

## Using Music as a Primary Source

### Describe:

- Background of piece- Title, composer and composer's background, date, events happening in the country/region at the time, venue
- What did you hear? How would you describe the music?
  - Is it an instrumental piece? What instruments (brass, woodwinds, string, percussion) are being used?
  - Is there a voice in this piece? What language/dialect is being sung?

### Analyze:

- Compositional and Performance Style: Use musical terms to analyze the music you just described (beat, instrumentation, crescendo, dissonance, foreground, background, melody, percussion, phrasing, range, register, rhythm, tempo, texture, timbre, vibrato, vocals, etc.)
- The words and syntax of the song lyrics.
- Do you sense any themes/connections in the music?

### Interpret:

- Motivation of the composer
- Purpose/intentions of the piece
- Impact on the audience
- How did it make you feel?
- Determine what the composer is trying to do.
- What is the music doing?

# GLOSSARY

**accent:** To emphasize a beat or series of beats.

**Afro-Cuban jazz:** A clave-based, mostly non-vocal music that integrates modern jazz practice and style with the rhythmic elements of Cuban folkloric music.

**arrangement:** The organization of a musical work for a given ensemble; determines which instruments play when, what harmonies and what rhythmic groove will be used, and where improvisation occurs.

**arranger:** Someone who creates arrangements for musical ensembles.

**bar:** A musical unit consisting of a fixed number of beats—also known as a measure.

**beat:** The basic pulse of a piece of music; the unit by which musical time is measured.

**bebop:** A style of music developed by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and others in the early 1940s and characterized by challenging harmonies and heavily syncopated rhythms that demanded a new standard for instrumental virtuosity and impacted every subsequent style of jazz.

**bent note:** A note that is seamlessly raised or lowered generally a half step away from the diatonic note; also known as a blue note.

**big band:** A style of orchestral jazz that surfaced in the 1920s and blossomed as popular music during the Swing Era (1935–50). Also: any ensemble that played this type music (i.e., a band consisting of a brass, woodwind, and rhythm section that played carefully orchestrated arrangements).

**blues:** An African-American music, developed in the South during the mid-1800s, that became the foundation of most American popular music.

**blues form:** A harmonic progression that typically consists of 12 measures, divided into three sections of four measures each. Often, the first section is a call or question, the second section repeats the question, and the third section resolves the question. The most basic blues form uses just three chords, though there are numerous variations.

**bossa nova:** A musical style developed in the 1960s that combines elements of cool jazz with Brazilian music and features complex harmonies, a steady straight-eighth-note groove, and sensual melodies.

**brass:** A family of musical instruments that includes trumpets, trombones, tubas, and French horns.

**break:** An established pause in the form of a tune during which an improvised phrase is usually played.

**call and response:** A musical conversation in which instrumentalists and/or vocalists answer one another.

**chord:** Three or more notes played at the same time, creating one sound. The harmonic structure of most songs is composed of a progression of different chords, on which soloists improvise.

**chorus:** A song form played to completion. When a musician solos, he or she may improvise several choruses in succession.

**collective improvisation:** Improvisation by two or more musicians at the same time; also known as polyphonic improvisation. See **improvisation**.

**composer:** The creator of a musical composition. See **composition**.

**composition:** A musical idea, generally including melody, rhythm, and harmonic structure, created by a composer.

**cool:** A style of playing characterized by spare lyricism and a relaxed demeanor. First inspired by the understated style of saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer in the 1920s, cool jazz became widespread in the early 1950s.

**cornet:** A brass instrument very similar to the trumpet but possessing a darker sound.

**crescendo:** A gradual increase in volume.

**dissonance:** A harsh, disagreeable combination of sounds that can suggest unresolved tension.

**dynamics:** The variation and contrast of loudness and softness in a piece of music.

**ensemble:** A group of more than two musicians.

**free jazz:** A style of music pioneered by Ornette Coleman in the late 1950s that eschewed Western harmony and rhythm in favor of greater freedom of self-expression.

