

## Spotlight on Point of View

In a song, the perspective of the singer is called the point of view. This can influence the way listeners connect with the song. The point of view usually falls into one of the following roles:

### The Storyteller (third-person):

The storyteller sings about other characters and tells the listener what has happened, what is happening, and/or what will happen. This can be a fictional or historical account.

*Example: “Rubin Carter was falsely tried” from the song “Hurricane” by Bob Dylan*

### The Participant (first-person):

The audience hears the song through the perspective of the “I” character’s experience and feelings. These viewpoints can be personal, as if they are shared by the singers themselves, or they can be about another character.

*Examples: “Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away” from the song “Yesterday” by John Lennon and Paul McCartney; “I’m the train they call the City of New Orleans, I’ll be gone five hundred miles when the day is done” from the song “City of New Orleans” by Steve Goodman.*

### The Advisor (second-person):

A common songwriting practice is to make listeners part of the story by referring to them as “you” in the lyrics.

*Example: “You’re so vain, you probably think this song is about you” from the song “You’re So Vain” by Carly Simon.*

## ACTIVITY

- Pick a recorded song that you think has good lyrics. Write your own substitute lyrics by becoming one of the following character types:
  - If the song you selected is from the point of view of The Advisor, pretend you are the person being sung to and write a “reply” lyric.
  - If the song is from the point of view of The Storyteller, pretend you are one of the supporting characters mentioned in the song and write a song from The Participant point of view.
  - If the song is from the point of view of The Participant, imagine you are a character not mentioned in the song. Write as that character using The Participant point of view.
- Pick one of your songs or one of your song ideas. Experiment with changing it to a different point of view.



Bob Dylan



John Lennon and Paul McCartney



Carly Simon