

# Melody

*Writing about individual melodic lines.*

Don't forget to describe the obvious – the first three of these are easy to hear and will usually get you marks. Only then move onto the more complicated, technical terms.

- **Direction:** is the melody rising or falling? Describe what happens in detail, e.g. “At first it rises then it falls” or “the melody keeps falling and rising in a repeated pattern”
- **Type of movement:** is the melody leaping (e.g. arpeggios) or moving by step (scales). If it is leaping, are the gaps small (e.g. thirds) or large (e.g. sevenths)
- **Range:** Does the melody use only a small range (a fourth or a fifth) or does it cover a much wider range? Is the range of the melody generally high or low? As with all elements it is worth listening to see if it changes (“e.g. at first the range is quite low but it slowly gets higher”)
  
- **Scales:** Is the melody based on a particular scale? The most common scales are listed below **{listen}**
  - Major
  - Minor
  - Pentatonic
  - Blues
  - Chromatic (either part of whole of chromatics scales – only using semitones)
- **Intervals:** Is a particular interval used **{listen}**
  
- **Simple repetition:** Most composers use lots of repetition – it makes life easier for them (less to write) and for the listener (we don't have to cope with too much information).
  - **Motifs** – short three or four note ideas that might be repeated at various points in a melody
  - Whole phrases – is a whole melodic phrase repeated at any point?
  - **Ostinato** – an ostinato is when a short idea is repeated continuously **{listen}**
- **Modified repetition**
  - **Sequence** – when a melodic idea of any length is immediately repeated but moved up or down in pitch **{listen}**
  - **Inversion** – when a melodic idea is repeated upside-down **{listen}**
  - **Retrograde** – when a melodic idea is repeated backwards
  
- **Ornamentation:** There are lots of different types of ornaments. The most common are:
  - Trill – rapid alternation of two notes
  - Grace note – a quick note that flicks onto the main note of a melody
  - Turn – a melodic idea that goes above and below the note
  - Mordent – goes to a note above or below the main note and then returns

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## Articulation

*Writing about how notes are played*

- Staccato – short and spiky
- Legato – smooth, all joined together
- Accent – a note louder than those around it
- Tremolo – very fast repetition of one note or very fast alternation between two notes **{listen}**
- Pizzicato – plucking a string instrument
- Arco – bowing a string instrument

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## Dynamics

*Writing about how loud or soft the music is and how it changes*

Just because this is obvious doesn't mean you won't get marks. You can just write about how the music is quite or loud, when the volume changes and whether it changes gradually or suddenly. (e.g. "The music starts very quiet then gets gradually louder before suddenly getting quiet again).

You also need to know the appropriate Italian terms:

<b>pp</b>	pianissimo	very soft
<b>p</b>	Piano	Soft
<b>mp</b>	mezzo piano	medium soft
<b>mf</b>	mezzo forte	medium loud
<b>f</b>	Forte	Loud
<b>ff</b>	Fortissimo	very loud
<b>cresc</b>	Crescendo	getting louder
<b>dim</b>	Diminuendo	getting softer
<b>sf</b>	Sforzando	suddenly loud

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## Texture

*Writing about different parts and how they relate to each other*

Most important of all is to **DESCRIBE WHAT YOU HEAR**. A really good description of a texture might be “the trumpet is playing the tune and the strings are holding chords. There is also a long held note in the bass”. However it is also important to use correct technical terms as listed on this page.

### Basic overall texture descriptions {listen}

<b>Monophonic</b>	a texture consisting of a single unaccompanied line
<b>Homophonic</b>	all parts play together in chords
<b>Melody and accompaniment</b>	a melody is accompanied either by chords or by a simple texture
<b>Polyphonic/contrapuntal</b>	a texture with several rhythmically independent parts
<b>Heterophonic</b>	several instruments/voices playing parts that are similar but not the same (i.e. one may be a more decorated or simplified version of the other. Common in Jazz and world music)

### Roles and relationships

<b>Melody (solo)</b>	An instrument playing the main melody
<b>Accompaniment</b>	Instrument(s) playing chords (or arpeggios etc) to support the melody
<b>Call and response</b>	Textures in which instruments or groups alternate (either same material or question / answer. In salsa, pregon and coro)
<b>Parallel motion</b>	Playing/singing in parallel thirds and sixths. Vocal harmonies often works in this way (or even sing parallel triads)
<b>Comping</b>	Chords/rhythms supporting solos in jazz – usually on piano.
<b>Core melody</b>	In Gamelan, a simple melody embellished by other instruments
<b>Continuo</b>	Accompaniment by a bass instrument (e.g. cello or bassoon) plus harmony instrument filling in chords by following figured bass (e.g. harpsichord, lute or organ) found in Baroque music
<b>Counter melody</b>	A second melody that complements the main melodic idea.
<b>Contrary motion</b>	Melodies that mirror each other
<b>Unison / octave unison</b>	Singing or playing the same notes / same pitches but an octave apart.
<b>Stabs</b>	Brass chords interjecting in jazz
<b>Duet / trio</b>	Two/three instruments playing together

## Specific Texture Features

**Imitation** – this is where instruments play overlapping repeats of the same melody. In other words, first one line begins and, before it has finished, another starts with the same idea, overlapping with it.

