

## Hit Songs Deconstructed Sample Assignments

(To view tutorials, [click here](#))

### Hit Songs Deconstructed Reports and SongLab

The Hit Songs Deconstructed Reports are widely used in music theory, songwriting, and production classes, and are commonly paired with SongLab, HSD's interactive song analysis tools which allow students to analyze songs using the same methodology found in the reports.

- The reports provide a framework to study today's most successful songs.
- SongLab provide a framework to reinforce the concepts covered through practical application.

**Note, you and your students must create and then log into your profile located in the top navigation to use SongLab. Each account is private.**

#### Sample Assignments:

Select one report to study throughout the semester or focus on the same section across multiple reports (for example, structure, melody, or lyrics).

As each topic is covered in the report(s) being studied in class, ask students to analyze another song using SongLab's interactive tools.

## Hook Arrangement Analysis

Using the SongLab Hook Arrangement Table, ask students to list all the hooks in a song, noting where they appear and how often they occur.

Discussion:

- What role does each hook play in driving listener engagement?
- Which hook functions as the primary hook, and how do supporting hooks reinforce it?
- How does hook placement and repetition impact memorability and replay value?
- What techniques define each hook (melody, lyric, rhythm, timbre)?
- What does the hook arrangement do for the listener within the first 15–30 seconds?
- How does repetition frequency affect listener retention without causing fatigue?

## Melodic Structure Analysis

Using the SongLab Vocal Melody Structure Table, ask students to detail the main melodic structure, sub-structures, syllable count, and end-of-line rhyme schemes for the song or song section.

Discussion:

- How does the melodic structure balance repetition and contrast within and across sections?
- How do sub-structures enhance engagement and memorability?
- Where are melodic hooks introduced or reinforced?
- How does the melodic structure interact with syllabic and end-of-line rhyme scheme structures?

## **Narrative Structure and Lyricism Analysis**

Using the SongLab Narrative and Lyricism Table, ask students to analyze a song or song section's narrative structure, including communication direction and tone, lyricism style, action, imagery, detail devices, emotion, and whether the lyricism is common, poetic, or clever.

Discussion:

- How do the narrative and lyricism choices support clarity and emotional impact?
- How effectively does the communication direction and tone serve the storyline?
- How do imagery, action, and detail devices reinforce the song's core message?
- Does the song feature an effective combination of showing and telling?
- Where does the lyricism benefit from being common versus clever?
- How does the narrative progress across sections?

## **Rhyme Scheme Analysis**

Ask students to use the SongLab Rhyme and L.C.A. Table to analyze a specific song section's rhyme scheme, highlighting internal rhymes, end-of-line rhymes, alliteration, and lyrical connection devices.

Discussion:

- What distinct rhyme and lyrical connection patterns are present?
- How do internal and end-of-line rhymes accentuate key lyrics and hooks?
- How do alliteration and other connection devices strengthen flow and cohesion?
- How does melody reinforce rhyme impact?

## **Genre and Influences Analysis**

Using the SongLab Genre and Influences Fusion Table, ask students to list all the genres and influences in the song, detailing where they appear and their prominence.

Discussion:

- What elements put each genre or influence into effect (vocal qualities, lyrical qualities, instruments, rhythmic patterns)?
- Where do these genre and influence cues appear, and how prominent are they?
- How do these elements align with marketplace trends and the artist's signature sounds?
  - Use HSD's compositional analytics to research trends and the artists signature characteristics.

## **Original Song Assessment:**

Have students assess one of their original songs for strengths and weaknesses using Hit Songs Deconstructed tools/tables.

Discussion:

- Students should present the changes they would make to the song and explain why.

## Compositional Analytics

Each week, as new songs enter the Billboard Hot 100 Top 10, the Hit Songs Deconstructed team manually breaks them down, providing real-time intelligence on how today's most successful songs are evolving and what's driving them at the compositional level over time.

Our compositional analytics database allows you to explore trends across primary genres, sub-genres and influences, instrumentation, lead vocals, lyrics, song structure, and more.

### Good to know:

- Trends are visualized using line graphs, bar graphs, and tables
- Each data point links to a list of the corresponding songs. From there you can access a one-page deconstruction for each song.

### Filters include:

- Date Range by Quarter or Year
- Peak Chart Position
- Staying Power (Weeks in the Top 10)
- Primary Genres
- Specific Songwriters, Artists, Producers and Labels
- And more

### Sample Assignments:

#### Current Trend Analysis

Using the analytics database, ask students to research which compositional, lyrical and production characteristics are trending among current hits.

#### Discussion:

- What is trending in the Hot 100 top 10?
- How have trends evolved over the past decade?

