

Lyric Writing

Writing lyrics is very much like writing poetry. Many of the same literary devices used in poetry can be useful in the writing of lyrics, including rhyming, metaphor, simile, and alliteration.

In lyric writing, the two most important aspects are the structure and the story. In lyric writing, the structure is related to the music. Part of the structure of a lyric is defining the different sections of the song. Many popular songs have a **verse** and a **chorus**. Much like poetry, the structure of a lyric also revolves around the rhyming sequence, or **rhyme scheme**. In telling the story, you want to tell it in a clear and effective way, so that it creates drama and suspense to keep the listener engaged.

The Dragon Song has a verse and a chorus. The verse mostly describes the attributes of the dragon and the chorus describes the adventure that the dragon undertakes in its story. Below is the first verse of The Dragon Song with the “rhyme scheme” marked. Notice any other literary devices being used?

In a world full of wizards and warriors too (A)
Where mages and mystics explore (B)
This little old bard has a ballad for you (A)
Of a mythical monster of yore (B)
With claws sharp as sabers and scales for skin (C)
And fangs that are second to none (D)
They take to the sky and they glide on the wind (C)
With wings that can blot out the sun (D)

That’s the rhyme scheme for the verse. It’s a pretty basic rhyme scheme; you’ve probably seen or heard it or something similar many times. Did you see the alliteration (*World/wizards/warriors*, for example)? Let’s look now at the chorus.

See them soar (A)
Hear them roar (A)
Feel the fire and fear at your back (B)
Know the terror (C)
And beware (C)
Of a dragon about to attack (B)
Better run, better hide (D)
If you fight you’ll be fried (D)
Says the Practical Guide (D)
To Dragons

That’s the format for your Green Dragon verse. Ready to get started?
What makes a good song great:

1. *Rhyme*
Rhyming properly is crucial to the success of a song. That means no cheating! If it doesn’t sound perfect, it probably doesn’t rhyme.
2. *How words are stressed*
All words have a natural rhythm, and proper way each syllable is stressed. For example, in the word “waffle” the first syllable (“WAH”) is stressed and the second syllable (“ful”) is unstressed. Try saying “waffle” while stressing “ful” instead of “wah.” Sounds silly, right?

Well, it sounds just as silly if you do that in a song. Set your words so they're stressed properly over the music.

3. *Wit*

Try to make your song fun. Don't get so bogged down in the details that you forget to have fun. The goal isn't to cram every detail into the song, but to write a song that you would enjoy hearing.

Overwhelmed? Don't be. It's a lot of fun. Let's get started.

What You'll Need:

1. *Pencil/Pen*
2. *Paper*
3. *The Green Dragon Worksheet*, which is online at www.mirrorstonebooks.com
4. *Your imagination!*

Those are the only things you need. Start writing!

What You May Want:

1. *A Rhyming Dictionary*

Why rack your brain thinking of every possible rhyme for "see" when there are books that list them? Your library should have multiple rhyming dictionaries. Most are alphabetized by sound ('A' sounds, like "bay" or "hat" towards the front - "U" sounds, like "cup" and "huge" towards the back). You can also find rhyming dictionaries online (www.rhymezone.com).

2. *A Thesaurus*

Some words are more difficult to rhyme than others. For example, there are only about 15 words that rhyme with "happy." But maybe another word that means happy would have more rhyming options. A thesaurus provides an extensive list of synonyms for thousands of words. Synonyms for happy, include "glad" "thrilled" "pleased" and many more. Think of how many more rhyming options you have! Check your library, or you can use www.thesaurus.com.

3. *Green Dragon Codex*

You don't need the *Green Dragon Codex* book to write the Green Dragon lyric, since we've provided you with information, but if you're interested in the story and want to know more, you can read the whole thing. If you like it, there are also books about the Red, Brass, Bronze, and Black Dragons available right now, and the Silver Dragon Codex is coming in the fall. Check them out!

Now you're ready to write your song. It's brainstorming time! Take a look at your Green Dragon worksheet and do the following:

1. *Freestyle writing:* Write down anything that comes to mind – and I mean anything! Take 5-10 minutes and write down anything you can think of. Maybe you'll stumble upon an idea for the song.
2. *Rhymes:* Write down words that might be useful for your song and write down words that rhyme with them – you never know what might work.

One more important thing about Lyric Writing...

Don't worry if the lyric isn't perfect on the first draft. You can always revise it. **Rewriting** is an essential part of the songwriting process.

Now you're ready...Start writing!