There are several different types of imitation:

**Canon and round** – very strict forms of imitation where the overlapping repetition is exact. Rounds are simpler and just keep repeating the material (like in London's Burning) whereas canons are longer and more complicated (like Pachelbel's famous canon)

**Fugue** – a movement in at least two parts in which the imitation is more varied and complex.

**Pedal** – a held note in the texture while other parts carry on moving. In folk and world music this is often called a **drone**

**Ostinato** – see in melody above. A repeated melodic idea that is used as an accompaniment

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## Structure

*Writing about how the overall shape of pieces and sections*

Structure is basically about **repetition**. You are often asked in the exam to identify patterns of repetition using letters (e.g. ABA means that the first idea is followed by a second idea before the first one returns).

Some patterns of repetition have specific names:

AB = **Binary**

ABA = **Ternary**

ABACA = **Rondo**

In music with words different terms are used:

A A A A (but with different words each time) = **Strophic**

A B A B = **Verse-chorus**

NOTE: you can add lots of extra sections to verse-chorus structure:

- **Intro / outro** – a section stuck on the beginning or end
- **Bridge** – a contrasting section often leading back into a chorus
- **Instrumental** – a section in which there is no singing, often based on the verse or the chorus

In all types of music, a piece with no repetition is called **through composed**.

There are a number of more complex structures that you ought to have heard of:

- **Theme and variations** – a melody is played and then in each new section it is embellished and changed in various ways
- **Ground bass** – a bit like variations but every section has the same bass line with the upper parts being varied.
- **Sonata form** – a longer movement in three sections a bit like ternary, but the middle section messes around with ideas from the first section (the three sections are called Exposition/Development/Recapitulation)

## Harmony (and tonality)

Writing about chords and chord progressions (and keys)

When describing harmony there are three main sets of opposites to keep in mind.

(simpler / nicer / easier / more cheerful)	(complicated / nastier / difficult/ more miserable)
<b>Consonant</b> (notes fit together nicely – e.g. a nice normal C major chord)	<b>Dissonant</b> (clashy and horrible – e.g. a nasty semitone/minor second)
<b>Diatonic</b> (notes only from a scale – like in a nursery rhyme – in C major just the white notes on the piano)	<b>Chromatic</b> (any notes – like in a horror film – in C major adding lots of black notes on the piano)
<b>Major</b> (more cheerful – like <i>Happy Birthday</i> )	<b>Minor</b> (more sad – like the <i>Funeral March</i> )

Note: some music from the twentieth century onwards is so dissonant and chromatic that it isn't in a key. This sort of music is called **atonal**.

### Cadences {listen}

*Cadences that sound final ...*

**Perfect** – this is the cadence heard at the end of most pieces. It makes the phrase sound final and complete going from chord **V** to chord **I**

**Plagal** – like the perfect cadence this ends on **I** but it is mostly heard in older religious music (sometimes called the *Amen* cadence). The chord before **I** is **IV** rather than **V**.

*Cadences that sound unfinished ...*

**Imperfect** – this cadence sounds incomplete because it means a phrase ends on **V**. For example, in C major the phrase would end on a G major chord, which makes it sound like it needs to carry on until it arrives on a C major chord again.

**Interrupted** – begins like a perfect cadence but instead of going to **I** it causes a **surprise** by going to **VI**. In a major key this means ending the phrase on a minor chord (A minor if you are in C major).

Some other things that might be relevant to say about the harmony and tonality:

- Whether the music is in a **major or minor key**
- If the key changes or **modulates**
- Whether the chords change slowly or quickly (**harmonic rhythm**)
- If there is a particular chord sequence (e.g. 12-bar blues)

See more detailed notes on Keys and Chords at the end of this booklet.

