



Advanced Higher Music:

Writing an Analytical Commentary

Name:.....

Class:.....

Teacher:.....



A GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY

You are required to write a listening commentary between 1500 and 2000 which relate to the study of two or more works or movements. You must include notated musical excerpts and referenced audio examples, therefore a copy of the **score** and **audio** must be obtained **BEFORE** you start.

Outcomes for your Analytical Commentary:

1. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of musical concepts.
 - Identify stylistic features of the music studied
 - Identify compositional features of the music studied in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, timbre, genre and form.
2. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of musical literacy
 - Notated music is accurately related to musical excerpts heard.
 - Music is notated correctly.

This evidence should provide the reader with everything they need to appreciate the work being described without any prior knowledge. It should be self-contained with accurate statements and clear descriptions of details within the musical score. It **MUST** use short excerpts of printed music or manuscript and audio excerpts to display your understanding of the piece.

Your Long Term Goal:

- *1500 – 2000 words*
- *2 contrasting pieces of music/ movements*
- *Compare and contrast them*
- *Music quotes – printed and audio*
- *This is not a historical account but -*
- *Your personal view of concepts and how they are applied in the music.*



Your Short Term Goal:

- *Pick your 2 pieces – listen to them loads and loads*
- *Get to know them really well*
- *Follow the score – Petrucci music library is great. www.imslp.org/wiki/*
- *Have the CD/MP3 available*

ADVANCED HIGHER COMMENTARY

DEADLINES

DEADLINE

DEADLINE

1ST

SEPTEMBER 2014

2 PIECES CHOSEN

AUDIO RECORDINGS AND SCORES SOURCED

3RD

NOVEMBER 2014

ANALYSIS OF PIECE 1

1ST

DECEMBER 2014

ANALYSIS OF PIECE 2

& COMPARE AND CONTRAST

12TH

JANUARY 2015

1ST FULL DRAFT

2ND

MARCH 2015

FINAL DRAFT WITH CD EXCERPTS

& MUSICAL EXAMPLES.

*All musical examples must be prepared on Sibelius. You must have a recording in full of the pieces you are studying, and recordings of your musical excerpts. This is very time consuming – **DO NOT LEAVE IT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE.***

ALL DEADLINES MUST BE MET – NO EXCEPTIONS

ALL DRAFTS SHOULD BE EMAILED TO MRS CROSSAN ON OR BEFORE THE SPECIFIED DATE.

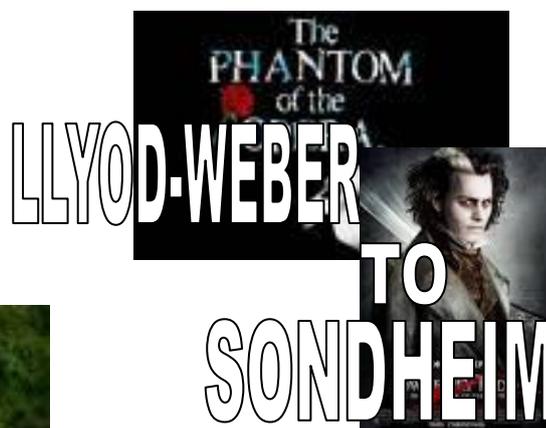
CHOOSING YOUR PIECES

This is an exercise in independent research and learning, and presents you with an opportunity to write about pieces of music which you have selected. The first important step is that you choose your pieces carefully.

Think about pieces that you have sung, played or listened to in class or at home.

It is vital that you really like and appreciate these. Not only will this make the whole task much more enjoyable, but it will enable you to produce a piece of writing which, as a result of your enthusiasm, will be much more interesting for the assessor to read. NB. Expressing a personal response is a critical aspect of the task of writing a listening commentary.

Beware of the “easy” option! Choosing pieces which are too simplistic will make the task much more difficult, the lack of substance will make it extremely difficult for you to reach the required length. The SQA states that you must have a detailed and in-depth analysis. In order to do this you must display an ability to identify the stylistic features of your pieces and also make full and accurate reference to compositional features, i.e. melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, timbre, genre and form. Therefore, ensure that the pieces which you select will allow you to make such an in depth analysis including a wide range of concepts and literacy requirements from SG through to Advanced Higher level.



What music interests you?

RESEARCHING YOUR PIECES

PIECE 1

Provide the appropriate information about each piece using this sheet to help you.

Title of the music:

Composer:

Instrumentation:

Style/ Period:

Why have you chosen this particular piece?

