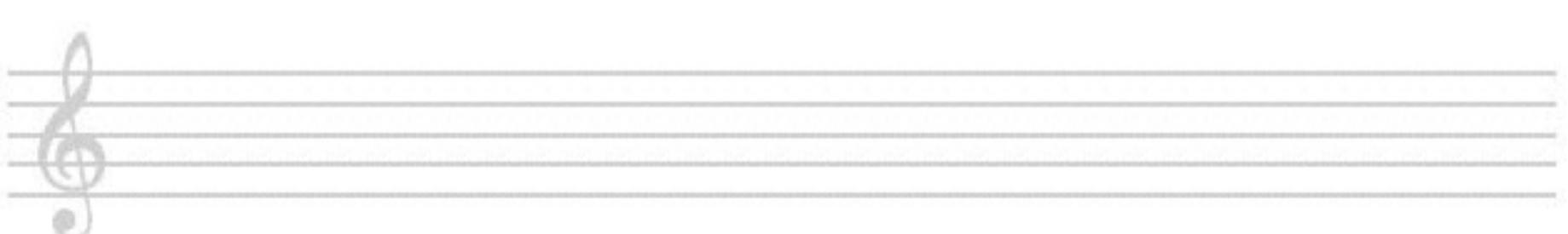
Rhythm



Melody



Harmony





What is a song?

(Anatomy of a song)



Lyrics



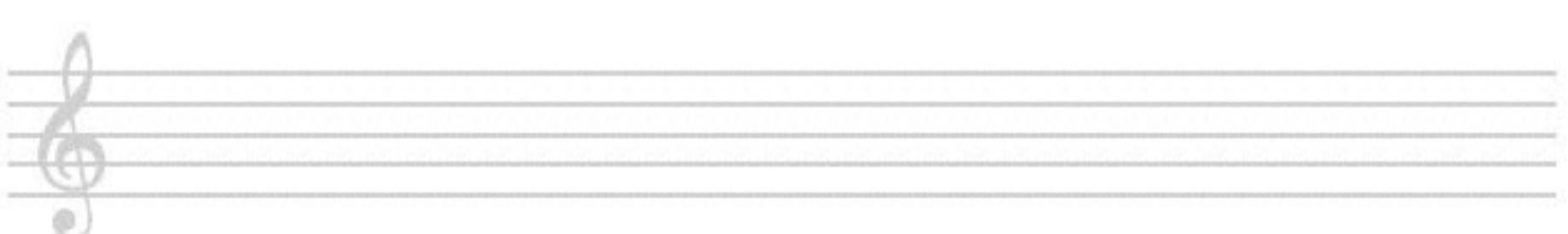
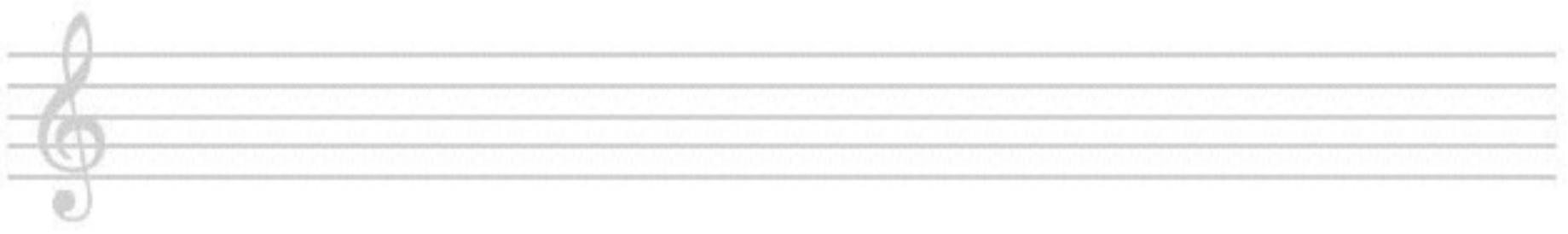
Melody



Structure

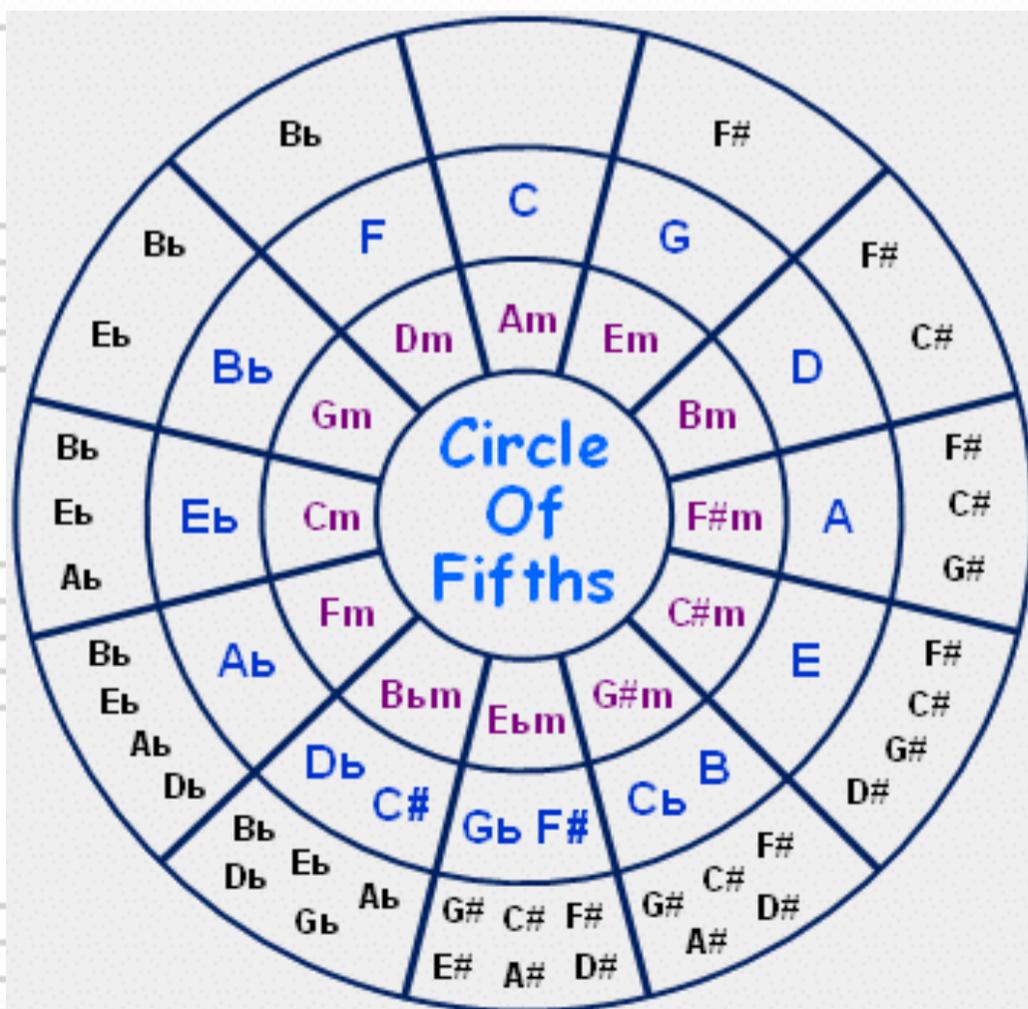
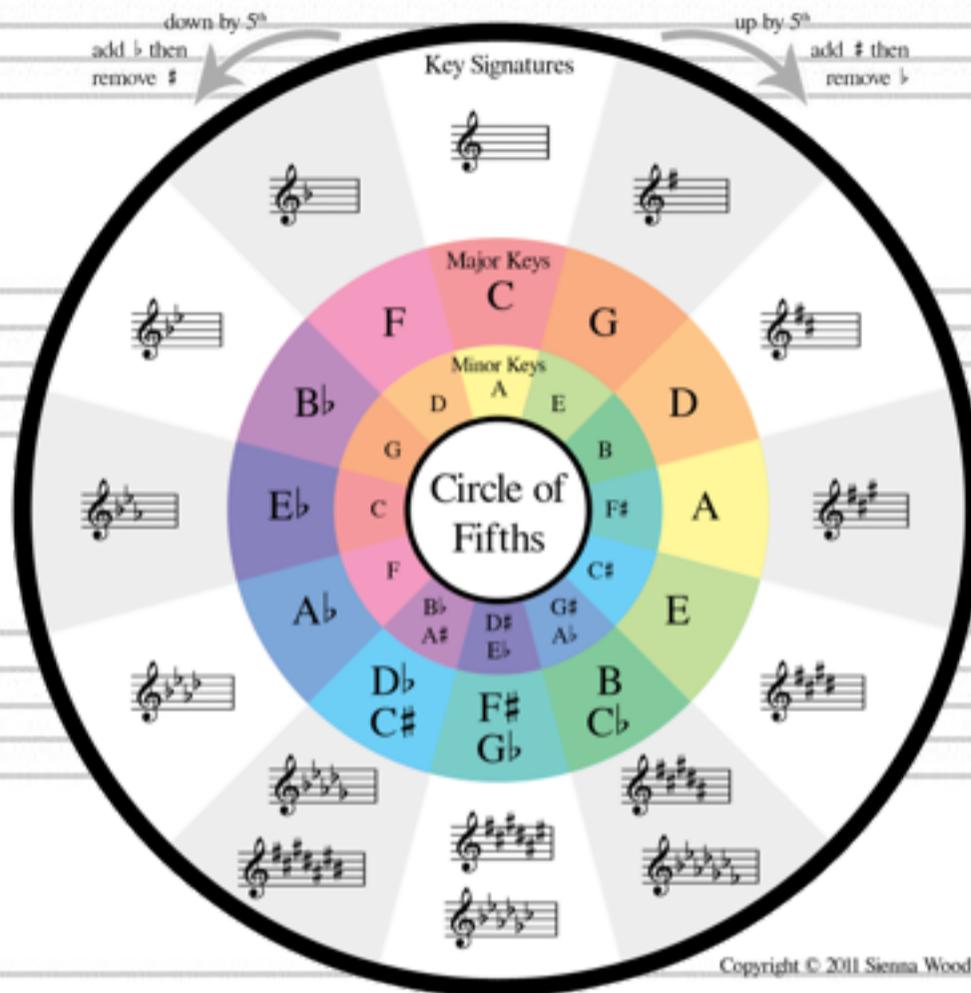


Key



How is a song built?

