Musical Elements Glossary (GSMIRTH)

Genre

Genre
Genre refers to general types of composition such as string quartet, sonata, symphony or madrigal. It is sometimes used to refer to styles of music (see below), but it is best reserved for more general categories. This is because a single genre might include music written in a number of different styles; a string quartet, for example, could be Neo-Classical or Modernist in style. Genre is used in a slightly different way when talking about pop music – it is often used to refer to different styles such as Britpop or Reggae.

Be careful in exams not to confuse genre and period – Classical is **not** a genre.

Period
Period refers to the rough divisions of musical history into eras such as Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Twentieth Century. However, these periods were invented by historians long after they had finished, so individual composers and pieces do not necessarily fit into them neatly. Pieces of music that sound obviously Classical were written before the 'Classical Period' started and persisted into the Romantic era (e.g. in Brahms and Schubert).

More detailed information on the main historical periods can be found in the *Short History of Music* section of this course book starting on page 47.

Style
Style refers to music written in a smaller time-span, location or by a particular group of composers. One example is the early Classical *Sturm und Drang* style (a stormy and turbulent style found in the Haydn Symphony in the anthology); another example is the early twentieth century *Impressionist* style, which is used to describe the music of French composers such as Ravel and Debussy. Writers sometimes use style to refer to the way music was written in a particular period (e.g. the piece is very Classical in style).

Some key instrumental genres
Orchestral
(see notes under Instrumentation for more details of the orchestra in different eras)
Concerto grosso – usually solo group plus strings & continuo (Baroque, 1680 ono.)

Suite – collection of dance movements often with an overture or prelude, more often for smaller ensemble but occasionally for larger groups (e.g. Bach and Handel)

Solo concerto – solo instrument and orchestra (mostly Classical onwards)

Symphony – large-scale orchestral work for strings plus variety of wind, brass and percussion (Classical onwards)

Overture/tone poem – as symphony but a single-movement work (there are also overtures in the Baroque suite)

Chamber
Trio sonata – continuo plus two melody instruments (Baroque)

Solo sonata – solo instrument plus piano (Classical onwards)

String quartet – two violins, viola and cello (Classical onwards)

Piano trio/quartet – piano, violin and cello plus viola for quartet (Classical onwards)

Wind quintet – flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon (late Classical onwards)

Brass quintet – two trumpets, horn, trombone and tuba (twentieth century)

Keyboard/solo

Solo harpsichord or organ (late Renaissance or Baroque):

- prelude, toccata, canzona – highly embellished with an improvisatory feel
- fugue – a movement with a series of imitative fugal expositions alternating with episodes (Baroque)
- dance-like movements from a partita or suite (Baroque)
- variations on a theme or basic harmonic progression

Solo piano (Classical onwards)

- sonata – three or four movement work
- variations on a theme
- character piece – shorter expressive pieces such as the bagatelle, impromptu, prelude and nocturne (Romantic)

Solo violin/cello/flute suite or partita (mostly Baroque)

Some key vocal genres (A2: see more detailed breakdown with composers on page 69)

Solo songs (accompanied by lute or piano)

- Air – English songs most often accompanied by lute (Renaissance)
- Lied – German songs accompanied by piano (late Classical/Romantic onwards)
- Chanson – French songs accompanied by lute/keyboard (Renaissance) or piano (Romantic onwards)

Secular vocal/choral

- Madrigal – most likely *a cappella* and largely polyphonic in Italian or English (Renaissance/early Baroque)
- Opera (Baroque onwards – always accompanied at least by continuo and usually by orchestra)
    - Baroque – mostly Italian (opera seria) and French with quite dry recitative and more elaborate arias (French have more chorus and dance numbers)
    - Classical – dominated by the more light-hearted opera buffa (Italian) with similar comic genres in France (Opera comique) and Germany (Singspiel) styles.
    - Romantic – Bel canto (virtuosic early Romantic Italian opera) eventually gave way to a wider range of operatic styles. The most famous are Verdi's more forceful and direct way of writing, Puccini's more dramatic and obviously Romantic style, and the works of Wagner, who placed more emphasis on the orchestra and used both motivic devices and chromatic harmony to achieve a distinctive and expressive way of creating operatic drama.

Sacred vocal/choral

- Cantata (late Baroque German) – solo, chorus, chorale with an instrumental accompaniment & continuo; German text; non-liturgical (it is hard to tell between a short extract from Cantata and one from an Oratorio – an oratorio would usually be an acceptable answer in an exam)
- Mass – in Latin; liturgical (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei)
    - Late Renaissance – *a cappella*; refined polyphonic style
    - Baroque – as cantata above but liturgical Latin
    - Classical – choir and Classical orchestra plus soloists
    - Romantic onwards – more operatic or in any C20 style
- Oratorio – as opera above but with sacred, vernacular, non-liturgical texts
- Motet (mostly Renaissance) – Latin, non-liturgical, usually *a cappella* and polyphonic (occasional Romantic and C20 examples are usually *a cappella*; Gabrieli wrote antiphonal motets with instruments as well)
- Anthem – English, in the Renaissance this would usually be *a cappella* (with the exception of the verse anthem below) but from the nineteenth century often accompanied by organ
- Verse anthem – English, accompanied, alternating solo and chorus (late Renaissance)

Structure and form

Identification of sections

In order to identify a musical form, you need first to divide a piece into broad sections that are either the same (e.g. A, A), similar (e.g. A, A') or contrasting (e.g. A, B). Breaks between sections are often articulated by devices such cadences, rests and repeats. One of the most common ways of creating contrast between sections is to have different melodic material, but many pieces rely on other types of contrast instead. It is common, particularly in the Baroque era, for the main contrast between two sections to be their tonal shape (e.g. **I-V** and **V-I**).

