

Writing Blues

OUTLINE

I. Lyrics: the basics

- a. Rhymes/wordplay (clever, funny)
- b. Regular rhythm (driving, soothing)
- c. Analogies/metaphors/imagery
- d. Concise eloquence (e.g., love songs)
- e. Humor/surprise (e.g., 12-bar blues “punch lines”)
- f. Stuttering/repetition
- g. Other?

II. Review: key elements of the 12-bar blues (Steve Korn)

a. Lyric form

- A₁: statement of problem, feeling, situation, etc. (4 bars)
 A₂: repeat of the above (4 bars)
 B: response to the A statement (4 bars)

b. Harmonic form (chords)

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|------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|
| A ₁ : | 1/// 4/// 1/// 1/// | e.g., | C/// F/// C/// C/// |
| A ₂ : | 4/// 4/// 1/// 1/// | | F/// F/// C/// C/// |
| B: | 5/// 4/// 1/// 1/5/ | | G/// F/// C/// C/G/ |

III. Songwriting exercise: 12-bar blues excerpts

“Songs are to be SUNG and HEARD. So good lyrics are different from other kinds of poetry. Lyrics go by quickly. The listener can’t re-read, and there are no visual clues or punctuation symbols on a page for guidance. To fit the short time span the songwriter uses compressed phrases. Pauses, corresponding to musical rests, are important too. To communicate the message the writer may repeat important lines, especially in a chorus. Songs that move us have combinations of meter and rhyme that reinforce the message of the words.”

--Wendy K. Silk, UC-Davis