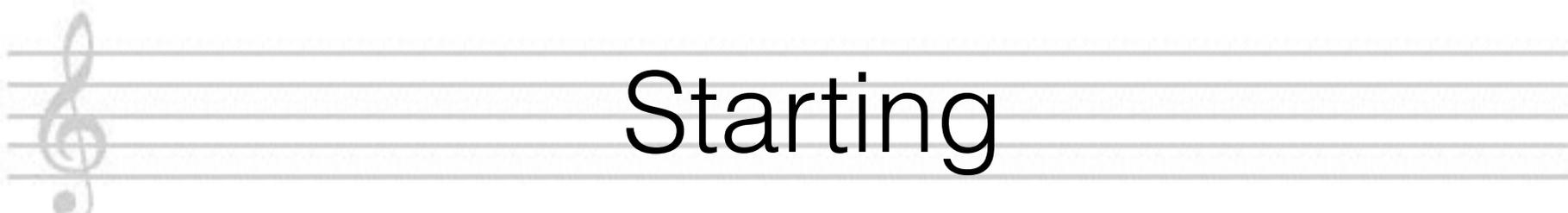
Key Signatures
Circle of fifths



Structures

I-IV-V Chords

KEY	I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi
C	C			F	G	
Db	Db			Gb	Ab	
D	D			G	A	
Eb	Eb			Ab	Bb	
E	E			A	B	
F	F			Bb	C	
Gb	Gb			Cb	Db	
G	G			C	D	
Ab	Ab			Db	Eb	
A	A			D	E	
Bb	Bb			Eb	F	
B	B			E	F#	

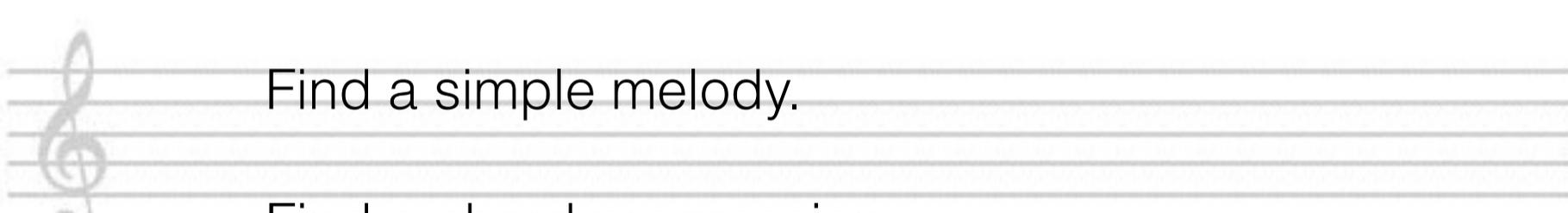


Starting



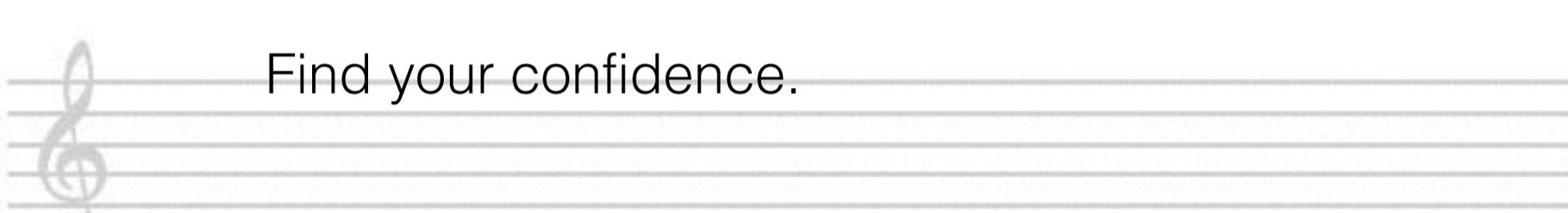
Find a place to write.

Find a message you feel passionate about.

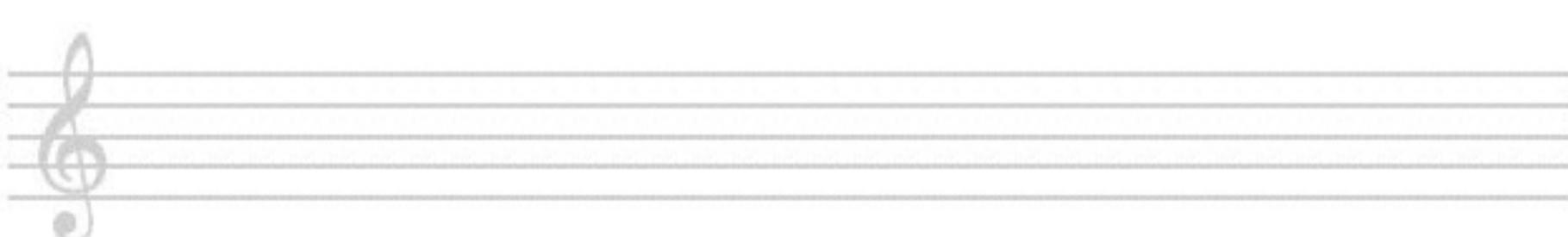
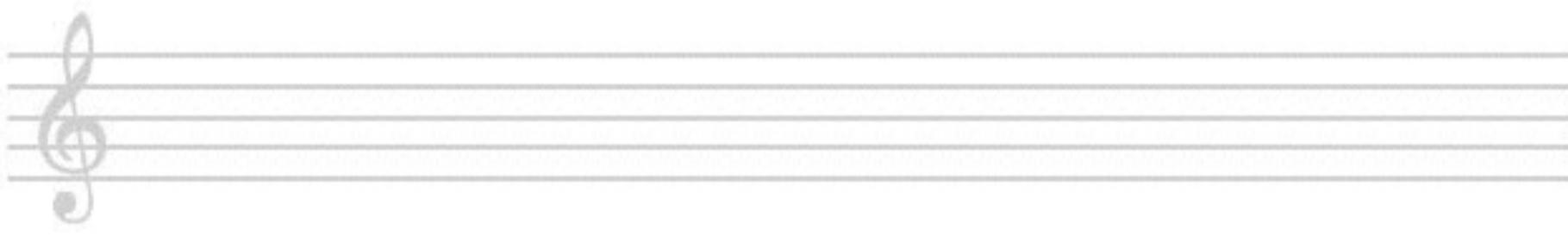


Find a simple melody.

Find a chord progression.



Find your confidence.



1... 2... 3... 4... I-IV-V

Exercise 1:

Let's pick a key, find the I-IV-V, and come up with a quick verse and chorus using the same chords to build our song



What to write about?

(Inspiration)



Finding inspiration in uniqueness of your life

Creating Mood, major, minor, 7th chords

Love

Friendship



Family

Conflict

Winning

Losing



Music and Song

Geography

Travel

Faith, hope, belief, religion, spirituality

Protests



Future past and present

Fads Crazes

States of Mind

History



Politics

Your mom

Your dog

Current events



The movie you just watched

A memory

Overheard conversations

Situations you or friends may be involved in

News



Magazines

Books

TV and Movie



Cool things to do!



Give yourself writing assignments

Constraints and limitations are breeding grounds for inspiration (necessity is the mother of invention).

Pick a key you specifically have not written in before. The new sounds will inspire new ideas.



“3 Minute Movie”

Write a 3-4 minute story.

Directors edit their movies to remove content that does not move the story along. Be the director and editor of your movie.



When you are writing, allow your first draft to flow freely. Do not get in your own way (Scrambled Eggs). Keep writing until you run out (Springsteen wrote pages of lyrics for most of his songs). Then go back and pare it down to the best lines that tell the story, and edit them to meet your satisfaction.

*extra verses can always be used for other songs



Be your own audience

Let the lyrics and the story be interesting to you.

Cliches are sometimes useful to convey a point. But, you can also use it as a starting point to rework the line. But be careful not to be too clever. You should strive to be honest, and make a real emotional connection. If you are writing a story outside of your personal experience, be the actor in that story and allow yourself to connect on an emotional level.



“Don’t bore us, get to the chorus”

The chorus should be delivered in less than one minute.

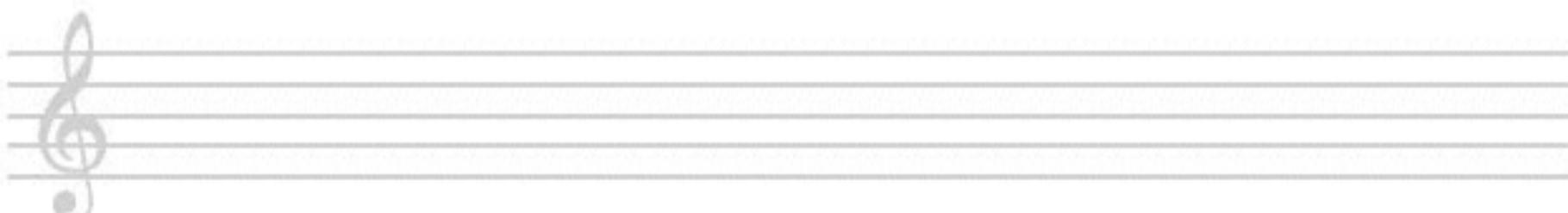


*Exercise: Rewrite an existing song

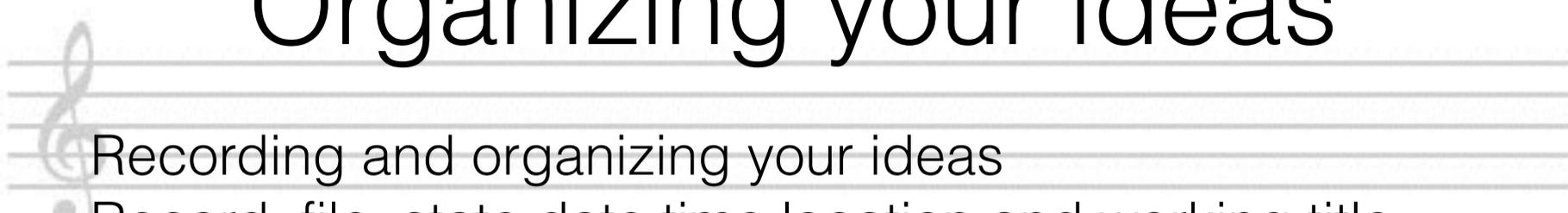
Blues progressions

Parodies





Organizing your ideas

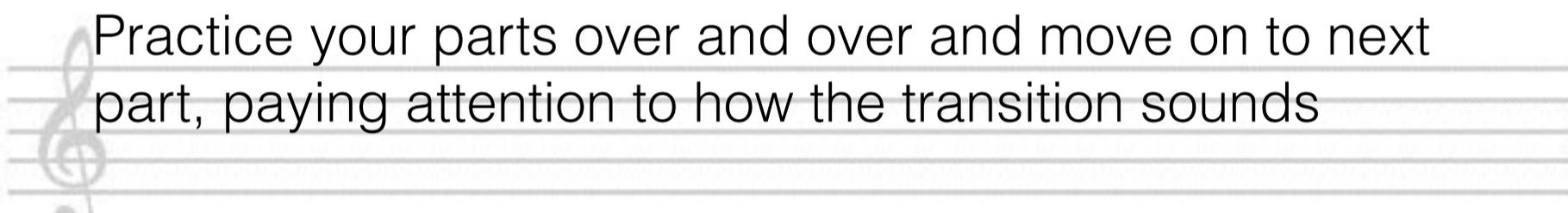


Recording and organizing your ideas

- Record, file, state date time location and working title
- Using a notebook of ideas, file and organize for later use
- keep and type on computer



Practice!