See separate AoS revision pages for information harmony and tonality in non-Western music such as Indian Classical and Gamelan

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## Instrumentation

*Writing about what instruments you can hear (and what they are doing)*

Listening to music on Youtube / Spotify etc. and making sure that you know what different instruments sounds like is the most important way of preparing for this. Also try <http://www.dsokids.com/listen/by-instrument/.aspx> where you can listen to them play)

### Western instrument families and their most common members

- Strings (violin, viola, cello, bass)
- Woodwind (piccolo, flute, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon)
- Brass (horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba)
- Percussion (bass drum, timpani, cymbal, snare, tam tam, glockenspiel, xylophone)
- Female voices (high to low): soprano, mezzo-soprano alto, contralto
- Male voices (high to low): treble (boys), countertenor (male alto), tenor, baritone, bass

### World music instruments by style

Gamelan (metallophones, gongs, drums)

Indian classical (plucked strings - sitar / sarod; bowed strings - sarangi / tanpura  
– plucked string drone / table – small pair of drums / flute - bansuri)

Bangra (Dhol – drum / sarango – bowed strings / tumbi and sitar – plucked string)

Tango (Bandoneon – type of accordion plus violin/piano/bass)

Salsa (brass, piano, voice plus perc: claves / cowbell / timbales / cogas / guiro)

Line dance (Slide guitar / banjo / harmonica / accordion)

Irish (tin whistle / bodhran / uilleann pipes)

### Common Instrumental Techniques

Strings (tremolo – scrubbing / pizzicato – plucking / harmonics – thin and high)

Jazz (scat – singing nonsense words / walking bass / improvisation)

Ostinato (repeated note or rhythm pattern – in jazz or pop often called a riff)

Pedal / drone (sustained or repeated note with other parts moving above or below)

Arpeggios (accompaniment based on skipping between notes of chord)

Glissando (sliding between notes)

Muted (muted strings and brass generally sound a bit duller and more mellow)

Rolls (drums)

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## Rhythm

As with all the MAD-TSHIRT elements, don't forget the basics:

- **Tempo:** is the basic speed of the music slow or fast
- **Duration:** are individual notes short or long

There are lots of technical terms to describe rhythm but don't be put off – what is actually being described is often quite simple.

Some basic terms:

- **Pulse / beat:** if you are tapping your feet to or conducting music you are probably tapping out the pulse
- **Upbeat** (or anacrusis): starting a piece on the fourth beat of the bar rather than the first
- **Syncopation:** playing off (or in between) the beat or pulse **{listen}**
- **Dotted** rhythms: making pairs of notes uneven by adding half the value to the first note of a pair taking it away from the second (e.g. if you dot quavers your first quaver is three rather than two semiquavers long and the second quaver is shortened to a semiquaver **{listen}**
  - **Swung** rhythms (jazz): like dotted rhythms but a bit lazier, so the first note is not quite so long and the last not quite so short **{listen}**
- **Triplets** – three notes squeezed in (evenly) into the space of two **{listen}**
- **Cross-rhythm** – triplets against normal rhythms
- **Pause** – a wait that interrupts the pulse

Some basic terms for world music:

- Chaal (Bhangra): the basic triplet rhythm underlying Bhangra played on the dhol (a drum)
- Clave (Salsa): the basic rhythm behind Salsa and other Latin music
- Habanera (Tango): a dotted rhythm often heard in the bass part of Tango music
- Gonggan and keteg (Gamelan): the equivalent of a bar and half-bar in Gamelan music
- Tala (Indian): the repeating rhythmic pattern on which a piece of Indian classical music might be based.

Some common Italian terms:

- *Accelerando* – getting faster
- *Allegro* – a very fast tempo
- *Allegro* – a relatively fast tempo
- *Andante* – a tempo roughly equivalent to walking pace
- *Moderato* – a moderate tempo
- *Largo* – slow and stately
- *Rallentando / Ritenuto (Rall / Rit)* – getting slower
- *Rubato* – playing rhythmically flexibly – slowing down and speeding up even though the music does not tell you to

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## Time Signature (Metre)

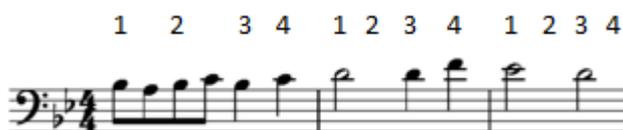
*Writing about how the basic pulse is grouped*

You need to be able to recognize basic time signatures by ear and there are two things to listen for:

- 1) How many beats there are in a bar
- 2) Whether the beats are divided into two or three

**Simple** metres have a main beat that can be divided into **TWO** (e.g. a crotchet beat that can be divided into two quavers). The time signatures for simple metres have 2, 3 or 4 at the top (e.g. 2/4, 3/4, 2/2 or 4/4).

In this example in 4/4 you would hear the main beat (crotchets) as well as the main beat divided into two (quavers):



**Compound** metres have a main beat that is divided into **THREE** (e.g. a dotted crotchet beat that can be divided into three quavers). The time signatures for compound metres have 6, 9 or 12 at the top (e.g. 6/8, 9/8, 6/4 or 12/8).

Compound metres have a distinctive three-to-a-beat feel (diddle-dee diddle-dee) which simple metres lack. Listening for this is the best way of telling between the two types (e.g. “Merrily merrily” in the example above).