### **Staying Power Analysis**

Using the analytics database, ask students to identify which qualities are more common among songs that remain in the Billboard Hot 100 Top 10 for 10 weeks or more.

Discussion:

- What differentiates songs that stay in in the Top 10 for 10 weeks or longer?

### **Modernizing a Song**

Using the current trends identified, ask students to modernize an older song.

Discussion:

- Students should explain their creative choices.

### **Artist Trend Analysis**

Using the analytics database, ask students to research key compositional, lyrical and production characteristics of a particular artist over time.

Discussion:

- How has the artist's sound evolved over time?
- How do they align with current trends, and how do they go against them to balance familiarity with originality?

### **Artist-Focused Songwriting Project**

Using the above insights and an HSD Logic project as a starting point, ask students to write a song with the artist in mind.

Discussion:

- Students should explain their creative choices.

## Logic Project Library

Every Hit Song Deconstructed Report includes a downloadable Logic project.

Using empty MIDI regions to visualize the instrumental arrangement, energy, vocal melody and production, structure, select techniques, and more, these projects provide a clear visual roadmap for understanding how today's hits were effectively arranged.

Logic projects can be used in **conjunction with the report as an audio/visual aid**, or for assignments.

### Sample Assignments:

- Replace the empty regions with midi or audio
- Write a soundalike using a Logic project template as a guide
- Write a new song using the project as a template
- Create their own Logic project for a song detailing the arrangement, vocal production, and other elements, and then compare it to the existing HSD project

## **HITTRAXX, A Library of Hit Song Technique Case Studies**

HITTRAXX is Hit Songs Deconstructed's searchable technique database, featuring more than 250 case studies of songwriting and production techniques drawn from Hot 100 top 10 hits.

### **This searchable technique library can be used:**

- To quickly find examples of techniques from current hit songs to reference in class
- In conjunction with SongLab for song analysis and technique-focused assignments

### **Sample Assignments:**

#### **Cross-Genre Technique Comparison**

Select three different songs from different genres that use the same technique in HITTRAXX and ask students to compare and contrast how the technique is executed in each song.

Discussion:

- How does each genre shape the execution of the same technique?

#### **Technique Study and Application**

Select a technique category to study in HITTRAXX. Ask students to study three technique case studies from that technique category. Ask them to write an original song or song section that incorporates that technique.

Pre-Writing Discussion

- What are the core characteristics that make the technique recognizable?
- What problem does this technique solve in a song?

Post-Writing

- Does the technique function as intended in your song?

- Does your song clearly demonstrate the defining characteristics of the technique category?

**Technique categories include:**

- Hook Techniques
- Intro Techniques
- Outro Techniques
- Duet/Group Lead Vocal Structure Techniques
- A.P.M. (Audience Participation Moments) Techniques
- Energy Techniques
- S.I.A. (Section Impact Accentuators) Techniques
- Genre and Influence Fusion Techniques
- Chorus Vocal Structure Techniques
- "D" (Departure) Section Techniques
- Prosody
- Lyric Techniques
- Motif & Hook Foreshadowing Techniques
- Cross-Section Melodic Arrangement Techniques
- Song Section Development Techniques
- Vocal Production
- Turnaround Techniques

**Good to know:**

- 250+ highly effective techniques drawn from Hot 100 Top 10 hits.
- New techniques are published every other Tuesday
- Each technique includes a clear explanation of the technique, visuals, and audio clips
- Techniques can be saved for quick access

## Reference Track Search

The Reference Track Search allows you to mix and match 200+ compositional filters to find top 10 songs with very specific compositional characteristics.

It's a powerful tool for quickly finding hit songs from the past decade to reference in class with just a few clicks.

### Good to know:

- Songs are added weekly as they enter the Billboard Hot 100 Top 10
- Every song has its own dedicated page featuring key compositional characteristics, lyrics, Spotify links, the official video, and more.

### Sample Assignments:

#### Comparative Analysis

Ask students to search for Top 10 hits that share three prominent qualities with their original song.

Discussion:

- How were those qualities featured in the songs, and what new ideas did this exercise spark for their own composition?

#### Studio Reference Selection

Ask students to search for reference tracks to bring into the studio for a song they are working on.

Discussion:

- How do these tracks inform arrangement, production choices, or songwriting direction?

## **Stylistic Consistency Across Diverse Songs**

Ask students to find stylistically diverse songs that share a similar set of characteristics, such as a classic disco influence across songs from the past decade (i.e. “Hold Me Closer,” “Treasure,” and “Flowers”).

Discussion:

- How are these characteristics put into effect in each song, and what roles do they play