Practice your parts over and over and move on to next part, paying attention to how the transition sounds



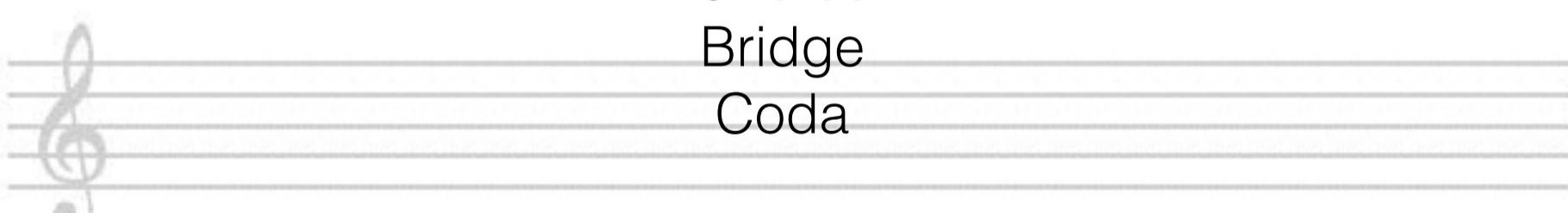
Form:

Intro

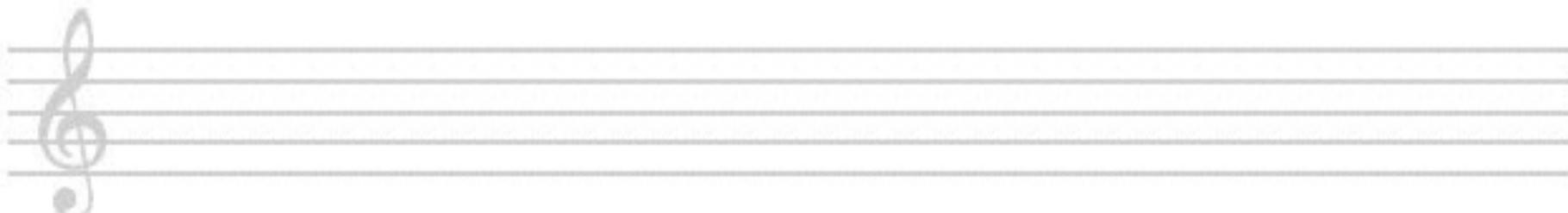
Verse

Pre-chorus

Chorus



Bridge



Coda

“D minor is the saddest key”



The Chicken or the Egg?

It is often asked whether the lyrics, melody, or chords come first, or if they come at the same time.

The answer is “yes”.

It depends on you as the writer, and your inspiration. You should not limit yourself to one method or the other, but rather allow the inspiration to move freely.

If a word inspires you to write lyrics. If you hear a melody, sing it

Phonetic composition: Start playing chords and sing a melody to the chords.

Allow the sounds turn into words that then develop into lyrics.

ex: Rolling Stones “start me up”

Chords that go together: (chords in a key)

Key Chord Chart

Major Key	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
A	A	Bm	C#m	D	E	F#m	G#dim
B	B	C#m	D#m	E	F#	G#m	A#dim
C	C	Dm	Em	F	G	Am	Bdim
D	D	Em	F#m	G	A	Bm	C#dim
E	E	F#m	G#m	A	B	C#m	D#dim
F	F	Gm	Am	Bb	C	Dm	Edim
G	G	Am	Bm	C	D	Em	F#dim
Minor Key	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Am	Am	Bdim	C	Dm	Em	F	G
Bm	Bm	C#dim	D	Em	F#m	G	A
Cm	Cm	Ddim	Eb	Fm	Gm	Ab	Bb
Dm	Dm	Edim	F	Gm	Am	Bb	C
Em	Em	F#dim	G	Am	Bm	C	D
Fm	Fm	Gdim	Ab	Bbm	Cm	Db	Eb
Gm	Gm	Adim	Bb	Cm	Dm	Eb	F



Openings and closings



The opening of a song should be like the start of a great book or movie. It can be something exciting starting in the middle of an action or conversation, or long shot to set up the atmosphere. Paul Simon likes a format similar to the start of a joke (A rabbi and a priest walk into a bar; One and one half wandering Jews)



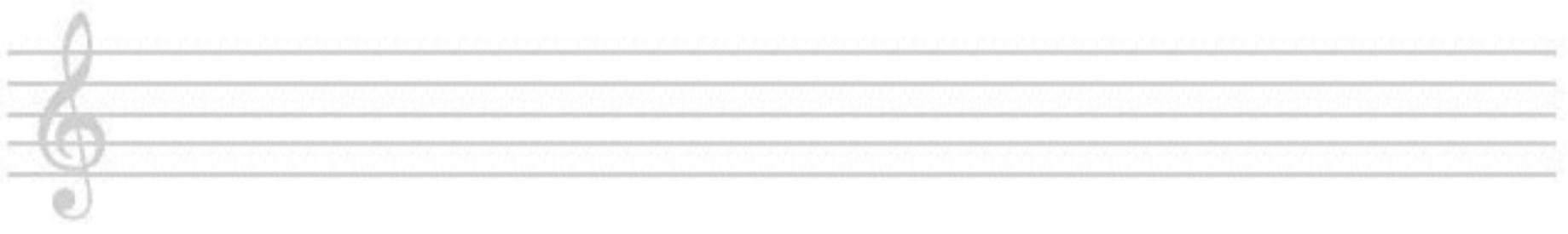
It is traditional to close with your chorus (which should represent some of the strongest lyric/melody). Another conventional method is to bring back your opening line, or a poignant line from earlier (...and she's buying a stairway to Heaven).



“Don't bore us, get to the chorus”

The chorus should be delivered in less than one minute.