- *Have you performed it?*
- *Is it written by a favourite composer?*
- *Is it performed by a favourite group?*
- *Have you heard the piece and enjoyed listening to it?*

Briefly place the chosen work in context:

- *Make reference to other pieces of a similar genre or period known to you*
- *Make reference to pieces you have listened to in class/ at home or pieces you have played*
- *Make reference to different sources to check on any historical or musical details*
- *Keep a note of all sources to compile a bibliography.*

Now listen to the piece several times. Follow the score and complete the following table identifying the relevant musical concepts. Use your concepts sheet to help.

<u>PIECE 1</u>	Write in what you hear...
<p>MELODIC <i>Scales, intervals, sequences, phrase structures, ornaments etc.</i></p>	
<p>HARMONIC <i>Chords, consonance, dissonance, suspensions, tonality, cadences etc.</i></p>	
<p>RHYTHMIC <i>Beat, Pulse, Anacrusis Syncopation, Augmentation, Diminution etc.,</i></p>	
<p>STRUCTURAL <i>Accompaniment, Texture, Form, Introduction, Coda, Other devices etc.</i></p>	

Identify the main melodic and/or rhythmic ideas and label them A, B, C etc. as this will help you start considering the form of the piece that will be looked at in more detail later. Write a description of these main ideas as they appear for the first time; use your own words in addition to the musical language as your own thoughts and ideas are important.

RESEARCHING YOUR PIECES

PIECE 2

Provide the appropriate information about each piece using this sheet to help you.

Title of the music:

Composer:

Instrumentation:

Style/ Period:

Why have you chosen this particular piece?

- *Have you performed it?*
- *Is it written by a favourite composer?*
- *Is it performed by a favourite group?*
- *Have you heard the piece and enjoyed listening to it?*

Briefly place the chosen work in context:

- *Make reference to other pieces of a similar genre or period known to you*
- *Make reference to pieces you have listened to in class/ at home or pieces you have played*
- *Make reference to different sources to check on any historical or musical details*
- *Keep a note of all sources to compile a bibliography.*

Now listen to the piece several times. Follow the score and complete the following table identifying the relevant musical concepts. Use your concepts sheet to help.

<u>PIECE 2</u>	Write in what you hear...
<p>MELODIC <i>Scales, intervals, sequences, phrase structures, ornaments etc.</i></p>	
<p>HARMONIC <i>Chords, consonance, dissonance, suspensions, tonality, cadences etc.</i></p>	
<p>RHYTHMIC <i>Beat, Pulse, Anacrusis Syncopation, Augmentation, Diminution etc.,</i></p>	
<p>STRUCTURAL <i>Accompaniment, Texture, Form, Introduction, Coda, Other devices etc.</i></p>	

Identify the main melodic and/or rhythmic ideas and label them A, B, C etc. as this will help you start considering the form of the piece that will be looked at in more detail later. Write a description of these main ideas as they appear for the first time; use your own words in addition to the musical language as your own thoughts and ideas are important.

WRITING YOUR ESSAY

You should now collate your notes on each piece and start writing your commentary. Treat in a similar way to your critical essay in English. The essay should not simply be a list of concepts. It should be structured in sentences, showing that you really understand the music you have been studying.

INTRODUCTION (About 200-250 words)

The introduction should be quite short and to the point. It should:

- Clearly identify the pieces and composers that you have chosen to study
- State why you have chosen these particular pieces
- Show you have a clear understanding of both the style of music and the place of the composers in the development of this style.
- Briefly place the pieces you have chosen in musical context e.g.

The Clarinet Quintet by Mozart was written in 1789 for the clarinettist Anton Stadler. It is scored for clarinet in A and string quartet. Mozart was very fond of the clarinet ever since first hearing it in London as a child. He included it in many of his orchestrations and wrote a concerto for clarinet in 1791 and a clarinet trio in 1786. The work follows a four movement structure and displays many characteristics of the classical era.

MAIN BODY OF YOUR ESSAY

ANALYSIS OF PIECE 1 (500 words)

- Discuss the concepts and how they are used;
- Give your personal opinion;
- Support your observations by using audio and printed examples
- Back this up by using conceptual knowledge;
- Discuss why the music may be technically challenging;
- It is not an ANALYSIS of the piece (e.g. the chord progressions here is I IV V or the key modulates to D major, the dominant)
- IT IS delving into why the composer did what he did; was it 'ground-breaking' at the time? Is it surprising? Unusual? What does it mean to you?

Look at the following example.

The first candidate has produced a list of concepts in a rather vague statement; the candidate should be advised to go back to the score and detail where and how each of the concepts is used.

1. 'Scarlatti used suspensions and pedals, passing notes and temporary modulations. There are repeated phrases, contrasting figurations, leaping arpeggios and octave doublings.'

