

*Enter the Prechorus: Producing Intensification in Two Recent Taylor Swift Songs*

Figure 1. Rhetorical function and musical characteristics of formal sections (after Adams 2019, 35)

Formal Unit	Function	Musical characteristics
Verse	Expository	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New lyrics in each verse</li><li>• Establishes chord loop and melody</li><li>• Modest instrumentation and intensity</li></ul>
Pre-chorus	Intensifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repeats (or nearly repeats) lyrics</li><li>• If harmonically differentiated from verse, more unstable<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ (Often beginning off-tonic and prolonging IV–V)</li></ul></li><li>• Melodic center moves higher</li><li>• Musical layers are added (extra percussion, background vocals)</li><li>• Rhythmic activity increases</li></ul>
Chorus	Culminating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repeated lyrics, often title of the song</li><li>• Melodic (and occasionally harmonic) closure</li><li>• Most engaging melodic material/hook</li><li>• Thicker texture</li><li>• Louder</li></ul>

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## Example 1. Taylor Swift, "You're on your Own, Kid," opening material

<p>Summer went away, still, the yearning stays  I play it cool with the best of them /  I wait patiently, he's gonna notice me  It's okay, we're the best of friends anyway /  I hear it in your voice, you're smoking with your boys  I touch my phone as if it's your face /  I didn't choose this town, I dream of getting out  There's just one who could make me stay all my days /</p>	<p>← changing lyrics, spare accompaniment, tonic-based loop</p>
<p>From sprinkler splashes to fireplace ashes  I waited ages to see you there /  I search the party of better bodies  Just to learn that you never cared  You're on your own, kid; you always have been</p>	<p>← predominant-based loop, repeated lyric  ← changing lyrics    ← loop breaks off, cadential progression begins  ← song title, repeated lyrics, melodic closure</p>

(" / " indicates end of the harmonic loop)

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Example 2. Taylor Swift, “You’re on your Own, Kid,” material following instrumental break

<p>From sprinkler splashes to fireplace ashes  I gave my blood, sweat, and tears for this /  I hosted parties and starved my body  Like I'd be saved by a perfect kiss /  The jokes weren't funny, I took the money  My friends from home don't know what to say /  I looked around in a blood-soaked gown  And I saw something they can't take away /  Cause there were pages turned with the bridges burned  Everything you lose is a step you take /  So make the friendship bracelets, take the moment and taste it  You've got no reason to be afraid  You're on your own, kid; yeah, you can face this  You're on your own, kid; you always have been</p>	<p>← predominant-based loop, repeated lyric  ← new lyrics</p> <p>← added backing vocals</p> <p>← higher melody, more backing vocals  ← extra drum fill</p> <p>← harmonic loop breaks off, cadential progression begins  ← song title, melodic closure, abandoned cadences  ← melodic and harmonic closure</p>
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(“ / ” indicates end of the harmonic loop)

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## Example 3. Taylor Swift, “the lakes,” verse-chorus unit 1

Is it romantic how all my elegies eulogize me? I'm not cut out for all these cynical clones These hunters with cell phones	← modest instrumentation, chord loop and melody established
Take me to the Lakes, where all the poets went to die I don't belong and, my beloved, neither do you Those Windermere peaks look like a perfect place to cry I'm setting off, but not without my muse [Remainder of song omitted]	← repeated lyric, song title, higher melody, musical layers added; but harmonically unstable, off-tonic beginning
	← no melodic closure, ends with (swelling) V chord

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