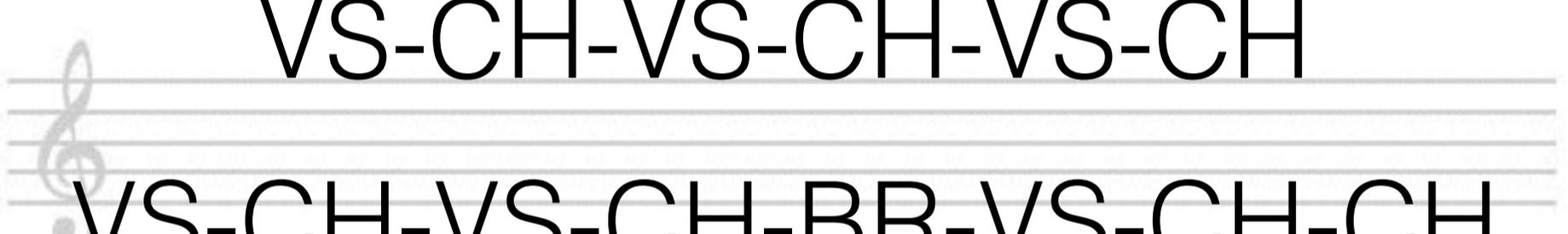




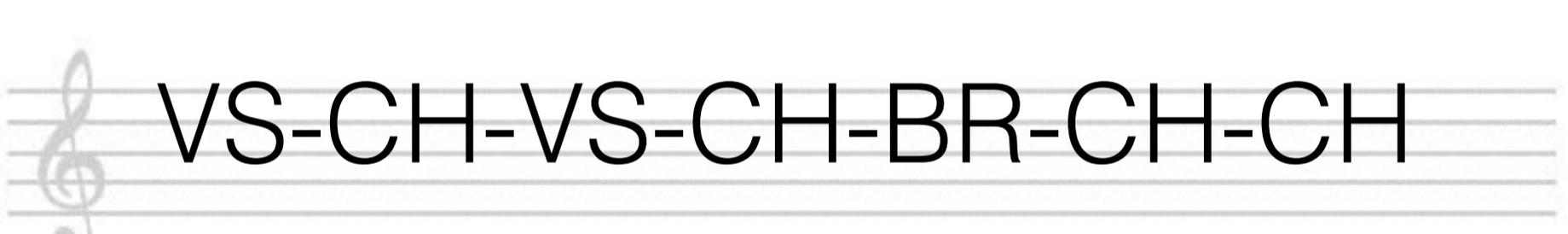
Common Song Forms



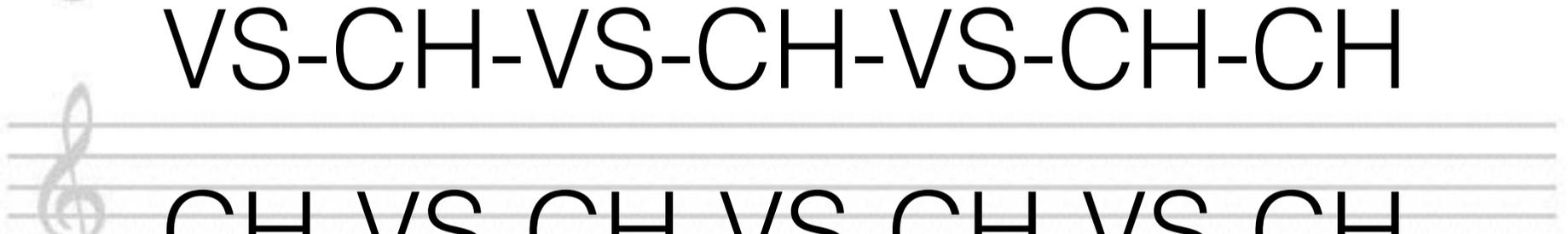
VS-CH-VS-CH-VS-CH



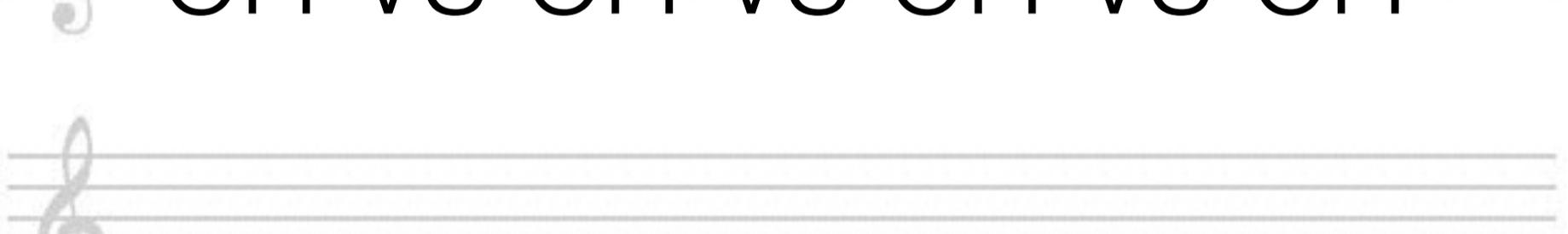
VS-CH-VS-CH-BR-VS-CH-CH



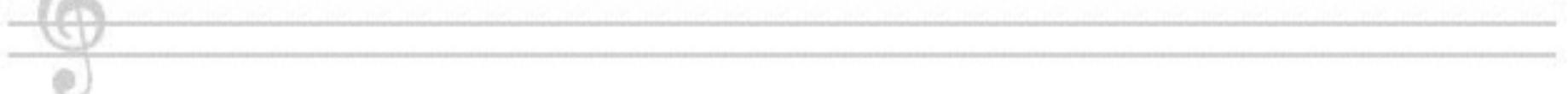
VS-CH-VS-CH-BR-CH-CH

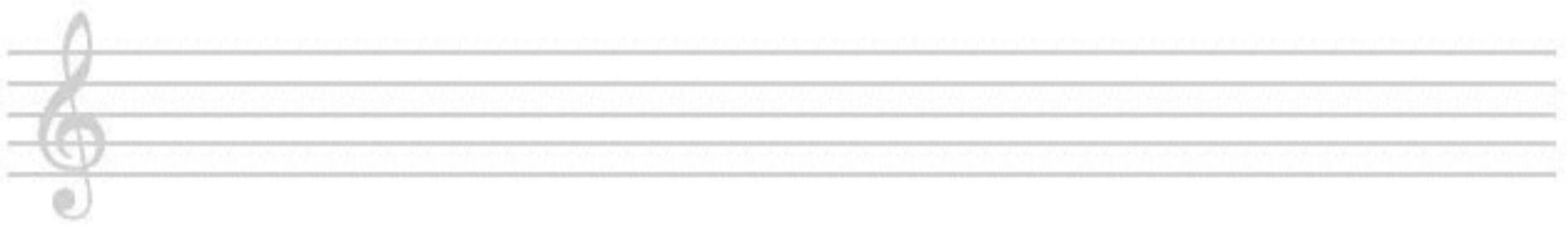


VS-CH-VS-CH-VS-CH-CH

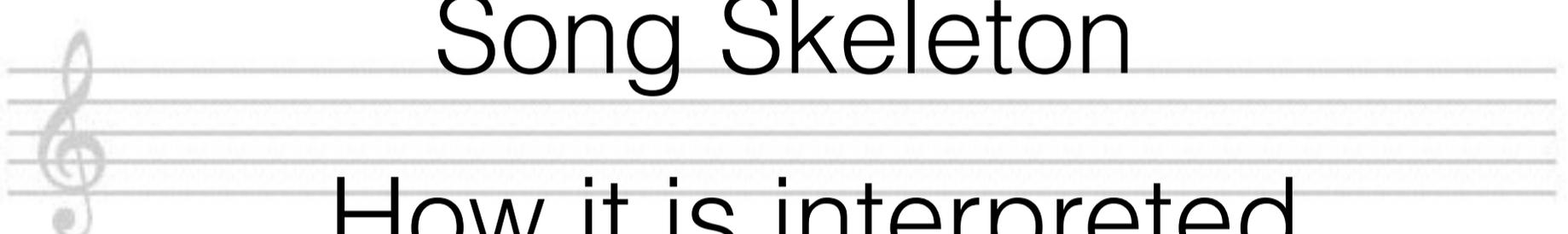


CH-VS-CH-VS-CH-VS-CH





Song Skeleton



How it is interpreted



Bob Dylan is a great example.....



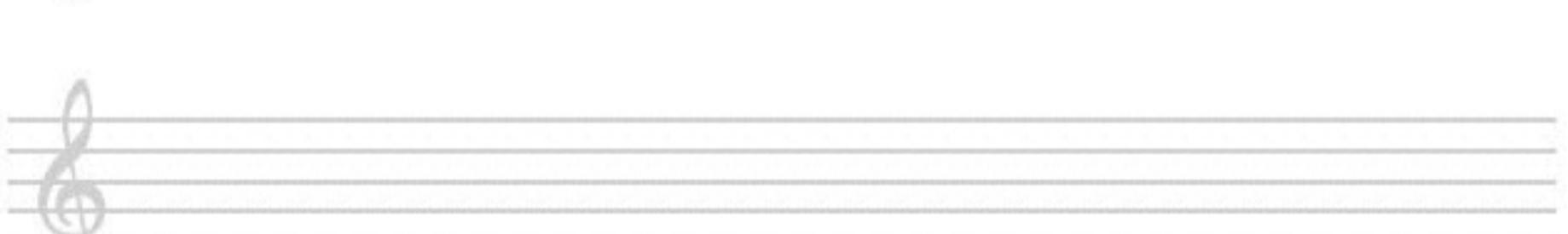
Rhythm

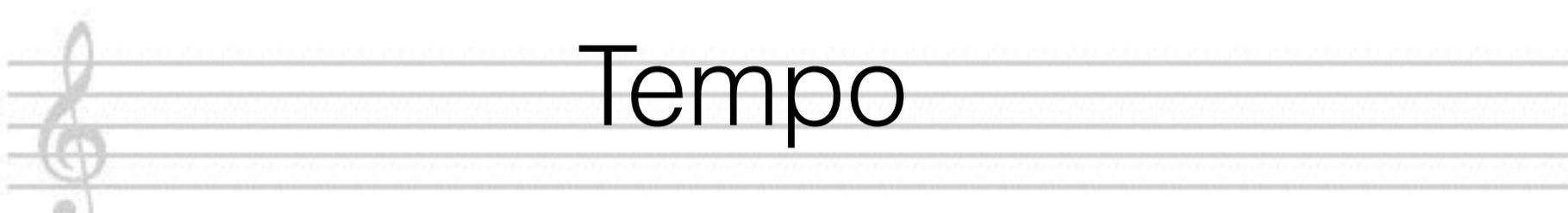
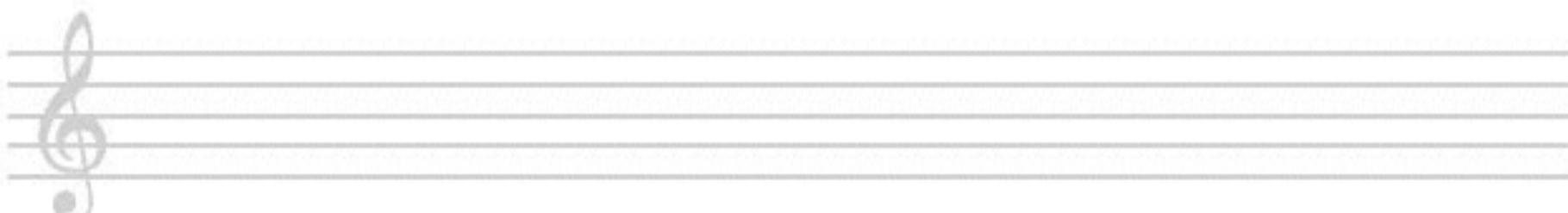