Type of musical form used

- **Binary** (||: A :||: B :||) – two sections; often repeated; in tonal music it is common for the A section to modulate from the tonic to the dominant or relative major with the B section returning to the tonic
- **Rounded Binary** (||: A :||: BA' :||) – as binary, but the B section is rounded off with a repeat of the A section modified to return to the tonic
- **Ternary** (ABA) – three sections in which each section is typically closed (i.e. tonic to tonic) but with the B section in a contrasting key
- **Ritornello** (Ritornello 1 Episode 1 Rit. 2 Ep. 2 etc.) – a Baroque form in which contrasting material is interspersed with repeating ritornello sections, that are often abbreviated and in a range of closely related keys
- **Rondo** (ABACADA) – a Classical form in which contrasting sections are interspersed with repeats of the A section, which usually remains in the tonic
- **Sonata form** – a Classical form in which an *exposition* sets out two main groups of ideas (usually in the tonic and a contrasting key) which are repeated in a *recapitulation*, everything is repeated but transposed to the tonic. There is usually a *development* section in between, where the material is reworked in a range of contrasting keys before returning to the dominant in order to prepare for the *recapitulation*. It is common for introductions, codettas and codas to be added to this scheme (see below)
- **Sonata-Rondo** (ABACAB) – a mixture of sonata and rondo form in which the initial AB corresponds to the exposition, AC corresponds to the development and the final AB to the recapitulation
- **Strophic** – a setting of a poem in which the same music is repeated for each stanza (or verse)
- **Through-composed** – a setting of a poem in which new music is composed for each section

Parts of a musical form

- **Introduction** – an extra section added onto the beginning of a structure
- **Exposition** – section in a sonata form in which the main themes are introduced, usually in the tonic and a contrasting key
- **Recapitulation** – section in a sonata form in which the main themes return transposed to the tonic
- **Development** – section in a sonata form in which the music modulates through a variety of keys, usually reworking some or all of the material from the exposition
- **Coda** – a closing section added to the end of a piece which emphasizes the sense of arrival at the end (and in a tonal piece re-emphasizes the tonic)
- **Codetta** – like a coda, but at the end of a section such as the exposition (in a tonal piece re-emphasizing the contrasting key)
- **Intro / outro** – the usual terms for the introduction and closing section of a pop song
- **Break** – a solo instrumental section in a pop song
- **Turnaround** – a progression that ends on **V** in preparation for the return of the chorus
- **Bridge** – an extra section that connects a verse to a chorus in a pop song
- **Middle eight** – a section with contrasting harmony in between a verse and a chorus in a pop or jazz number

Tonal structure
In tonal music, the keys of the main sections of a piece and the modulations between them are a vital part of the structure. In some forms, the tonal structure of the piece is the most important aspect of its construction. An example of this is sonata form, in which the keys and modulations are the best ways of distinguishing from one section and another.

Clarity of form and structure
Composers can choose how clear they make their forms and structures to their listeners. Some make changes of section more obvious by articulating (i.e. marking) them in some way, whereas others blur the divisions between them. On the whole, Classical composers tend articulate sections more clearly, whereas the changes in Baroque and Romantic forms tend to be harder to distinguish.

There are a number of common ways of articulating a change of section:

- **Pauses** – a pause may arise from a longer note value, a rest or an actual written pause at the end of a section
- **Cadences** – a cadence can mark the end of a phrase on its own, but it is up to a composer how much emphasis he or she wishes to place on cadences at the end of sections (emphasis may be given to a cadence through longer note values or a simplification of the texture, for example)
- Changes of **texture** – changes of texture, or at least accompanying pattern, can help to make the contrast between one section and the next more obvious.
- Changes of **dynamic** – similarly if one section ends quietly and the next begins loudly, the join between the sections (and therefore the structure itself) is more noticeable
- **Melodic or motivic** changes – if two sections have very different melodies, they contrast more clearly, whereas if sections have lots of motivic similarities the sections are harder to distinguish from one another

Melody

In the Melody, Rhythm, Texture and Harmony sections of GSMIRTH there are two main headings under which you might make comments for short answer questions and comparisons:

- General description – it is best to start answers with more general characteristics of the music that apply either to the whole piece or to larger sections
- Specific features – having described the music in general, you can then go on to detail features that happen at specific points in the piece

General description

Basic characteristics

Two fundamental characteristics that affect the general feel of a melody are the scale upon which it is based and the extent to which it is leaping or stepwise. Whereas late Renaissance music, for example, tends to be mostly diatonic and stepwise, some early twentieth century music is highly chromatic and contains a large number of big leaps – composers across the ages have found many different points between these two extremes.

