

**“The Bridge of Our Lives”:
The Anthem Bridge as the Emotional Climax in Modern Pop**

Hannah Laws
University of Arkansas



Please scan for supplementary materials and to add a song with an Anthem Bridge to the Google Sheet!

Selected Examples

	Generic Bridge	Anthem Bridge
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to final chorus • Creation of tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Climax • Narrative focal or turning point • Invites audience participation
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed before final chorus and after familiar material • Contrast from familiar material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible melody • Strong hook • Emotional energy gain • Emphasis on lyrics

Figure 1: Function and characteristics of a generic bridge and an anthem bridge.

“drivers license,” Anthem Bridge, 2:24
Red lights, stop signs I still see your face in the white cars, front yards Can't drive past the places we used to go to 'Cause I still f*****' love you, babe (ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh) ← narrative focal point Sidewalks we crossed I still hear your voice in the traffic, we're laughing Over all the noise God, I'm so blue, know we're through But I still f*****' love you, babe (ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh)

Figure 2: Lyrics of the bridge in “drivers license” by Olivia Rodrigo.

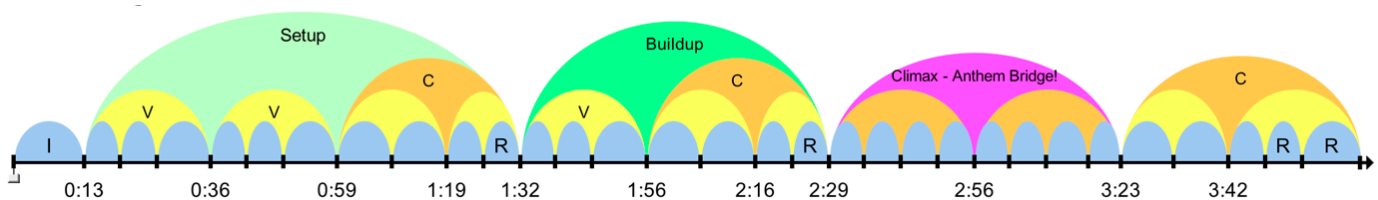


Figure 3: Form diagram depicting the larger setup, buildup, and climax functions at work in “drivers license” by Olivia Rodrigo.

“Keep Driving,” Anthem Bridge, 1:23	
<u>Anthem Bridge</u>	
Passports in footwells	← introduction of electric guitar, low synth
Kiss her and don't tells	
Wine glass, puff pass, tea with cyborgs	
Riot America, science and edibles	
Life hacks going viral in the bathroom	
<u>Continued Energy Build</u>	
Cocaine, side boob	← introduction of high synth, background vocals
Choke her with a sea view	
Toothache, bad move	
Just act normal	
Moka pot Monday, it's all good	
Hey, you	
Should we just keep driving?	

Figure 4: Lyrics and the textural build of the bridge in “Keep Driving” by Harry Styles.

	“drivers license”	“Keep Driving”
Bridge Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textural & emotional climax • Slow lyrical delivery • Repeated lyrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textural & emotional climax • Build within the bridge, more tension created • Fast lyrical delivery • No repeated lyrics
Song Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-beat sonic preparation for bridge • Song contains a weak chorus/formally ambiguous • Subdued final chorus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-beat sonic preparation for bridge • Song contains a weak chorus/formally ambiguous • No full final chorus, just repeated refrain

Figure 5: Characteristics of the bridge and overall song characteristics of “drivers license” in comparison to “Keep Driving,” both of which contain anthem bridges.

“Death by a Thousand Cuts”, Anthem Bridge, 1:53	
My heart, my hips, my body, my love	
Trying to find a part of me that you didn't touch	
Gave up on me like I was a bad drug	← new narrative information
Now I'm searching for signs in a haunted club	
Our songs, our films, united we stand	
Our country, guess it was a lawless land	
Quiet my fears with the touch of your hand	
Paper cut stings from our paper-thin plans	
My time, my wine, my spirit, my trust	
Trying to find a part of me you didn't take up	
Gave you too much but it wasn't enough	← new narrative information
But I'll be all right, it's just a thousand cuts	

Figure 6: Lyrics and significant narrative information revealed in the bridge of “Death by a Thousand Cuts” by Taylor Swift.

“Red Wine Supernova,” Anthem Bridge, 2:22	
Well, back at my house	
I've got a California king	
Okay, maybe it's a twin bed	
And some roommates (don't worry, we're cool)	
I heard you like magic	
I've got a wand and a rabbit	← sexually charged,
So baby, let's get freaky, get kinky	← peak excitement
Let's make this bed get squeaky	

Figure 7: Lyrics and the peak of sexual excitement in the cheer-like bridge in “Red Wine Supernova” by Chappell Roan.