

Music Analysis Tool

Using Music as a Primary Source
(Read the guide in its entirety *before* listening to the music.)

1. Describing the Music using Historical Context:

- Title: _____
- Date Composed/Recorded: _____
- Events Happening in the World/Country/Region at the Time: _____

- Recording Company and Location: _____
- Composer: _____
- Background of the Composer: (position, nationality, gender, occupation, social class, religion, ethnicity, etc.)

2. What did you hear? (First time played)

- Type of Music (folk, classical, blues, jazz, rock, etc.): _____
- Instruments (brass, woodwinds, strings, percussion): _____

- Vocals: Is there a vocalist in the piece? _____ What language/dialect is being sung? _____
- Describe the music and/or the voice. Describe the artist(s) approach to the music.

3. Analyzing the Music: (Second time played)

- Compositional and Performance Style: Use musical terms to analyze the music you just described. (beat, call and response, dynamics, harmony, improvisation, melody, register, rhythm, tempo, texture, timbre, etc.) The “Jazz Glossary” created by The Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University defines many of these terms. <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/jazzglossary/archives.html>.

| Musical Term | Analysis (How is it used in the music? Why?) |
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- Song Lyrics: Write down the most important words of the song. How do they help tell the song's story?

| Words/Phrase | Analysis (What does the word mean? Why is it used?) |
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- Note anything the music informs the observer about life in the world/nation/region at the time it was created.
- Video Performance (if available): Describe the performance (wardrobe, location, choreography, staging, interaction between the performers and the audience, depiction of the music, etc.) of the piece. How does the performance of the piece help to further the message of the song?

4. Interpreting the Music: (Based on the description and the analysis of the piece.)

- Motivation/Purpose: What is the message of the piece? What is the composer trying to do? Explain using specific references from the music.
- Audience: Based on your description and analysis of the piece, who was the intended audience for the music? Explain.
- Impact/Effectiveness: Is the composer's message effectively presented in the music? What impact would it have on the intended audience? How did it make you feel? Explain with specific references to the music and its historic context.

5. Lasting Impression: What is the most memorable or powerful aspect of this piece? Explain.

Student Discussion Questions

1. What is the title of the piece? Who was the composer? Provide some information on his/her background.
2. When was it written? What historical events were occurring at the time?
3. Can you explain what is happening in the music?
4. How will you remember this piece so you can identify it when you hear it again?
5. What was the motivation of the composer to write the piece? Does the music effectively support the composer's message? (Include relevant and specific detail from the historical context in your answer.)
6. What questions would you ask of this composer in an interview?
7. Do you agree with the message of the piece? Cite specific information to support your view.
8. Imagine yourself to be a music critic at the time the piece was first performed. How would you rate the piece? Why?