**front line:** Collectively, the primary melody instruments in a New Orleans band, namely the trumpet, the trombone, and the clarinet.

**groove:** A musical pattern derived from the interaction of repeated rhythms.


**hard bop:** A style of jazz characterized by intense, driving rhythms and blues-based melodies with a bebop sensibility.

**harmonic structure:** The pattern of chords for a song.

**harmony:** The chords supporting a melody.

**head:** The melody statement of a jazz piece.

**horn section:** A grouping of musical instruments in a band or orchestra that generally includes saxophones, trumpets, and trombones.



**improvisation:** The impromptu creation of new melodies to fit the structure of a song.

**key:** The central group of notes around which a piece of music revolves.

**lyrical:** Possessing a poetic and super-melodic quality.

**melody:** A succession of notes that form the primary musical statement of a song or composition.

**minstrel show:** A variety act of song, dance, comedy, and theater popular in the 19th century and performed largely by white actors in blackface.

**modal jazz:** A style of jazz based on Greek scales known as modes rather than on the chord changes standard to most jazz.

**orchestrate:** To arrange music in a form that facilitates various instruments playing together.

**ostinato:** A musical phrase that is repeated over and over, generally by the bass.

**percussion:** A family of instruments generally played by striking with hands, sticks, or mallets.

**phrasing:** The grouping of notes into musical statements.

**polyphony:** The sound or act of playing two or more melodies at the same time.

**polyrhythm:** Contrasting rhythms played simultaneously.

**ragtime:** A musical precursor of jazz, generally played on the piano, that appeared in the first years of the 20th century and that combined European classical technique with syncopated rhythms, which were said to “rag” the time.

**register:** The range of a voice or musical instrument (generally: high, medium, or low).

**rhythm:** The organized motion of sounds and rests; the patterned repetition of a beat or accent that drives a musical piece forward.

**rhythm section:** A grouping of instruments that provide the rhythmic and harmonic structure in band or orchestra; usually the drums, bass, and piano.

**riff:** A short, repeated musical phrase used as a background for a soloist or to add drama to a musical climax.

**scale:** An ascending or descending progression of related notes.

**scat:** A vocal technique that uses nonsense syllables to improvise on a melody.

**score:** A written map of a piece of music that is created by the composer and that dictates the notes to be played by each instrument.

**section:** A subdivision of a musical composition. Also: a group of instruments in the same family (e.g., brass or woodwind) that form a discrete part of a band or orchestra.

**shuffle:** A rhythmic style that formed the basis of the blues and early jazz and informed the feeling of swing.

**solo:** The act or result of a single musician improvising, usually within the structure of an existing song.

**staccato:** A playing or singing style characterized by crisp, short notes.

**stride:** A style of playing piano in which the left hand covers wide distances, playing the bass line, harmony, and rhythm at the same time, while the right hand plays melodies and intricate improvisations.

**swing:** The basic rhythmic attitude of jazz; based on the shuffle rhythm. Also: a style of jazz that appeared during the 1930s and featured big bands playing complex arrangements.

**syncopation:** The act of placing a rhythmic accent on an unexpected beat.

**tempo:** The speed at which a piece of music is played.

**texture:** The overall sensory effect created by the combined sounds of musical instruments and harmonies.

**theme:** The central message or melody of a composition, usually a musical phrase or idea.

**timbre:** The tonal quality of a voice or instrument (e.g., raspy, rough, smooth, clear, etc.).

**time signature:** A numeric symbol, expressed as a fraction, at the beginning of a written composition; describes the number of beats per measure and the rhythmic value of each note.

**vibrato:** A slight, often rapid fluctuation of pitch that enriches or dramatizes a note.

**woodwind:** A family of musical instruments that includes saxophones, clarinets, flutes, oboes, and bassoons.