The second candidate has dealt with a specific feature and displays a more detailed approach with bar numbers, an accurately referenced musical excerpt/quotation and a short audio excerpt of the section being described.

2. 'Brahms uses many complex rhythmic structures including extensive use of syncopation. In the following manuscript quotations, bars 83-86, the right hand of the piano part plays off-beat chords to sustain the rhythmic vitality of the movement. See quotation below and listen to audio excerpt 8 on the CD.'

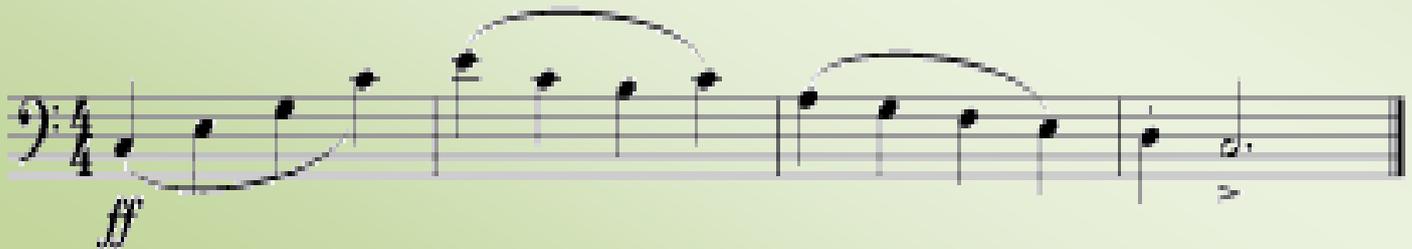
*****BIG TIP FOR ANALYSIS SECTION*****

FOLLOW THIS FORM:

State the overall layout (Form) of the piece/ movement. Analyse the piece/ movement section by section. No waffle stories about the piece/ composer that are completely irrelevant. Keep it clear and make sure your statements are concise. You should have at least 10 STATEMENTS followed by a MUSICAL EXAMPLE.

E.g.

"This piece opens in the key of C major with an ascending legato arpeggio on trombone. This powerful opening sets the tone of the movement. The third bar descends in step before a strong perfect cadence is articulated with staccato and an accent in bar 4."



ANALYSIS OF PIECE 2 (500 words)

Follow the same structure as piece 1.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST SECTION (400-500 words)

You must now COMPARE and CONTRAST the two pieces/ movements you have just analysed. Aim for 10 statements of each.

E.g.

“Both pieces follow strict Sonata Form”

“Both movements feature modulations into the relative minor key” etc.

“The first piece is based mainly in the major key, whereas the second is in the minor key”.

“The tempos of the two pieces vary tremendously.” Etc.

More Example Statements...

“while X does this, Y did that”; “both pieces display...”; “although both pieces are sonatas, Beethoven broadens the development of tonal and harmonic possibilities as shown in the recapitulation section of the 1st movement”;

“although the instrumentation of the works is similar, the technical difficulties associated with valve-less horns is evident in the opening section”.

CONCLUSION (200 words)

A final drawing together of your points. What you have learned; how this study has deepened your knowledge of your subject.

- A) Describe the overall conclusions about the composers and/ or the particular piece/ movement which your study has led you to reach.
- B) Sum up what you personally have learned by carrying out this work, in a way that demonstrates that you have developed informed opinions about the music.

E.g.

“I enjoyed discovering the form of these two pieces, but the Rodrigo has more melodic highlights that appeal to my ear.”

HINTS AND TIPS

STRUCTURING YOUR PARAGRAPHS:

You are likely to find it useful to consider the method of paragraph structure used in the critical essay model which you have learned in English, i.e.

- **Point**
- **Context**
- **Evidence**
- **Analysis**
- **Evaluation**

BUT- in comparative essay writing like this, you should not attempt to follow the order of this structure rigidly: instead you should ensure that you include all of these elements.

APPENDICES

Any appendices might contain some details of the evidence to which you have referred.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Titles and Authors of any books or scores to which you have referred. These should be organised alphabetically by the authors surnames, so that the names are presented surname first. The rest of the bibliographic information should be given in the order shown in the example below

Headington, C., *Britten*, London: Methuen, 1981, pp. 42-43

(Author, title, place of publication, publisher and date of publication)

Keep a note as you go of what sources/ books you have used. It is more time consuming to go back at the end to find information.