- **Diatonic** – using only (or mostly) notes from a major or minor scale
- **Chromatic** – notes that are not in the major or minor scale
- **Pentatonic** and **hexatonic** – five and six-note scales that are found in a wide range of music, particularly in the twentieth century, as well as in pop music and many non-Western musical traditions.
- **Whole-tone** – a scale made up only of whole tones
- **Stepwise** (conjunct/scalic) – a melody that moves mostly in tones and/or semitones
- **Leaping** (disjunct) – a melody that employs larger intervals – many tonal melodies use a mixture of small leaps based on arpeggios and steps based on the diatonic scale

Phrase lengths

Phrases are more clearly articulated in the Classical era than in most other periods, but most music can be divided into phrases that (at least in tonal music) end with some sort cadence.

- **Periodic** – phrase lengths are based on regular groups of two, four and eight bar phrases, although composers usually avoid a completely regular pattern by shortening or extending some phrases. This type of phrasing is particularly typical of the Classical era
- **Irregular** – the piece is divided into phrases of consistently irregular length

Direction, shape and range

When responding to short answer questions, it is easy to forget to comment on the basic shape of a melody, in other words the use of ascending and descending motion. When comparing melodies either within or between pieces it is also worth discussing the range of the melody (the interval it spans) and whether it is particularly low or high. The range of a melody is sometimes called its **tessitura**.

Repetitions

In an exam question, you might be asked to outline how much a piece of music uses repetition in general. The simplest type of repetition is where a phrase is literally played again, but there are a number of more complex transformed repetitions that are discussed in the 'Specific Features' section over the page. The other main type of repetition is where a shorter melodic idea (a **motif**) is used to construct a melody. Motifs are often repeated and modified from one section of a piece to another, which makes the music overall more unified.

Word-setting features

- **Syllabic** – text set to music with one note per syllable
- **Melismatic** – text set to music with several notes per syllable
- **Word-painting** – the use of musical features to portray the meaning of the words. Some simple examples are ascending to portray upward motion and using two-note sighs to portray grief.

Specific features

Transformations of the melody

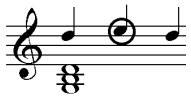
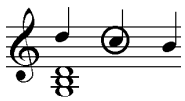
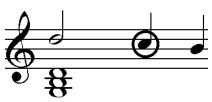
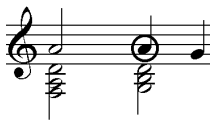
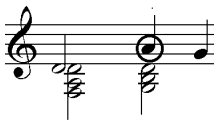
Most music uses repetition to some extent and often these repetitions involve changing the original in some way. Repetition might be of a whole phrase or of a shorter motivic fragment. The first three in the list below are very common in a wide range of styles, whereas the last two are most often found in twentieth century music.

- **Transposition** – repetition in which the melody is moved up or down in pitch. In an exam it is worth being specific about where the melody is transposed (e.g. down a second or up a fourth)
- **Sequence** – a sequence is a series of *consecutive* transposed repetitions of a short melodic idea. Sequences are often not exact transpositions, but instead move up or down a step within the same diatonic scale
- **Inversion** – a melody turned upside-down. An inversion is like a mirror – if the original melody goes up a third, then the inversion will go down a third
- **Retrograde** – a melody played backwards
- **Retrograde inversion** – a melody played both upside-down and backwards

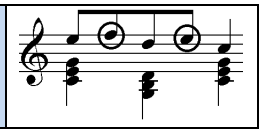
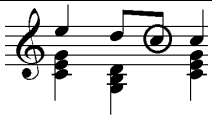
Embellishments

Melody in tonal music is built by embellishing chords. The simplest embellishment is the arpeggio, which skips between the notes of a chord. All other embellishments are outlined below.

Dissonances resolved by step

Unaccented		Accented		
Steps away from note of chord and back	Moves by step between notes of chord	Moves by step between notes of chord	Prepared (same note before)	Not prepared (leap before)
Auxilliary*	**Unacc. Passing**	**Acc. passing**	**Suspension**	**Appoggiatura**
				

Dissonances not resolved by step (unaccented)

Approached by step and quitted by leap	**Echappé**	
Approached by step and quitted onto same note	**Anticipation**	

* occasionally auxiliary notes are accented

Ornamentation

Ornaments are extra decorations added to a melody by a performer, as opposed to embellishments, which are part of the written melody itself. Composers often suggest ornaments using a range of standardized symbols:

- **Trill** () – the performer rapidly alternates between the written note and the one above
- **Mordent** () – the performer adds upper auxiliary note (or a lower one if there is a line through the symbol)
- **Turn** () – the performer plays an upper auxiliary followed by a lower auxiliary note
- **Appoggiatura** () – the performer plays the added note on the beat, taking up half the note value of the main note (so in this case the result is two crotchets). Note this may or may not result in an appoggiatura in the sense described above under embellishments, depending on whether the ornament is approached by step or by leap.
- **Acciaccatura** () – the performer squeezes in the added note just before the beat

Instrumentation

Instruments (or forces) used

Common instruments

If you are asked to describe the instrumentation or forces used, you might comment both on the ensemble as a whole (e.g. orchestra), a section within it (e.g. lower woodwind), or individual instruments. The most common chamber groups are listed on page 33 under **Genre** above.

