

Year 5 Music Assessment: The Orchestra and Beyond

Learning objective: To identify, classify, and analyse the characteristics of orchestral instruments and their roles within musical compositions.

Read each question carefully. Use your knowledge of instrument families (Strings, Woodwind, Brass, Percussion) to provide detailed, accurate answers. Ensure your explanations use technical musical vocabulary where appropriate.

Max the monkey is currently organising a concert for his friends in the jungle. He is busy categorising instruments by how they produce sound. Pip the caterpillar has noticed that the violin, despite being small, has a very high pitch, while the tuba creates a deep, low rumble that vibrates through the forest floor. Zara the zebra is interested in how the materials—such as brass, wood, or taut animal skin—affect the overall timbre of the music.

Word bank: Pitch · Timbre · Resonance · Vibration · Percussion · Woodwind · Acoustics · Orchestra · Articulation

1. Name the four main instrument families found in a standard Western orchestra and provide one example instrument for each. (4 marks)

2. Explain the difference between 'pitch' and 'timbre'. Use an example to support your answer. (3 marks)

3. Max the monkey wants to play an instrument that uses a reed to create sound. Which family of instruments should he look at, and how does the vibration occur in these instruments? (3 marks)

4. Compare and contrast a snare drum and a xylophone. Consider both how they are played and how they contribute to a musical piece. (4 marks)

5. Justify why a composer might choose to use a brass instrument rather than a string instrument to signal a heroic or powerful moment in a piece of music. (3 marks)

6. Extended Writing: Imagine you are designing a brand-new instrument. Describe what it is made of, how the player creates sound (e.g., blowing, striking, plucking), and which instrument family it would belong to. Explain how its unique design would change the sound it produces. (8 marks)

Draw: Sketch your new instrument from the final question. Label the parts that vibrate and the parts that help amplify the sound.



Extension challenge: Total: /25. Challenge: What might happen to the sound of a string instrument if the strings were made of a different material, such as thick plastic instead of metal or gut? Explain your reasoning using the concept of resonance.