DISCOGRAPHY

Details of any recordings you have listened to (title, composer and performer)



IN SUMMARY

- Make the commentary interesting reading for the assessor
- Have a total word count of 1500- 2000 words
- Give details such as titles of the works being discussed as early as possible
- Give reasons for your choice of works
- Place the pieces of music in context
- Identify the stylistic features of the music
- Comment in a detailed manner about the compositional features of the music
- Give evidence of a clear understanding of the music studied
- Give correctly notated examples that are referenced to the text and are accurately related to the audio examples
- Summarise your findings briefly and effectively in your conclusion
- Include appendices to index any audio examples and resources used e.g. books, CD ROMS, websites etc. (i.e. a bibliography and discography)
- Your writing must show technical competence in terms of punctuation, spelling and grammar
- Use connecting words and phrases, e.g. “furthermore”; “conversely”; “in complete contrast”, etc. etc. in order to make clear to the reader your train of thought and to lend flow to your writing.

TRY TO AVOID

- Simply analysing your two pieces as you will fail, even if done well.
- Using up too much space on the context of the works
- Simply repeating information on the scores
- Giving a list of cadences, lists of modulations, list of dynamics etc. or a list of line-ups
- Copying information from the web when there is no evidence of any understanding of the contents

Assessor's Pro Forma

Unit Music: Listening (Advanced Higher)

Candidate _____

Title of Commentary _____

Assessor _____

Unit completed _____

Documentary evidence	√/X	Comments
Assessor's process observation checklist		
Commentary on two or more works or movements (1500-2000 words)		
Referenced music excerpts		
Referenced audio excerpts		
Candidate evidence is presented clearly and is intelligible to the reader		
Performance criteria/ evidence requirements		
Personal choice of the work is explained		
Chosen works are placed in context		
Stylistic features of the music are identified		
Compositional features of the music (melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, timbre, genre, form) are described by means of detailed comment.		
Notated music is referenced to the text, and is accurately related to audio excerpts. Music is notated correctly.		
Comparison is made between the chosen works. Comparison relates to style and use of compositional techniques.		
Candidate's findings are briefly and effectively summarised		
PASS		
Supplementary comments		

Assessor's process observation checklist

Unit Music: Listening (Advanced Higher)

Choice of works for study	√/X		Date
Has been made independently by candidate			
Has been made by candidate with some guidance from tutor			
Has been made by tutor as a result of candidate indecision.			
Initial research into first work			
Successfully and independently undertaken by candidate			
Undertaken by candidate with some prompting/ guidance			
Undertaken with considerable tutor input			
Initial research into other work(s)			
Successfully and independently undertaken by candidate			
Undertaken by candidate with some prompting/ guidance			
Undertaken with some considerable tutor input		(Insufficient candidate input to justify a Unit pass)	
First Draft completed by candidate			
Subsequent Draft(s) completed by candidate			
Final version of commentary			
Completed successfully by candidate			
Has eventually been completed, but with an unacceptable level of tutor prompting/ assistance		(Insufficient candidate input to justify a Unit pass)	
Outcomes achieved/ unit pass			

A QUICK GUIDE LAYOUT FOR ADVANCED HIGHER COMMENTARY

1	NAME
2	ADVANCED HIGHER COMMENTARY
3	INTRODUCTION :Question/ Statement of intended study (200-250 WORDS)
4	<p>ANALYSIS OF PIECE 1 (500 WORDS) – <i>DUE NOVEMBER</i></p> <p>FOLLOW THIS FORM:</p> <p>State the overall layout (Form) of the piece/ movement. Analyse the piece/ movement section by section. No waffle stories about the piece/ composer that are completely irrelevant. Keep it clear and make sure your statements are concise. You should have at least 10 STATEMENTS followed by a MUSICAL EXAMPLE.</p>
5	<p>ANALYSIS OF PIECE 2 (500 WORDS) – <i>DUE DECEMBER</i></p> <p>Exactly as piece 1</p>
6	<p>COMPARE AND CONTRAST SECTION (400-500 WORDS) – <i>DUE DECEMBER</i></p> <p>You must now COMPARE and CONTRAST the two pieces/ movements you have just analysed. Aim for 10 statements of each.</p> <p>E.g.</p> <p>“Both pieces follow strict Sonata Form” “Both movements feature modulations into the relative minor key” etc.</p> <p>“The first piece is based mainly in the major key, whereas the second is in the minor key”. “The tempos of the two pieces vary tremendously.” Etc.</p>
7	<p>CONCLUSION (200 WORDS) – <i>FULL DRAFT DUE JANUARY</i></p> <p>State which piece/ movement you prefer and why?</p> <p>E.g.</p> <p>“I enjoyed discovering the form of these two pieces, but the Rodrigo has more melodic highlights that appeal to my ear.”</p>