Orchestral instruments

The table below gives a rough idea of typical orchestras for Classical (e.g. Haydn, Mozart & Beethoven), Romantic (e.g. Brahms & Tchaikovsky) and Late Romantic (e.g. Wagner & Mahler). The last category also includes the orchestra as constituted in the twentieth century, although this varies wildly according to the preferences of individual composers. The string strengths in brackets are approximate and wind instruments in brackets in the Romantic orchestra are often doubled (i.e. the second flute will also play the piccolo as required).

	Classical	**Romantic**	**Late Romantic / Twentieth century**
Strings	Violin I (6) Violin I (6) Viola (4) Cello (4) Double Bass (2)	Violin I (14) Violin I (12) Viola (10) Cello (8) Double Bass (6) Harp	Violin I (16) Violin I (14) Viola (12) Cello (10) Double Bass (8) 1-2 Harps
Woodwind	2 Flutes 2 Oboes 2 Clarinets 2 Bassoons	2 Flutes (Piccolo) 2 Oboes (Cor Anglais) 2 Clarinets (Bass cl. / Eb cl.) 2 Bassoons (Contrabassoon)	2/3 Flutes & Piccolo 2/3 Oboes & Cor Anglais 2/3 Clarinets & Bass/Eb 2/3 Bassoons & Contra.
Brass	2 Horns (or 4) 2 Trumpets	4 Horns 2 Trumpets 3 Trombones (Bass Tromb.) (sometimes Tuba)	4-8 Horns 3-4 Trumpets 2-3 Trombones & Bass Tromb. 1-2 Tubas (sometimes Wagner Tuba and/or Euphonium)
Percussion & Other	2 Timpani	3 Timpani Snare/bass drums Cymbals/triangle/tambourine Glockenspiel	4 or more pedal Timpani Snare/bass drums Cymbals/triangle/ tambourine/woodblock Glockenspiel/Xylophone/ Marimba/Vibraphone Chimes Tam-tam Piano/Celesta/Organ

Solo keyboard instruments

Piano (Classical period onwards)
Harpsichord – strings plucked with quill plectra (Renaissance and Baroque)
Organ (Renaissance through to present day)

Voices

Voice type	Part
Soprano (high female)	Soprano
Treble (unbroken boy)	Soprano
Castrato (castrated adult male)	Soprano
Mezzo Soprano (middle female)	Alto
Contralto (low female voice)	Alto
Countertenor (falsetto male)	Alto
Tenor (high male)	Tenor/Bass
Baritone (middle male)	Tenor/Bass
Bass (low male)	Bass

Common Chamber Groupings

- Renaissance consort – recorders, viols or brass
- Baroque chamber – continuo plus a range of melody instruments. The trio (cello plus two violins) is particularly common.
- Classical chamber – string quartet is the classic combination but quintets also common. A lot of repertoire for piano plus strings (piano trio or quartet) or woodwind plus strings (e.g. oboe quartet or clarinet quintet)
- Romantic chamber – as Classical but larger and more unusual combinations become more common.
- Twentieth century chamber – some composers continue Classical/Romantic tradition but others put together much more unusual combinations.

Roles and groupings of instruments
The following list includes some of the main roles that instruments might play in a musical texture. Some more general roles are listed at the top of the list, while those lower down are more specific to particular eras or genres. These terms are useful for answering questions about instrumentation in general and the role of specific instruments.

- **Solo** – an instrument or voice that carries the main melodic interest and/or has the most prominent place in the texture. An instrument might take this role for the whole piece (e.g. in a concerto) or just for a short passage.
- **Accompaniment** – an instrument or group of instruments whose main function is to provide harmonic and textural support for a solo instrument.
- **Tutti** – all the instruments in an ensemble playing together with (more or less) equally important parts
- **Countermelody** – a independent melodic line played alongside the main melody
- **Bass line** – instruments or voices playing the lowest part in a texture and therefore the bottom note of any chords that occur.
- **Continuo** – in Baroque music any instruments playing or embellishing a bass line, often with the help of figured bass (a shorthand system of indicating harmony above a bass line). The continuo part is usually played by one or more melody instruments (cello, double bass or bassoon) plus an instrument that can play chords (harpsichord, lute or organ). The organ is most common in sacred music.
- **Concertino (or solo)** – a group of solo instruments within a concerto grosso
- **Ripieno (or tutti)** – the larger ensemble within a concerto grosso

A more general point that can be made about instrumental ensembles and groups within them is the extent to which the instruments are similar or different. A **homogenous** ensemble is one in which the instruments have similar sounds because they are all from the same family (e.g. violin family). A **heterogeneous** ensemble is one that has more than one contrasting sound and therefore does not blend in this way.