3/4



4/4





Tempo

Slow

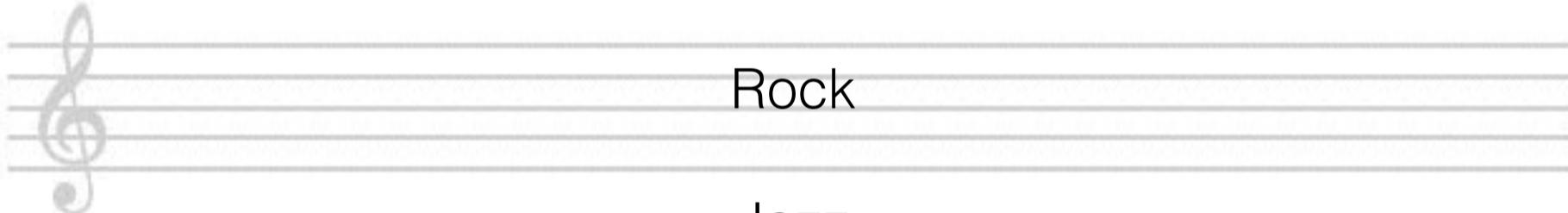


Fast



Choosing a style

Singer songwriter



Rock

Jazz



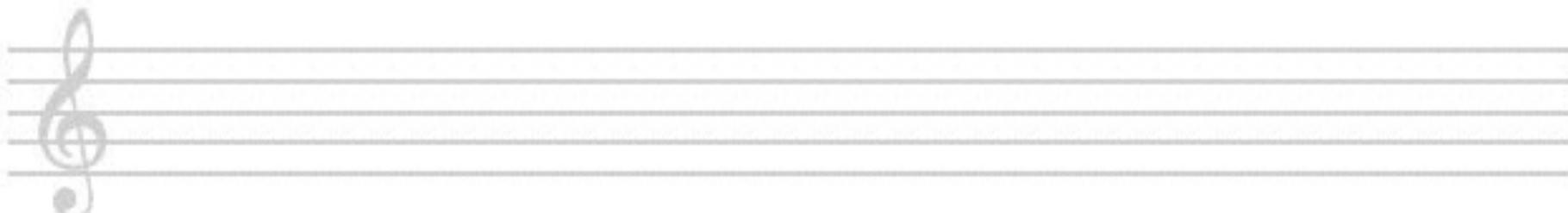
Country

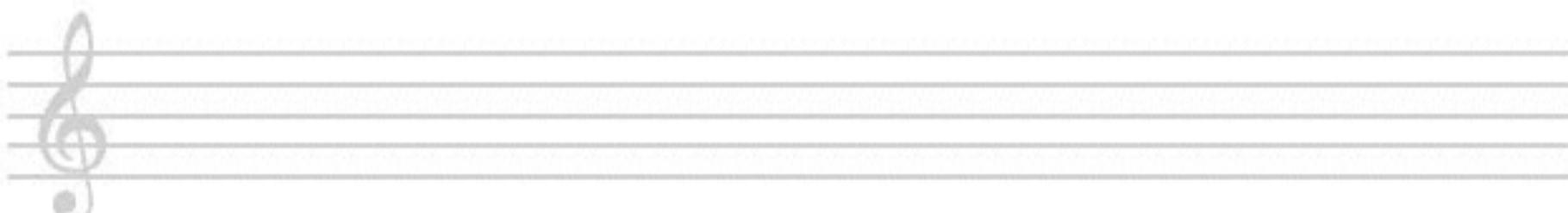
Pop



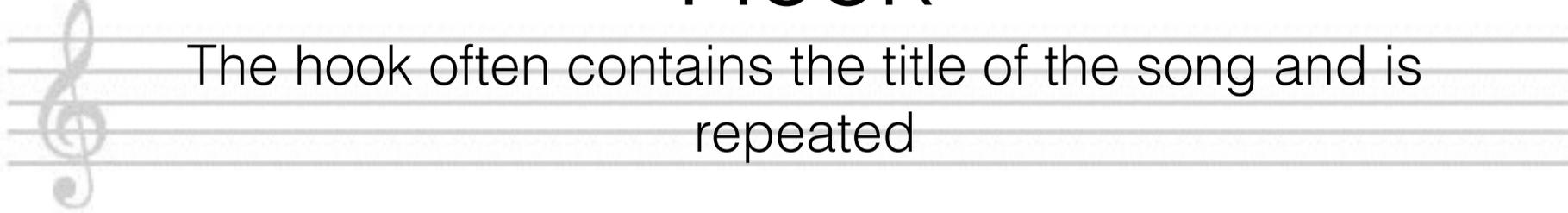
Bluegrass

Reggae



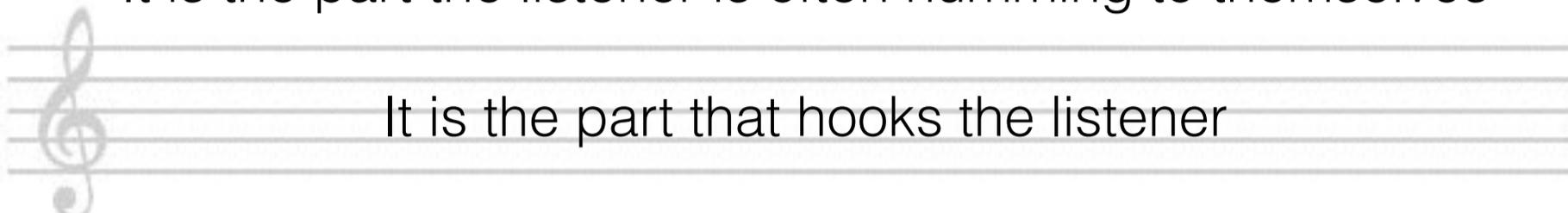


Hook

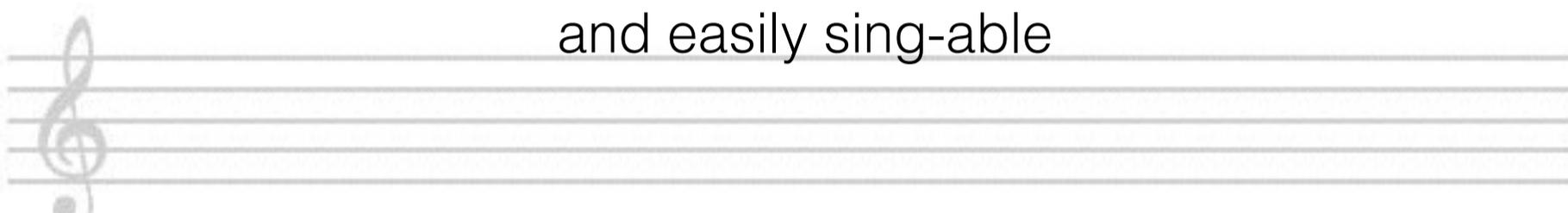


The hook often contains the title of the song and is repeated

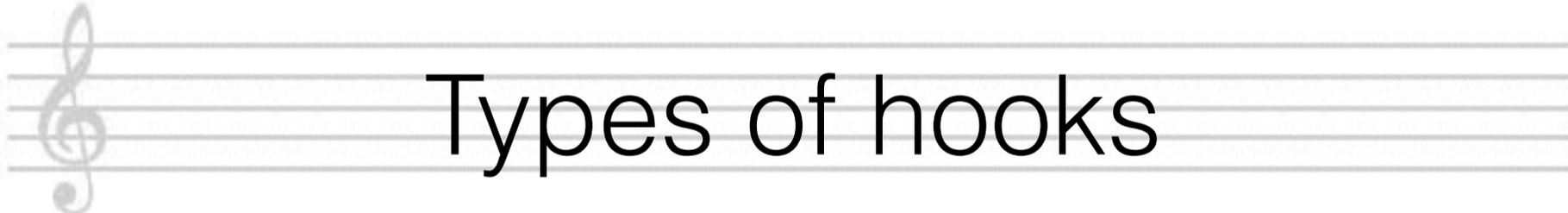
It is the part the listener is often humming to themselves



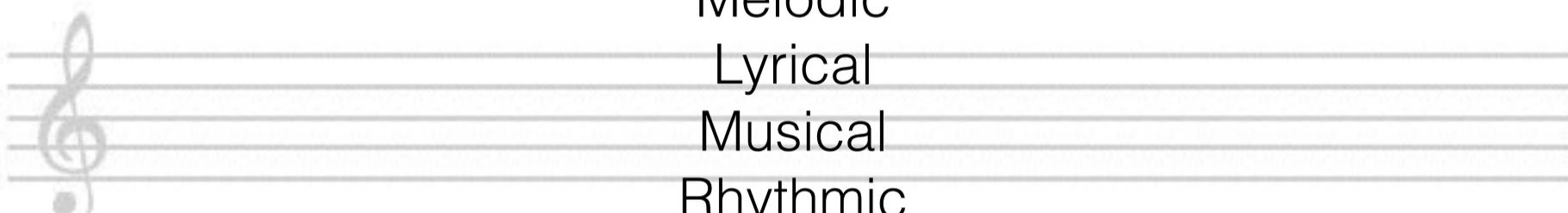
It is the part that hooks the listener



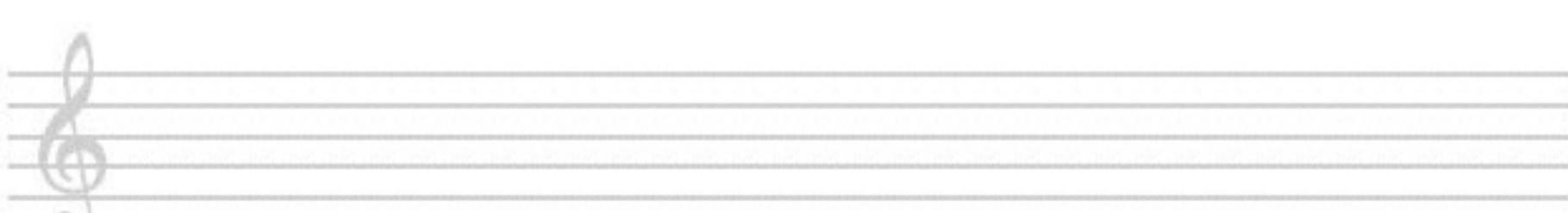
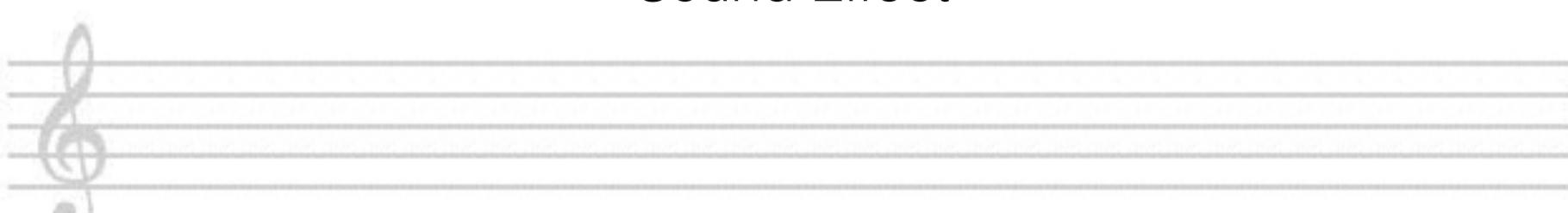
A melodic hook should always be original, memorable, and easily sing-able

