

Mastering Musical Masterpieces

Learning objective: To analyse the influence of historical composers and understand how tempo, dynamics, and instrumentation contribute to the mood of a musical composition.

Read each question carefully. Use your knowledge of musical terminology and the lives of historical composers to provide detailed, reasoned answers. Ensure you use musical vocabulary where appropriate.

Max the monkey is currently studying how 18th and 19th-century composers used sound to paint pictures in the mind of the listener. He is fascinated by how a simple motif can be developed into a complex symphony using different instruments and varying dynamics.

Word bank: tempo · dynamics · crescendo · staccato · orchestration · symphony · motif · composition · timbre

1. Explain why a composer might choose to use a sudden 'crescendo' during a fast-paced section of a piece. How does this shift affect the audience's emotional response? (3 marks)

2. Compare and contrast the typical instrumentation of a small chamber ensemble versus a full symphony orchestra. Why would a composer choose one over the other for a specific project? (4 marks)

3. If a piece of music is described as having a 'staccato' rhythm, what does this tell you about how the notes are being played? Describe the effect this has on the overall character of the music. (2 marks)

4. Justify your answer: Does a composer's choice of tempo always dictate the mood of the piece? Use an example to support your reasoning. (3 marks)

5. What might happen if a composer removed all 'dynamics' from their musical score? Explain the impact this would have on the listener's ability to interpret the story within the music. (3 marks)

6. If you were composing a symphony to represent the changing of the seasons, which instruments would you choose to represent 'Winter' and why? Consider the timbre of the instruments in your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a graphic score representation of a storm. Use different lines, shapes, and colours to represent the changing tempo and dynamics of the music.



Extension challenge: Choose a piece of classical music. Write a short critique (150 words) evaluating how the composer uses the orchestra to build tension. You must use at least five terms from the word bank in your critique.