Thanksgiving Day Songwriter's Blueprint

1. Basics of the song lyrics. Answer these:

Coming home for Thanksgiving and realizing that the imperfect, loud, messy family gathering means more than it used to. The holiday is not special because everything goes perfectly. It is special because the people you love are still together.

Emotion:

Warm, nostalgic, grateful, emotional, bittersweet and ultimately uplifting.

Central Point/Core Idea (What's song about?)

The singer returns home after being away and experiences the familiar chaos of Thanksgiving with a different perspective this time. The crowded kitchen, family arguments, burnt food, old stories, kids running around, and emotional moments are all imperfect, but the singer realizes those imperfections are part of what makes being together for Thanksgiving meaningful.

What is the key emotion evoked?

Gratitude mixed with nostalgia. The singer recognizes how valuable these ordinary family moments are because time is moving quickly and everyone has been through difficult things.

Unique because of:

The song does not present Thanksgiving as a perfect holiday-card celebration. It embraces the burnt turkey, loud relatives, old disagreements, tears, repeated stories, and general chaos as the very things that make the day feel real and worth appreciating.

Singer style/mood/attitude:

Conversational, reflective, affectionate, slightly humorous, sentimental and grateful. The singer observes the family chaos with maturity instead of frustration and gradually realizes how much being home means.

Backing vocals:

Echo or response vocals on the repeated phrase "Thanksgiving Day" in the choruses reinforce the title and communal family feeling. The repeated title also gives the chorus a natural singalong quality.

What's the juicy part that everybody can relate to?

Family holidays are rarely perfect. People show up late, food gets burnt, relatives repeat the same stories, old tensions re-appear, kids run around everywhere making a mess, and somebody usually gets emotional. Yet when you look around the table and realize everyone is still there, those imperfect moments can suddenly feel incredibly important.

2. Point of view. Answer these:

Who is talking?

A person returning home to spend Thanksgiving with their family after being away for a significant period of time.

What is their character avatar?

An adult family member who has spent enough time away from home to see the family gathering differently this year. They have experienced a difficult or lengthy road back since the last Thanksgiving and now appreciate the familiar family chaos more deeply.

What pronoun?

I

Who are they talking to?

Primarily their family and home collectively, while also sharing the experience directly with the listener.

Their character avatar:

A familiar, imperfect family made up of Mama, uncles, children and other relatives gathered together for Thanksgiving.

What pronoun?

You, we, and our

Why are they talking to them?

Because returning home causes the singer to recognize how much these people and traditions matter. The singer wants to express that despite arguments, imperfections, difficult years, and the passage of time, being together still feels right.

3. What is the musical/lyric hook that encapsulates the relatable premise? Write the lyric and sing the melody. The only part of the song you want to write out of pure inspiration is this step.

What is the Hook?

Thanksgiving Day

The central hook is reinforced through repeated uses of - Thanksgiving Day

What is the Melody?

Thanksgiving Day is the repeated melodic focal point and title phrase of the chorus.

4a. Where will the hook be in the chorus? Beginning? Middle? End?

The hook appears throughout the chorus rather than only once. "Thanksgiving Day" first arrives near the beginning, then returns repeatedly after each new chorus idea and again at the end.

Main Idea:

The singer has found their way back home and realizes that the imperfect family celebration is exactly where they want to be on Thanksgiving Day.

Details (imagery/senses):

Being a little late, the food being a little burnt, the family being loud, sharing memories with every bite, and being together despite nothing going exactly as planned.

Sensory/metaphor:

"Memories with every bite" connects the physical experience of eating Thanksgiving dinner with memories, history, family and emotion.

4b. What will comprise the remainder of the chorus?

The chorus expands the hook by listing the imperfections of the holiday and then turning those imperfections into something positive.

The singer admits that Thanksgiving is: A little late, a little burnt, a little loud

But follows that with the emotional realization: But it's all ours now

The chorus then connects food with memory through "Memories with every bite" and finishes with the larger message that even if nothing usually goes according to plan, everything feels right today because the family is still together.

5. What will I say in the 1st verse that will set up my chorus? (Only one main thought idea per section so you don't confuse listener with too much). You need to know the What and Why and When And How and Where and Who. Tell the Story in the verses. Use human senses - what can the character and listener see, hear, touch, taste and smell? Use details in verses - what is the central character wearing? Who else is in the song? What are other characters doing, wearing, saying, etc.?

Main Idea:

The singer walks back into the familiar Thanksgiving chaos at home and immediately realizes that everything looks and sounds almost exactly as they remember it, but being back now affects them differently.

Details (imagery/senses):

A crowded kitchen. People talking too loudly. Mama yelling something that nobody can hear. Turkey burning. Smoke hanging in the air. Football playing on the television. Laughter everywhere. The singer stopping in the doorway and taking everything all in. The same chaos and love they remember from before.

Sensory/metaphor:

The verse relies heavily on sight, sound, and smell.

Sight: A crowded kitchen, smoke in the air, football on the television, and the singer standing in the doorway.