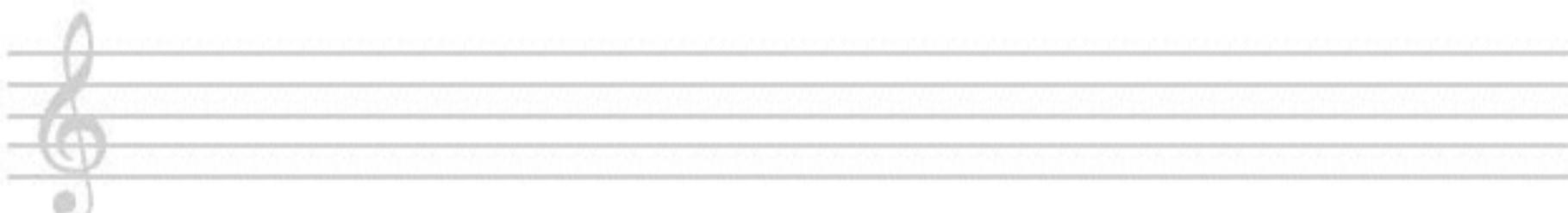
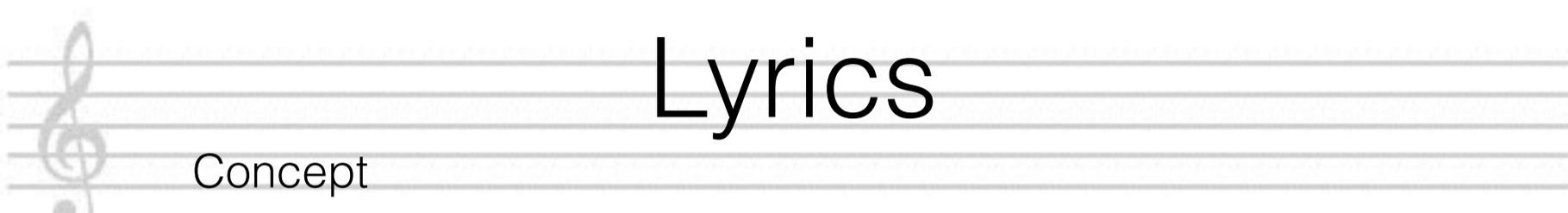