Changes in timbre (instrumental colour) and range
The timbre of a piece of music changes if, for example, the melody passes from the lighter, more airy sound of the flute to the richer, darker sound of the clarinet. Timbre is also affected by moving from one part of an instrument's range to another – most instruments increase in richness as you move down the instruments and become shriller in the higher registers.

Performance indications / special effects
The following list includes some of the most common performance indications, playing techniques and special effects:

- **Dynamics** – the volume required, from very quiet (**ppp**) to very loud (**fff**)
- **Staccato** – playing notes so that they are detached (and therefore usually short)
- **Legato** – playing notes so that they join smoothly
- **Con sordino** (Mit Dämpfer / Dämpfer auf) – playing with a mute
- **Senza sordino** (Dämpfer ab) – playing without a mute
- **Tremolo** – very fast repetition of one note or alternation of two notes
- **Pizzicato** – plucking a string instrument
- **Arco** – bowing a string instrument
- **Sul ponticello** – bowing near the bridge to create a harsh sound (strings)
- **Sul tasto** – bowing over the fingerboard to create a whispering sound (strings)
- **Col legno** – striking the strings with the wood of the bow
- **Naturale** – returning to a normal playing style (after one of the above)
- **Double stopping** – playing two notes on a string instrument at once
- **Harmonic** (false harmonic) – on a string instrument touching the string in order to bring out one of the natural partials of that string (false harmonic stops the string to change the basic length)

Difficulty of parts
A general comment that can be made about the writing for instruments is the difficulty of the parts. Some genres are written primarily for amateurs whilst others are written mainly with professionals in mind (e.g. solo concerti). Particularly difficult writing that displays advanced level of technique is often called **virtuosic**.

Rhythm

General description

Tempo
Some common tempo markings are:

- *Presto* (very fast – ca. 140-170)
- *Allegro* (lively – ca. 120-145)
- *Moderato* (moderately – ca. 90-115)
- *Andante* (walking pace – ca. 75-105)
- *Adagio* (slow and stately – ca. 60-80)
- *Largo* (broadly – ca. 41-60)

Time signature / Metre

- **Duple** – two main beats in a bar (e.g. 2/2 or 6/8)
- **Triple** – three main beats in a bar (e.g. 3/4 or 9/16)
- **Quadruple** – four main beats in a bar (e.g. 4/4 or 12/8)
- **Simple** – two subdivisions per beat (e.g. 2/4 or 3/4)
- **Compound** – three subdivisions per beat (e.g. 6/8 or 6/4)
- **Irregular** – does not subdivide into regular groups(e.g. 5/8 or 7/4)

Pulse and accent
In most music before the twentieth century the pulse is reasonably regular, but the rhythms of a piece of music may or may not make this pulse clear for a listener. Pulse becomes less clear when accents are more syncopated (not on the strong beats or parts of beats) and/or more irregular.

Level of rhythmic activity
The rhythm of a texture will appear busier overall the more that overlapping rhythms of individual parts create activity on and within each beat. In faster Baroque music, for example, it is common for most quavers (or even semiquavers) to contain a note somewhere in the texture.

Harmonic rhythm
Harmonic rhythm is the speed at which harmonies change. If there are, for example, four chords in a bar the harmonic rhythm is faster, whereas if there are several bars per chord then the harmonic rhythm is slower.

Specific features

- **Syncopation** – rhythmic accentuation not on the strong beat of the bar (or subdivision of a beat)
- **Hemiola** – two in time of three or vice versa (the most common type of hemiola is when two bars of 3/4 are divided into three groups of two crotchets rather than two groups of three as you would expect)
- **Augmentation** – repeating a rhythmic pattern but with the note values lengthened (e.g. quavers become crotchets)
- **Diminution** – repeating a rhythmic pattern but with the note values shortened (e.g. crotchets become quavers)
- **Additive rhythm** – rather than regular groupings of beats, the music consists of irregular patterns made up of changing groups of beats (e.g. 2+3+5+1). The result is often that the underlying meter is neither clear nor very significant to the feel of the music
- **Cross rhythm** – two conflicting rhythmic divisions such as triplets against duplets
- **Polyrhythm –** the use of conflicting rhythmic patterns simultaneously. The term is sometimes used to describe cross rhythms, but a useful distinction to make is that cross rhythm is a conflict between two regular patterns (e.g. triplets and quintuplets) whereas polyrhythm implies that at least one rhythmic pattern is irregular
- **Rubato** – rhythmic flexibility (i.e. speeding up and slowing down) added to a piece of music by a performer
- **Backbeat** – emphasis on beats 2 and 4 of quadruple time in pop music
- **Swung / straight** – straight quavers, for example, are played as written but swung quavers are played unevenly somewhere between triplets and dotted rhythms

Texture

General description

Number of different parts/voices

When discussing texture, particularly in short answer questions, it is easy to forget to mention how many instruments or voices are in the texture.

