

Music

Analysing music

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When analysing music, you will identify each section of a piece and talk about what the performing media (instruments – including vocals) are doing within each section.

Instructions

1. Draw boxes to identify each section or change in the music.
2. Label each section using letters.
3. Within each box, write one or two points that help identify each section.

intro	A	B	C
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• piano = harmony• drums = rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strings = melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• new melody by brass• drums new rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strings and brass = new melody

Words like verse, chorus, bridge and instrumental are only used when labelling parts of a song, not in pieces of music without words.

Instrumental analysis tips

- Sometimes in instrumental music, there is an introduction.
- The first time a melody is presented, this section is called A. If the melody is different in the next section, this would be called B.
- If the second section has the same melody, but it is played slightly differently (for example, by a different instrument, with the addition of other instruments or at a different tempo), then this would be labelled A1. If this happened again, it would be labelled A2 and so forth.
- Any *new* melody that appears would be given a new letter.
- If a section returns, unchanged, it would be given its original letter. For example, intro, A, B, A, C, A.

intro	A	B	A1	A2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• piano = harmony• drums = rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strings = melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• new melody by brass• drums new rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strings and brass = melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• strings and brass = melody• oboe + flute added to harmony

- The names of sections can then be used as subheadings for points. An example of this is shown below.

intro	A	B	A1	A2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> piano = harmony drums = rhythm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strings = melody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new melody by brass drums new rhythm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strings and brass = melody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strings and brass = melody oboe + flute added to harmony

intro - piano harmony = *forte* semibreve chords

- drums play syncopated ostinato 

- etc.

A - melody by high strings = *piano*, long note values, ascending stepwise

- drum ostinato continues

- etc.

B - new melody introduced by brass = *forte*, short note values, first three notes of phrase repeated

- drums stop

- etc.

Hot tip number 1

Remember to:

- identify and write about the concepts of music in each section.
- write down the most obvious musical observations.

When analysing the concepts of music, remember to always:

- provide a clearly structured answer. Use subheadings if needed
- justify musical observations (the 'what') with who (the performing media) and when (the section or part of music in which it is heard)
- use correct music terminology, including appropriate Italian terms
- attempt notating the rhythms and label the instrument/voice playing them.

Important terms

Unity

Unity refers to musical events that hold the excerpt of music together and unify it. This can be the use of an ostinato (repeated rhythmic or melodic pattern) or something as simple as unchanging:

- tempo
- time signature
- tonality
- instrument roles
- dynamics level

A theme, rhythm or even a particular instrument that reappears throughout an excerpt but is not consistently present can also create unity.

Contrast

Things that are different or change. Contrast can occur:

- between sections; for example, a different melody, group of instruments or dynamic level or
- between layers of sound; for example, short note values in the harmony and long note values in the melody.

Hot tip number 2

Remember to:

- identify what stays the same (what holds the excerpt together and creates unity)
- identify what changes or is different (to create contrast).

Hot tip number 3

When addressing texture and pitch, remember to:

- identify and discuss the layers of sound
- describe the use of melody, harmony and tonality.

Sound sources

Sound sources is another term for performing media.

Tone Colour

Tone colour refers to quality of sound and adjectives are used to help differentiate the sounds of those instruments. These adjectives are not emotions, colours or words used in pitch, duration or dynamics (or example high, low, sharp, flat, loud, soft, long or short). Tone colour also refers to the *type* of sound production, for example membranophones and idiophones.