

*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 2. Taylor Swift, "You're on your Own, Kid," concluding postverse section

<p>[prechorus-like]</p> <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</p>	<p>← predominant-based loop, repeated lyric</p> <p>← new lyrics</p> <p>← (added backing vocals)</p> <p>← higher melody, (more backing vocals)</p> <p>← (extra drum fill)</p>
<p>[chorus-like]</p> <p>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>← harmonic loop breaks off, cadential progression begins</p> <p>← song title, melodic closure, abandoned cadences</p> <p>← melodic and harmonic closure</p>

(" / " indicates end of the harmonic loop)

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

<p>[verse] Is it romantic how all my elegies eulogize me? I'm not cut out for all these cynical clones These hunters with cell phones</p> <p>[postverse] 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</p> <p>[remainder of song omitted]</p>	<p>← modest instrumentation, chord loop and melody established</p> <p>← repeated lyric, song title, higher melody, musical layers added; but harmonically unstable, off-tonic beginning</p> <p>← no melodic closure, ends with (swelling) dominant chord</p>
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