Different types of texture

- **Monophonic** – a texture consisting of a single line (may be played by multiple instruments)
- **Rhythmic unison** – two or more parts playing in the same rhythm
    - **Unison** – instruments playing exactly the same melodic line (a texture that consists **only** of a single unison line is monophonic but it would not be correct to describe a unison line within a texture as monophonic. Unison is not homophonic, which can be in rhythmic unison but implies chords)
    - **Octave unison** – instruments playing the same melodic line but an octave or more apart
- **Homophonic**
    1. all parts play together in chords as in a hymn. If a texture is basically chordal with some minor embellishments it is also considered homophonic
    2. a melody is accompanied either by chords or by a simple texture based on chords (e.g. Alberti bass). This is sometimes called **melody-dominated** homophony
- **Monody** – solo voice and continuo accompaniment (a new texture in the Baroque era)
- **Homorhythmic** – this term is used to describe a passage within a larger piece where all the parts come together rhythmic unison (NB: you would not describe a Bach chorale as homorhythmic as it has a homophonic texture throughout)
- **Polyphonic** – a texture with several rhythmically independent parts
- **Antiphonal** – a texture involving call and response between two distinct groups, which may be spatially separated. The most typical antiphonal texture is where a second group of instruments repeats the music of a second group either exactly or with modifications.
- **Heterophonic** – a texture in which two or more parts simultaneously play different variations of the same basic melodic idea
- **Two-part counterpoint** – a term often used to describe music that consists mainly of two more-or-less rhythmically independent parts (e.g. some of Bach's keyboard music)

Relationship between parts/voices

Students often forget to describe the way in which parts within a texture relate to each other. The use of parallel thirds and sixths, for example, is particularly common in tonal music and worth pointing out in a short answer question on texture. The four main types of relationship between any two parts are as follows:

- **Parallel motion** – where two parts move together keeping the interval between them the same (thirds and sixths are common in tonal music, whereas in many styles fifths are avoided)
- **Similar** – where two parts move in the same direction but not necessarily by the same interval
- **Contrary** – where two parts move in opposite directions
- **Oblique** – where one part stays on the same note and the other part moves

Specific features

Contrapuntal devices

Contrapuntal devices result in a polyphonic texture, so all contrapuntal textures are polyphonic (but not necessarily the other way round!)

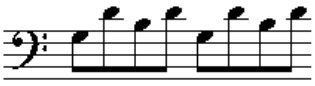
- **Imitation** – overlapping repetition, where two parts play the same basic melodic idea but not starting at the same time. An imitated line is often transposed from the original as well
- **Close imitation** – imitation where the gap between entries is small. Where a second set of imitative entries is closer than the first, this is called **stretto**.
- **Canon** – a very strict form of imitation where the overlapping repletion is exact (can still be transposed)
- **Fugue** – a movement in at least two parts in which the pattern of imitative entries shown below is used. A complete set of such entries is called a fugal exposition and most fugues alternate these stricter sections with slightly freer imitation.

Voice 1	Subject (**I**)	Countersubject	Freely written part
Voice 2		Answer (**V**)	Countersubject
Voice 3			Subject (**I**)

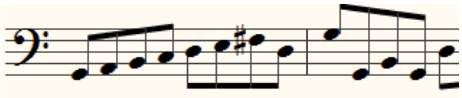
Accompanying textures

In short answer questions, the description of a given passage should include any accompanying textures used. The examiner will often be looking for a statement such as “the strings play detached chords”.

- **homophonic** – a simple accompanying texture, which may simply be sustained or involve repeated chords in crotchets or quavers
- **elaborated homophonic** – one of the most straightforward elaborations of a homophonic texture is the familiar oom-cha alternation of bass note and rest of chord. Chords can also be elaborated by being arpeggiated in various ways, the most common of which is ...
- **Alberti bass** – an elaboration of a chordal accompaniment in which an arpeggio pattern is repeated, most typically in the left hand of a piano texture:



- **Walking bass** – an arpeggiated bass line that is common in both Baroque and jazz music. The following example would be typical in a cello part by the mid-Baroque composer Corelli:



- **Ostinato** – a repeated melodic idea used as an accompaniment
- **Riff** – a repeated melodic, chordal or rhythmic idea used as an accompaniment in jazz or pop styles

Harmony (chords)...

General description
Harmony is concerned with the detail (as opposed to the overview provided by descriptions of tonality). This section presumes knowledge of the keys, chords and cadences described in the basic theory quick reference section.

Types of chords

- **Diatonic** – chords based only on notes from the major or minor scale of the key (a useful phrase to describe Classical music is 'mainly diatonic')
- **Chromatic** – chords that include notes from outside the major or minor key (a useful phrase to describe diatonic harmony with occasional chromaticisms is 'diatonic with chromatic inflections')
- **Consonant** – harmony using only intervals with simple ratios (softer and more 'pleasant' sounding): octave, sixth, fifth, fourth & third
- **Dissonant** – harmonies employing some intervals with more complex ratios (harsher sounding): seconds, sevenths, triton (augmented fourth/diminished fifth)
- **Triadic harmony** – harmony based on the tonal triad and its inversions (a chord made up of a third and a fifth above the root)
- **Added note chords** – harmony that employs triads with added notes such as sevenths, ninths and sixths

Functional harmony
Functional harmony is the term used to describe music that uses chord progressions which function to establish a major or minor key. The most important functional chord progression is the perfect cadence (**V** -**I**) that closes most tonal pieces, many phrases and as is often found as a progression in the middle of a passage as well. There are many other common functional progressions such as imperfect cadences and common approach chords to cadences (e.g. **ii7B**) that you will encounter in both harmony and analysis.