Types of hooks



- Melodic
- Lyrical
- Musical
- Rhythmic
- Sound Effect



Lyrics

Concept

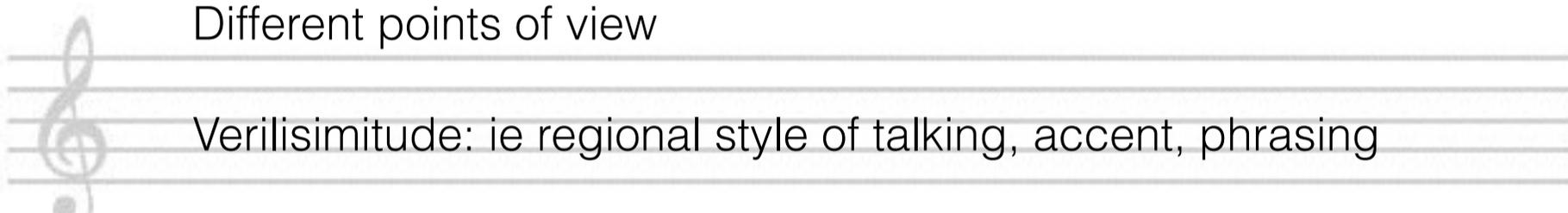
Story telling



Novelty humor

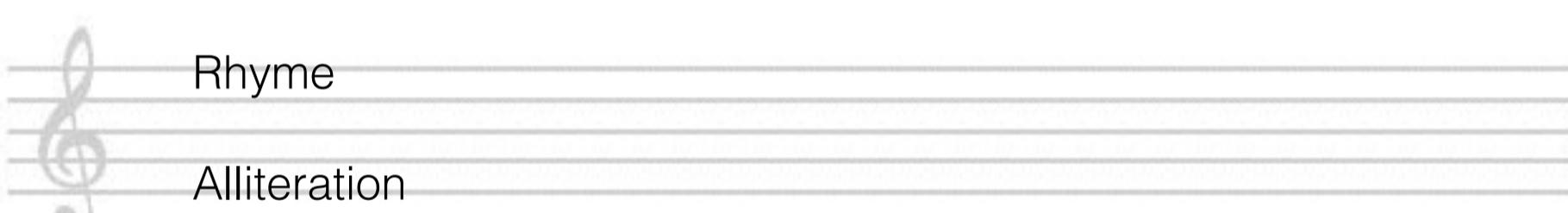
Inspirational

Different points of view



Verilisimilitude: ie regional style of talking, accent, phrasing

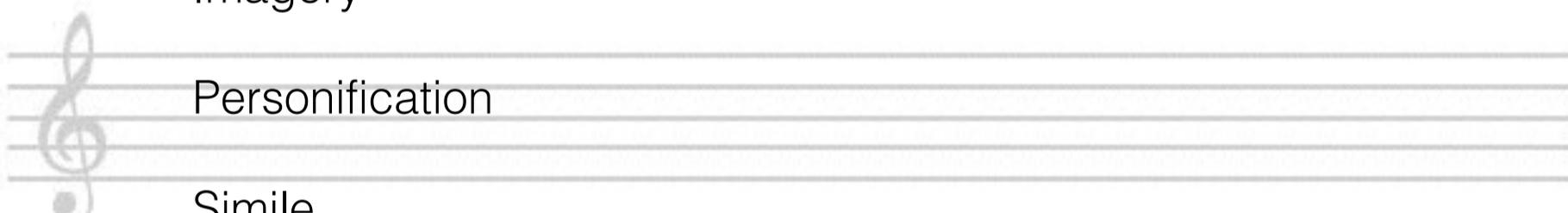
Repetition



Rhyme

Alliteration

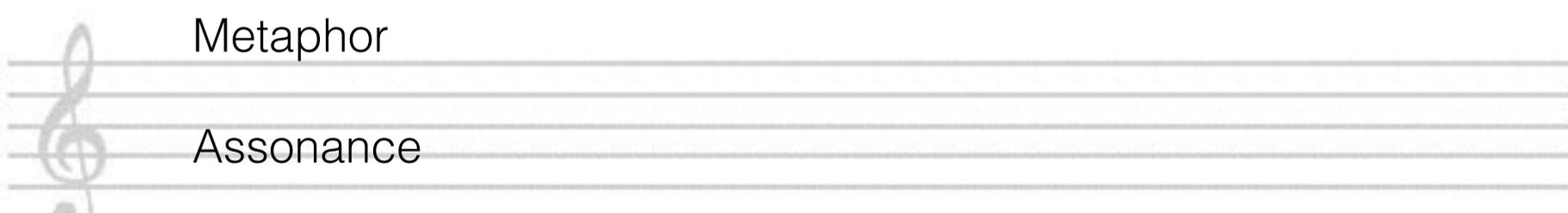
Imagery



Personification

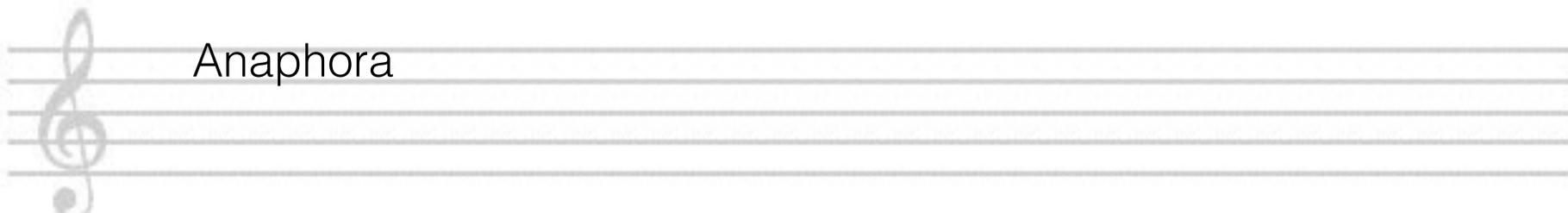
Simile

Metaphor

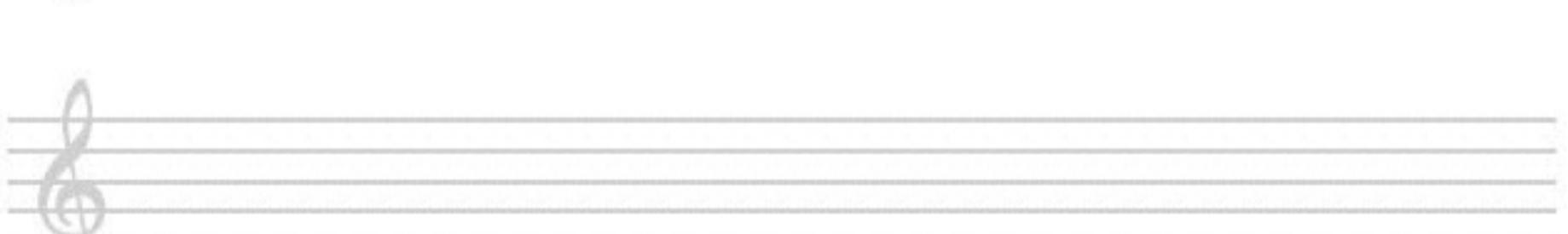
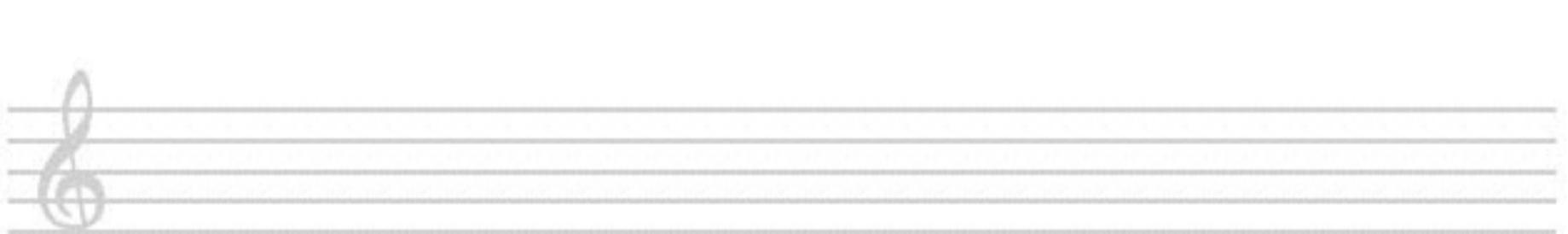
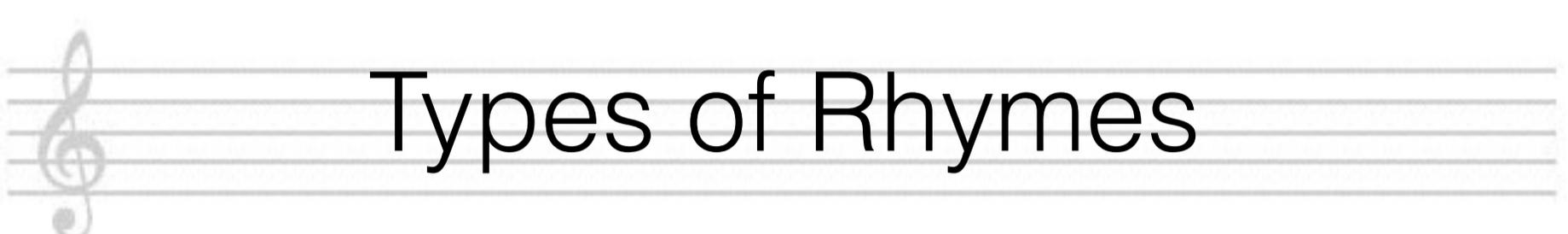
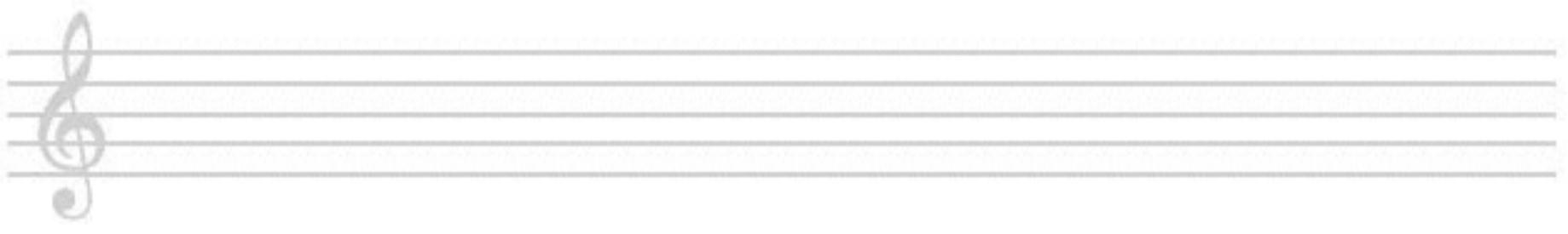


Assonance

Consonance



Anaphora



Types of Rhymes

Perfect Rhyme

Near Rhyme

Metaphor and Simile

Prosody: the patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry (syllabic emphasis).

Emotional prosody - the music should match the emotional content of the lyric

Melodic prosody - Up is happy, down is sad. ex. Up Where We Belong

Rhyme Scheme

Matching Rhyme Scheme with Chords

Contrast

You would get bored of eating the same food at each meal. Your songs should have contrast to keep it interesting.

Melodic Contrast Try to make the chorus melody differ from the verses.

You can also vary the melodic rhythm.

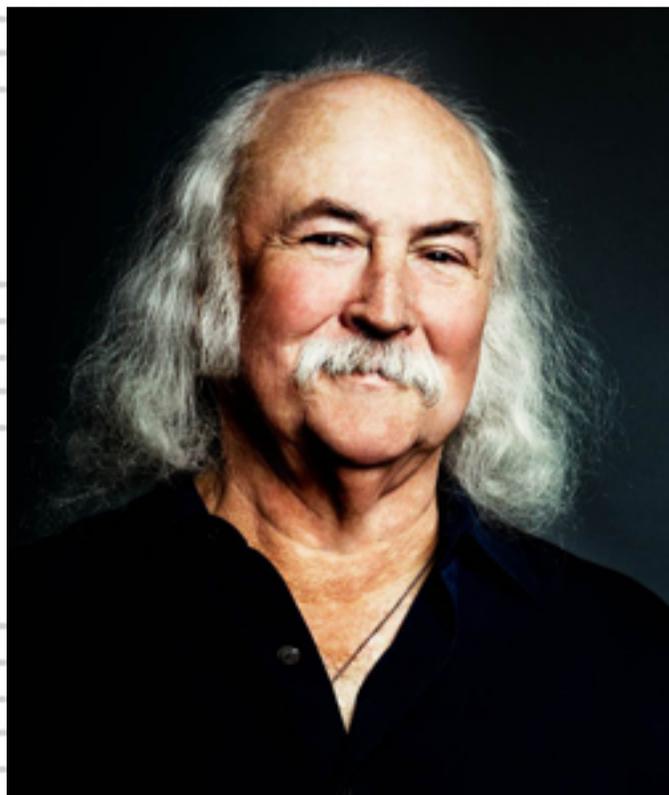
Rhythmic Contrast Variations in the rhythm structure can add strong emphasis to the lyrics,

the mood, and build the song.

This could be as strumming more aggressively as the song builds, to altering to a reggae beat in the chorus.

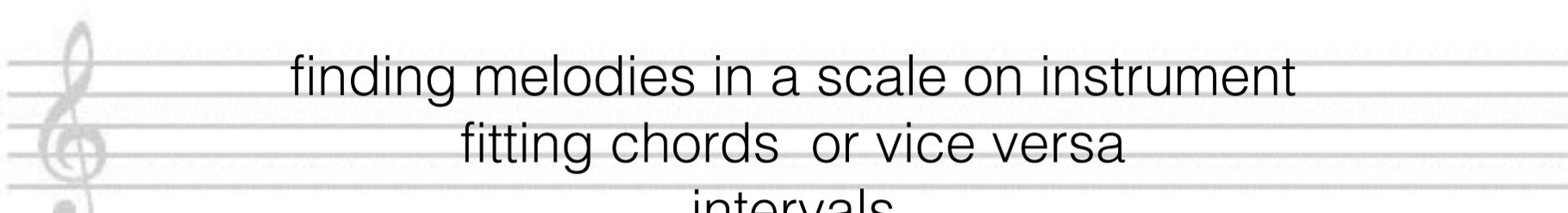
Learn the rules and break the rules

David Crosby often writes in a more “classical” style wherein there are not traditional A, B, C sections, but rather movements.





Songwriting tools:



finding melodies in a scale on instrument

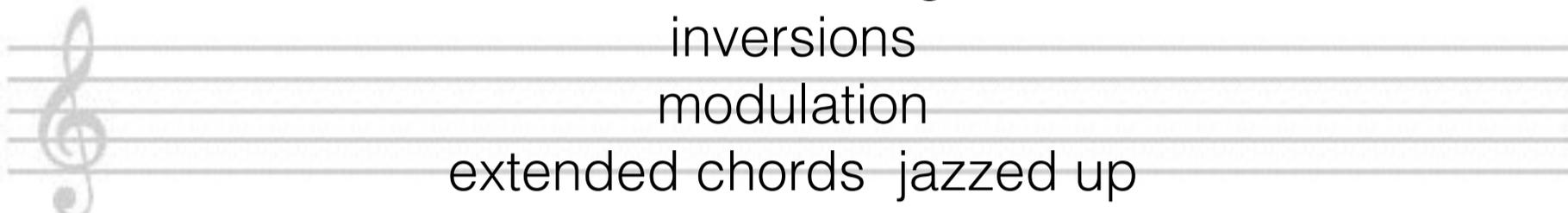
fitting chords or vice versa

intervals

chord voicings

inversions

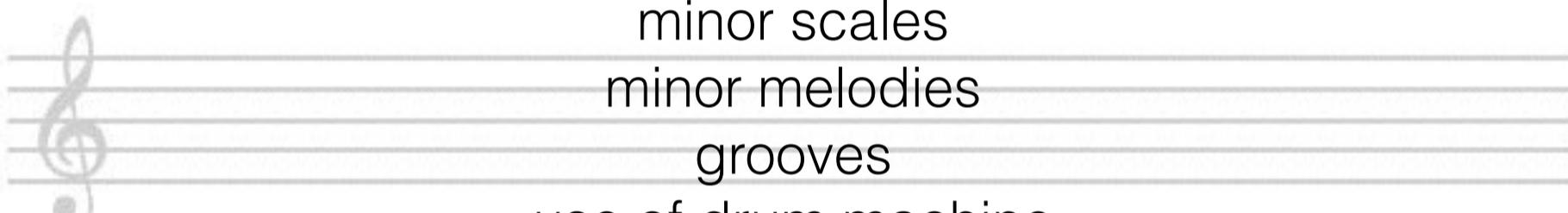
modulation



extended chords jazzed up

motifs

minor scales

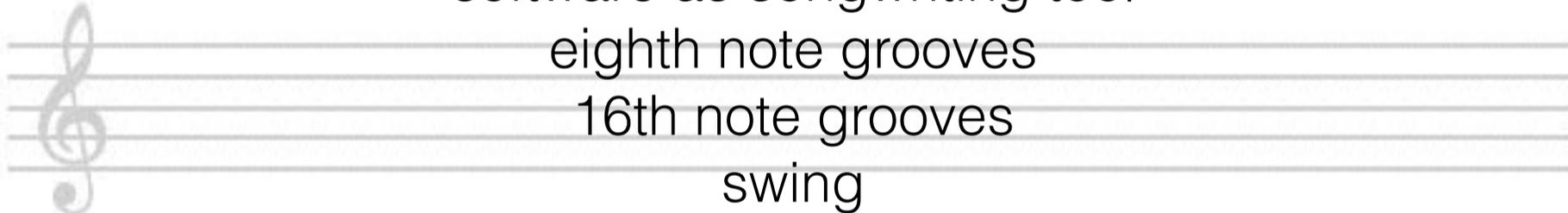


minor melodies

grooves

use of drum machine

software as songwriting tool

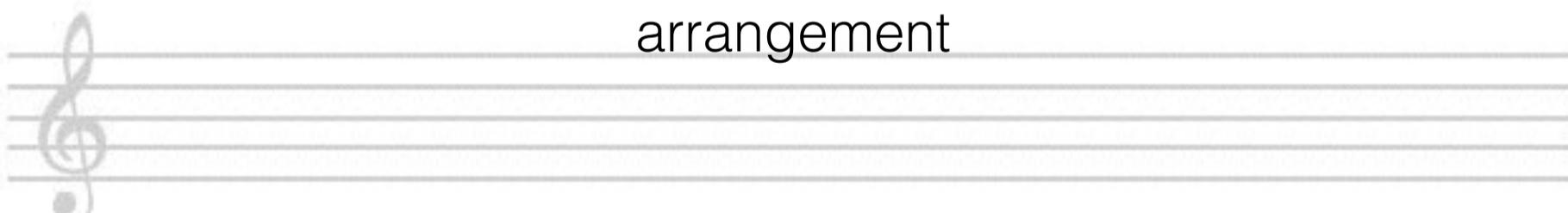


eighth note grooves

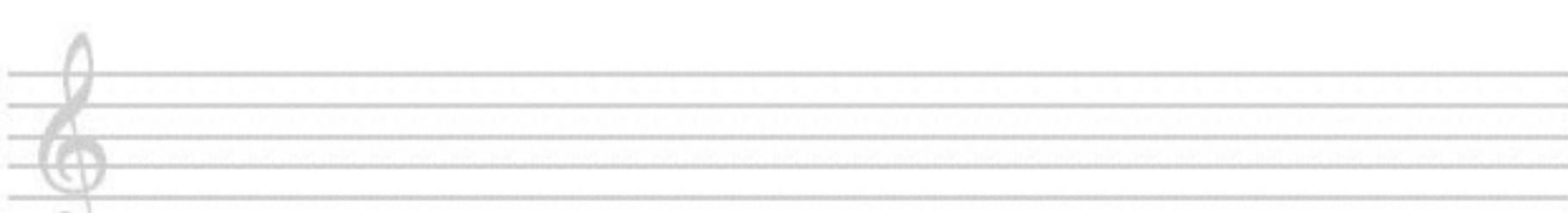
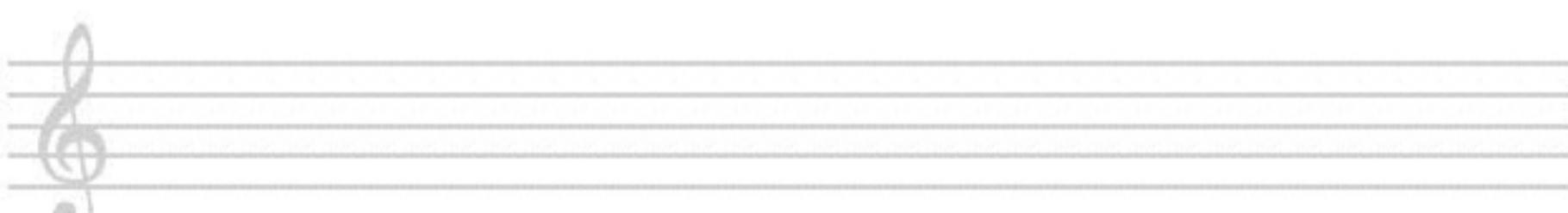
16th note grooves

swing

blues scale



arrangement



Write every day

Writing is a muscle that needs exercise.

Some writers write a song every day (whether it is good or not) just to keep that muscle strong. At the end of the year they would have 365 songs. There are bound to be some gems in there!

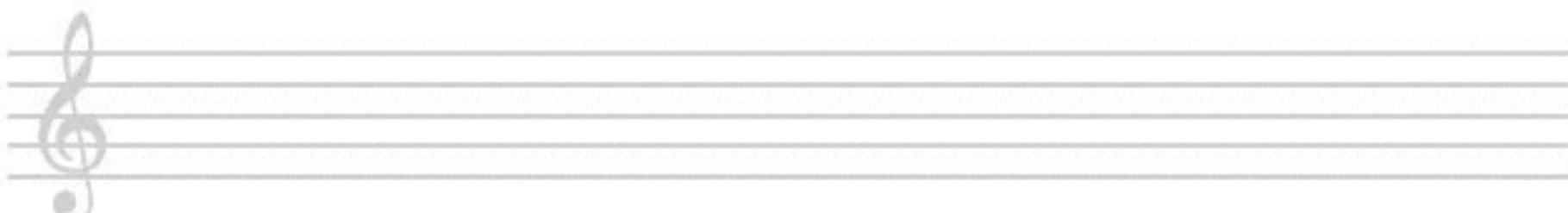
While writing every day may be a stretch for most of us, set aside time and space to create.

*if inspiration strikes, chase it!

Be Prepared

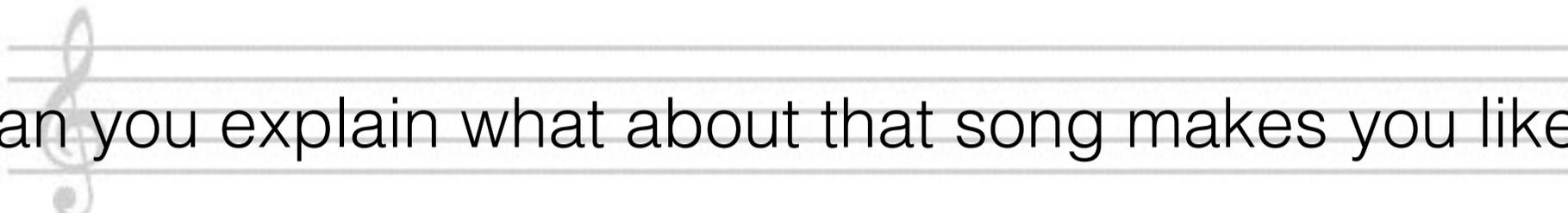
Being prepared when inspiration strikes:

- Recording device
- Phone
- Note pad

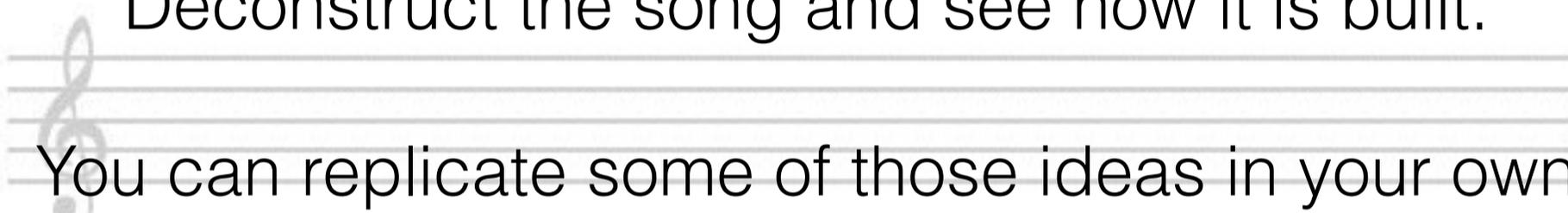


Exercise

Choose a song you like.

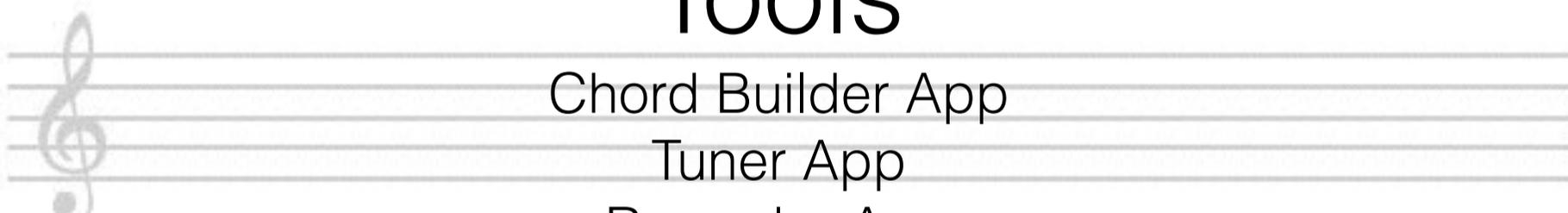
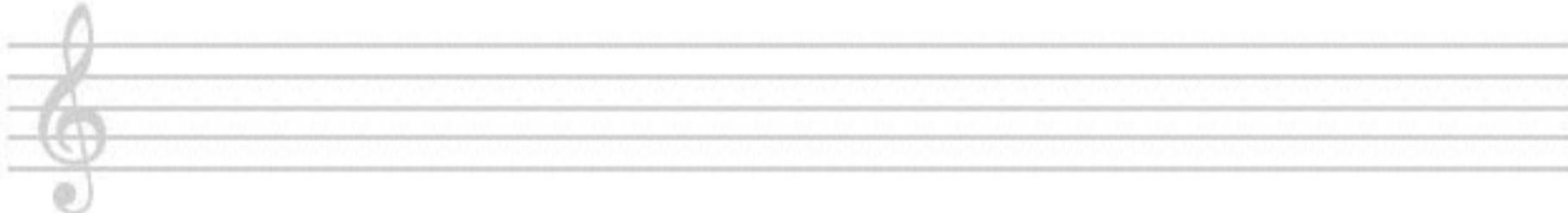


Can you explain what about that song makes you like it?



Deconstruct the song and see how it is built.

You can replicate some of those ideas in your own songs.



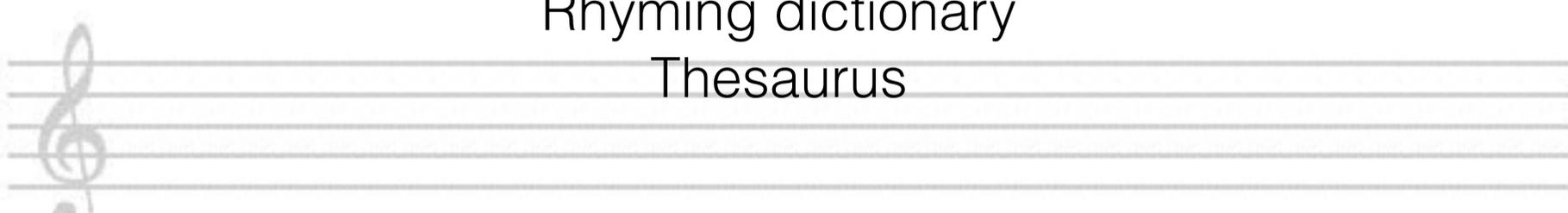
Tools

Chord Builder App

Tuner App

Recorder App

Rhyming dictionary



Thesaurus

