The Gift Song Interview

Start with the story

Song for: _____ Occasion: _____ Date: _____

Answer from your own memory, or quietly ask family members and friends. You won't use every answer; you're looking for the handful of details that will make listeners smile, laugh, or reach for a tissue.

Question	Notes
1. Who is the song for, and what is the occasion?	
2. What do people call them? (nicknames, family names)	
3. Where are they from? Important places in their life?	
4. What are they known for? (a talent, a hobby, a famous dish)	
5. What do they always say? (a favorite phrase or saying)	
6. What makes everyone laugh about them? (kindly)	
7. A story everyone in the family knows	
8. For couples: How did they meet?	
9. What music did they love when they were young?	
10. What do you most want them to know?	

Ask several people the same questions. A spouse, a sibling, and a grandchild will each remember different details, and the best songs often combine them.

Choose the Details That Sing

From interview notes to a song

Look over your notes and circle the five or six details that are most specific, most vivid, and most beloved. The best details are:

Specific	“a yellow dress at the county dance,” not “a beautiful dress”
Visual	something listeners can picture
Shared	something most of the audience will recognize
Affectionate	details that celebrate rather than embarrass

My Best Details

Detail	Where it could go (verse, chorus, bridge)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

My Hook

Usually the person’s name plus the occasion or a defining detail, such as “Happy Birthday, Dorothy” or “Forty Years on Juniper Lane.”

The Four Tests

Before you finalize the song, tick each test it passes.

☐	**Kindness**	Will the person laugh or smile, or wince? Good humor laughs with someone, not at them.
☐	**Privacy**	Does the song reveal anything they might prefer to keep private: health, family conflicts, money, or secrets?
☐	**Audience**	Who will hear it? Match the content to the widest audience that might hear it.
☐	**Sharing**	If posted online, what personal information does it reveal? Consider first names only, or share a private link.

> **Test the name first.** Before creating the final version, generate a short test to hear how the name is sung. If it’s wrong, spell it the way it sounds, such as “Mar-REE-uh.”