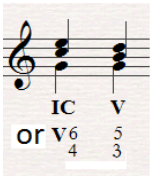
Specific features

Cadences

- **Perfect** – the **V**-**I** cadence is the most important chord progression in establishing and confirming the tonic (chord **I**) of a key. The perfect cadence creates a sense of closure.
- **Imperfect –** any cadential progression that ends on **V** is imperfect and, compared to the perfect cadence, is more open as it implies eventual resolution to chord **I**. Common imperfect cadences are: **I**-**V**; **IV**-**V** and **ii**-**V**.
- **Interrupted** – an interrupted cadence replaces the **I** of a perfect cadence with **vi**. This interrupts the sense of closure provided by a perfect cadence and therefore prolongs the phrase until it finally resolves onto the tonic.
- **Plagal** – the **IV**-**I** cadence is much less common, and is found most often in Renaissance religious music, which is why it is sometimes called the 'Amen' cadence.
- **Phrygian cadence** – a specific type of imperfect cadence that progresses from **ivB-V** in a minor key (the characteristic falling semitone in the bass is found at the end of pieces in the Phrygian mode, which is where this cadence gets its name)

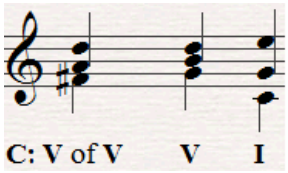
Chords
Short answer questions often require the identification of chords. Sometimes this a simple diatonic chord such as the tonic or dominant, but more often it is one of the more interesting diatonic or chromatic chords listed below:

- **IC (or cadential 6/4)** – a very common way of approaching the **V** of a perfect cadence or an imperfect cadence. The bass note for both chords is the same, so the progression sounds like a double appoggiatura onto **V**. It is often called a cadential 6/4 because of the intervals above the bass created by **IC** (i.e. a sixth and a fourth):

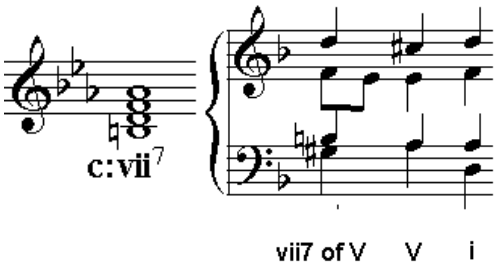


- **Dominant 7th** – chord **V7** is the only diatonic seventh chord that is made up of a major triad and a minor seventh – it strongly implies resolution to **I**

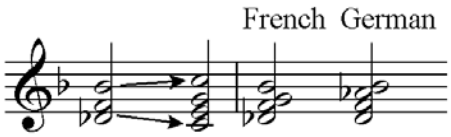
- **Secondary dominant** – a chord that is briefly the dominant of a chord other than the tonic. In the example the D major chord is the dominant of **V** in C major. This secondary dominant briefly implies that the tonic is G major before the real dominant (G) resolves to C:



- **Diminished 7th** (bass usually **rises by semitone** onto **V**) - a diminished seventh chord is **vii7** in a minor key, but it is usually used as a chromatic chord resolving onto **V**. The first example shows **vii7** in C minor as a diatonic seventh chord (notice that it is made up of a stack of minor thirds). The second example shows **vii7** of **V** (i.e. of A) in D minor:



- **Augmented 6th** (bass **falls by semitone**, usually onto **V**) – the augmented sixth resolves outwards by semitone onto an octave. The simple augmented sixth plus a third above the bass is called an Italian sixth – French (+aug. 4th) and German (+perfect 5th) variants are shown in the example..

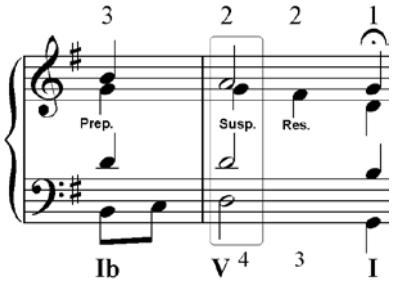


- **Neapolitan** – a Neapolitan is a chromatic chord used as an approach to **V** before a cadence. The chord is a modification of chord **II** in which the root and fifth are both flattened to create a new major chord. In C major, a Neapolitan would be a Db major chord. It is often found in first inversion, which is why it is sometimes called a Neapolitan 6th (short for a sixth and a third above the bass).
- **Tierce de Picardie** – in a minor key, the replacement of the tonic chord in a perfect cadence with a major chord (major chords were considered more 'perfect' than minor in the Renaissance, and therefore more suitable as a final chord).