Sound: People talking loudly, Mama yelling, the television, and laughter.

Smell: The turkey burning and smoke hanging in the air.

The emotional image is the singer pausing in the doorway. That physical pause represents the moment they realize that although the family has not changed much, their own perspective has.

6. What will I say in the pre-chorus (if there is one) that will set up my chorus?

Main Idea:

The singer acknowledges how difficult the road back home has been and how previous family tensions once bothered them, but those things no longer feel as important. Instead of keeping their distance, they move closer to the family they love today.

Details (imagery/senses):

The long road back home. Remembering things family members said the previous year. Grabbing a beer. Physically moving closer to the family. Trying not to cry. Feeling as though they never really left.

Sensory/metaphor:

The "long road getting back here" works both literally and emotionally. It can represent the physical journey home as well as everything the singer has experienced since leaving.

Grabbing a beer and moving closer to the family creates a simple physical action that shows the emotional change. Instead of withdrawing because of old disagreements, the singer chooses connection.

7. What will I say in the 2nd verse that will further the story and set up and keep moving the chorus along? It has to be different than verse 1 – don't say the same thing or idea again. (Only one main thought idea per section so you don't confuse listener with too much).

Main Idea:

Moves beyond simply noticing the familiar Thanksgiving chaos and reveals why this particular gathering matters so much. The singer looks at the family and becomes aware of aging, passing time, shared struggles, and the fact that everyone is still together right now.

Details (imagery/senses):

Uncles repeating stories they have told many times before. Kids running in circles without slowing down. Someone crying in the hallway. That person eventually laughing it off and letting the problem go. The singer looking around the table. Lines appearing on family members' faces.

The realization that every year seems to move faster. The acknowledgement that everyone has gone through difficult experiences. Everyone still sitting together at the same table.

Sensory/metaphor:

"The clock moves too fast" represents the singer's growing awareness of time and aging. "Lines on every face" gives the passage of time a visible physical detail.

"We've all been through hell, and gotten back somehow" turns the family's individual struggles into a shared journey of survival.

The image of everyone "still sitting here" becomes emotionally important because the singer understands that these gatherings cannot be taken for granted forever.

8. If the bridge has lyrics, what will be said there? Must fit into relatable premise but offer a different twist/perspective but still make sense. The most emotional lyrics tend to come in the bridge where the story is being resolved, or where you're adding an extra twist in the tale to heighten the emotion. There are three things a bridge can do:

1) Change time
2 Change perspective
3) Go universal/philosophical

None

9. If there is a 3rd verse or ending, what will be said there? Is it really needed?

None

10. Ending / Final Chorus

Main Idea:

The final chorus repeats the central realization but adds a slightly stronger attitude of acceptance. Instead of merely observing that nothing goes their way, the singer essentially dismisses the imperfections and chooses to appreciate the moment anyway.

Details (imagery/senses):

The same recurring images remain. The final "So what" adds an emotional shift. The singer is no longer concerned with whether the holiday is perfect.

11. Final Checklist – answer these questions:

DID YOU TELL THE WHOLE STORY?

Yes.

Verse 1 establishes the return home and introduces the familiar Thanksgiving environment.

The pre-chorus reveals that the singer has been away, has experienced a difficult road back, and previously carried tension about things the family said.

The chorus delivers the main realization that the imperfect celebration still feels right because the singer is home.

Verse 2 deepens the story by showing aging, passing time, family struggles, and the realization that everyone being together cannot be taken for granted.

The final chorus shifts toward acceptance, and the outro states the central lesson directly.

DID YOU INVITE THE LISTENER IN?

Yes.

The song uses highly recognizable Thanksgiving details such as crowded kitchens, burnt turkey, football, loud relatives, repeated stories, children running around, family tension, tears, laughter, food and gathering around the table.

Even listeners whose families are different can recognize the larger experience of returning home and realizing that imperfect family moments become more meaningful with time.

DID YOU FULFILL EXPECTATIONS?

Yes.

The opening establishes a chaotic family Thanksgiving and creates the expectation that the singer will reveal how they feel about returning to it.

The chorus fulfills that expectation by explaining that despite everything being imperfect, being home feels right.

Verse 2 then gives the deeper reason why it feels right. Time is passing, everyone has struggled, people are getting older, and the family is still together.

The outro provides a clear resolution: Thanksgiving's never perfect. But that’s why it matters.

DID YOU SAY WHAT YOU MEANT TO SAY?

Yes.

The song consistently communicates that Thanksgiving does not need to be perfect to be meaningful. The singer's emotional journey is not about fixing the family or creating an ideal holiday. It is about recognizing the value of the people, traditions, memories, and imperfections that are already there.

DOES THE SONG FEEL COMPLETE?

Yes.

The song has a clear emotional progression: Returning home. Recognizing the familiar chaos. Letting go of old tension. Feeling grateful to be back. Recognizing that time is passing. Appreciating that everyone is still together. Accepting the imperfections. Ending with gratitude for Thanksgiving Day. The outro gives the song a concise final resolution by directly connecting imperfection with meaning.