

Song Title _____ Composer/Year _____

Date(s): _____

1. Visit the lyric

- a. Write out the lyric on a sheet of paper in big print ☐
- b. Say the lyric without singing as if it were a story or poem ☐
- c. Note where the words run together and where the natural pauses are so you can sing in complete sentences. What words are stressed and what words are unstressed? Underline stressed words. ☐
- d. Note the different kinds of phrases there are, such as descriptions, questions, and declarations. Notate with question mark, exclamation, etc. ☐
- e. Think of each line of the song as a question you're answering or as a response to someone. ☐
- f. Write the story of the song in your own words. ☐
- g. Paraphrase each line of the song and notice how your emotions and thoughts change. Write the meaning and then the underlying thoughts. ☐
- h. Prepare a subtext for the song including who is singing, to whom are you singing, where are you, what happened directly before you started singing this song. See handout on Subtext. ☐
- i. Think about the overall mood that you want to convey. A song might be a 'happy' song but there are many kinds of happiness, i.e. carefree, delirious, overjoyed, contented, amused, charmed. (List of emotions.) ☐
- j. Try saying the song in rhythm while you are keeping time. ☐
- k. Sing the song with the music in your own words. ☐

2. Sing the song a capella (without music) to establish for yourself the groove and the tempo you want to sing in. ☐

3. Now sing the melody of the song without the lyric and convey the emotions with just the sound of your voice. Consider how you use tone and dynamics to get your meaning across. When is vibrato appropriate and when do you want to use a straight tone? Where do you want to vary the melody? Usually just small changes in the melody can add to the interest. You don't need to reinvent the entire song. Make written notes for yourself. ☐
4. Now sing the song with the lyric with all your intention and planning that has come before. Try to sing in complete sentences and leave space between thoughts. Breathing in the appropriate places will start to become evident now. When do you need big breaths, when just small breathes? Where is it natural to breath? If you don't take a breath when you are saying a line you probably won't want one when you are singing the line either. ☐
5. Now you are ready to begin the arrangement for your song that will include deciding on the instrumentation, the introduction, the tempo and feel and the form.
6. See Creating an Arrangement.