Dissonances

As outlined in the list under **Melody** on p. 37, there are many melodic embellishments that might make the harmony more dissonant. The following two types of dissonance are melodic embellishments, but often considered harmonic features as well.

- **Suspension** – a suspension makes an accented dissonance (the alto G in the example.) less prominent. It lessens its impact by having the same note in the same voice in the previous voice (preparation) and then resolving it by step. Common suspensions are 4-3 (shown) 9-8 and suspended sevenths of various kinds (e.g. **ii7B**)



- As a melodic embellishment, the **appoggiatura** is defined as being accented and approached by leap. However, as a harmonic feature of the Classical style, all accented dissonances that resolve by step onto a note of the chord are described as appoggiaturas whether approached by step or leap. Two or three appoggiaturas at the same time (double and triple) create an even more striking leaning effect into the chord.

Other features

- **Circle of fifths** – a harmonic progression that in which each chord is a fifth below (or fourth above) the last. Composers often use part of the progression but a complete circle of fifths would be **I-IV-vii-iii-vi-ii-V-I**.
- **Sequence** – where a passage is transposed down or up a step or more. As both the melodic lines and the harmonies are transposed it is both a melodic and a harmonic feature.
- **Pedal** – a sustained (or consecutively repeated) note in a texture where other parts continue to move. Because it so often occurs in the bass, a pedal at the top of a texture is often called an inverted pedal.
- A **false relation** occurs when the same note appears as a flat or sharp and a natural either in consecutive beats or at the same time. If the two notes appear in the same voice, this is not a false relation but simply a **chromaticism** (i.e. one of the notes is not diatonic).

... and Tonality (keys)

While harmony is concerned with chords, chord progressions and the details of the music, tonality is more to do with the overall system. If harmony is like the weather, then tonality is more like the climate. The two are mutually dependent and it is difficult to describe the tonality of a piece without citing particular harmonic events (such as cadences or chromatic chords) as examples. Questions about tonality require descriptions of the overall system and, in the case of tonal music, the various **modulations** (changes of key). If asked to discuss tonality in an exam, you can describe harmonic features so long as they are examples of the wider tonal picture.

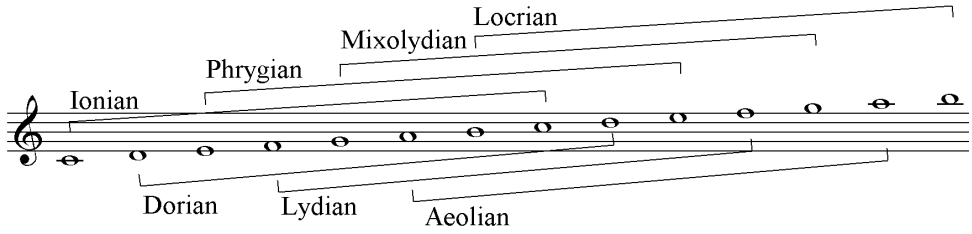
Basic system
The majority of the music that you will encounter during your A level studies is to some extent tonal. A tonal piece will usually:

- be based on major and minor scales
- have diatonic triads as the basis of its harmony
- include enough cadences and cadential progressions to have a strong sense of tonic
- modulate to a range of closely related keys (see below)

A piece that has none of these properties is considered to be **atonal** (e.g. the Webern in the anthology) – such a piece will have no sense of key at all and all examples date from the early twentieth century onwards.

A lot of twentieth century music weakens rather than abandons these basic principles (e.g. the Tippett in the anthology). Such pieces often have elements of the following systems:

- **Modal** – music based on or borrowing from Mediaeval/Renaissance modes. There are seven possible modes, and they can be understood as constructed by starting on different notes of the C major scale and therefore creating a slightly different interval pattern. Compared to the tonal system, modes offer more variety (seven 'flavours' rather than the two of major and minor) but less flexibility, as modal music from before 1600 does not modulate to the extent that tonal music does. The example below shows the seven modes, of which the last (Locrian) is very uncommon (the Ionian has survived as the major scale and the Aeolian as the 'natural' minor without a sharpened leading note):



- **Bitonal** – music that gives the impression of being in two keys at the same time.

Clarity
The tonality of a piece may be very clearly emphasized or obscured by various harmonic features and the extent to which those features are emphasized by other elements (such as instrumentation and rhythm). Music that is more triadic, diatonic (rather than chromatic) and consonant (rather than dissonant) tends to have clearer tonality.

Functional tonality
If a piece uses functional harmony, it will involve many progressions between diatonic chords and, in particular, cadential progressions (e.g. **I-V or V-I**). The tonal equivalents of harmonic progressions are modulations: functional harmony involves modulations mostly between closely related keys, which help to establish the overall tonic. The closely related keys are a network that share very similar key signatures and are therefore easy to modulate between.

The six closely related keys (from the perspective of a major key with examples from C major):

Subdominant (F)	Tonic (C)	Dominant (G)
Rel. min. of subdom. (d)	Relative minor (a)	Rel. min. of dominant (e)