

Writing a School-developed Topic

(Music in Context)

When choosing the *School-developed* topic and the topic for the *Individual Research Project* it is highly recommended that teachers guide their students to choose topics from *varying styles and periods*, in order to maximise educational experience. (Aldis Sils – SSABSA Support Material: *musc-ti-013*)

The Stage 2 Music Curriculum Statement states:

The school develops one topic for the class or, by negotiation with students, separate topics for individual students. Applications for approval of school-developed topics must be lodged with the Curriculum and Assessment Officer for Arts at SSABSA by Week 4 of the semester in which the unit is to be studied.

The school-developed topic is to consist of one or more works, which must be different from those in the core topics. A work may be either a single movement or a group of shorter pieces. The total work or works should be approximately 10 to 15 minutes long. The study of each work requires the use of scores or charts, and recordings.

Suggested Topics

- The American Musical
- The Birth of Rock and Roll
- The Classical Concerto
- Contemporary Australian Indigenous Music
- Dance Music
- Late Romantic Keyboard Music
- Minimalism
- Music of the Digital Age
- 1970s Progressive Rock
- Opera
- Postwar Avant-garde
- Punk and Grunge Music
- Ragtime, Stride, and Boogie-woogie
- Traditional Australian Indigenous Music
- Work Songs.

Students are required to analyse the following aspects of music from stylistic and historical perspectives: melody; harmony/tonality; rhythm/metre; timbre/dynamics; texture; form; compositional features used; underlying ethos.

Students are required to communicate their knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of musical style through aural recognition and the use of appropriate musical terminology.

Assessment

This assessment component is designed to assess Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 5. It is weighted at 20%.

This assessment component will be set and marked by the teacher, and moderated by SSABSA.

Students will undertake 1 hour of aural recognition tasks on the works of the school-developed topic in Section 1 of the 'Scope'.

Criteria for Judging Performance

The student's performance in aural recognition will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

accuracy

How accurate is the student's aural recognition?

knowledge

To what extent does the student use appropriate musical terminology?

To what extent does the student demonstrate understanding of musical style in its historical and cultural context?

Choosing a Topic

You can choose:

- from the Core Topic list, as long as it is not one already chosen
- from the Suggested Topics list
- something that interests you (or your students) and which meets the criteria for a topic
- something for which you already have resources

Decide on a focus for your topic:

- development of a genre, style or form with reference to a musical work, or works
- a stylistic focus based around one or two works
- a composer and his/her influence on a genre e.g. Schubert and the Lied, or Haydn and the symphony

Gaining Approval

Complete form '2006 Applications for Approval of School-Developed Topic' from the Arts Learning Area Manual (p 149) and send in to SSABSA.

Obtaining Resources

It is recommended that you have:

- all relevant recordings – preferably for each student so that they can listen to the works at home (check for and obtain copyright permission where required)
- relevant scores/charts for each student
- student access to musical reference material (musical dictionaries, encyclopaedia, specialist books) where possible

Writing the Topic

You will need to consider some, if not all, of the following:

- the cultural, social and historical influences which abounded at the time the work was written and which may have influenced the composer
- the genre of the work – its construction and how this work fits in to the pattern, style and development of the genre
- the stylistic features of the period in which the work was written, and which of these features can be found in the work
- an analysis of the work, including form, tonality, melody, rhythm/metre, instrumentation, harmony, texture, dynamics
- compositional devices and features in use not covered above
- underlying ethos

How?

You can:

- aurally analyse the work before using a score, by listening to it numerous times and noting the points of interest – thematic material, tonality, instrumentation, form
- encourage the students to take notes while listening to the music so that they don't forget what they've heard
- prepare a series of notes (preferably handouts) for the students to expand upon (a summary, even in dot points, that outline the above)
- during class time fill out the notes to something more substantial (students to be constantly taking notes themselves and annotating their scores in pencil)
- discuss the composer's musical style and how it is in evidence in this work
- discuss the particular stylistic features of the period in which it was written with reference to the work
- provide a variety of musical references so that the students learn about stylistic features of the period in which the work was written, and so that they can use correct musical terminology
- set the students assignments which require them to research an aspect of your notes, and which require them to be very familiar with the music and the score.

During lessons

Apart from providing the students with written notes, you can structure lessons around some points of interest in the work or stylistic features that you want fleshed out. The list below (in Assessment) is great for this. This can be achieved by constant reinforcing of student knowledge by listening to and discussing the work:

- class discussion on one section of the score, and students relating what they know about it
- listening to a section and students firstly identifying what work it is from and where in that work it might be found and then discussing the compositional points of interest
- distinguishing between, for example, the exposition statement of a theme and then how it exists in the recapitulation
- choosing one aspect of composition, e.g. form, thematic development, keys used, within the work and discussing it in detail.

Assessment

Assessment for this topic is based on an aural exam set by you and moderated by SSABSA.

To prepare the students for this, you should make them very familiar aurally with the work. They need to be able to answer a series of questions on the work after hearing particular excerpts from the work. Aldis Sils (SSABSA, Support Materials *musc-ti-013*) provides a list of suggestions of questions around which you can prepare your students:

1. Identify the composer of the example.
2. Identify the title of the piece from which the example has been taken.
3. Identify the section.

4. Identify the instrumentation. *i.e. list the main instruments featured in the example.*
5. Identify the form. *i.e. give a general description of the form of the complete movement from which the example has been taken.*
6. Identify the resources used. *i.e. list the main instruments and/or voices featured in the example.*
7. Identify the recording techniques used.
8. Name another important work by the composer.
9. Name another work in the same genre by the composer.
10. To what period of music does this piece belong?
11. Comment on the form of the piece from which this example has been taken.
12. To what genre does this piece belong?
13. What is the most usual form used in the 1st movement of this genre.
14. Mention any particular point of interest in this example.
15. Which instrument is featured at the beginning of the extract?
16. Name the performance technique heard in the strings.
17. What is the usual function of the featured section? *e.g. solo; cadenza*
18. Which two woodwind instruments are featured?
19. Name the album on which this piece was originally featured.
20. Describe three compositional techniques heard in the extract that are typical of the composer.
21. Describe the thematic relationship between this section and the main theme of this work.
22. Name the work and specify the movement from which the extract has been taken.
23. Name the original stage musical from which this standard has come from.
24. Name the medieval chant which features in this movement.
25. Name another song where the composer features elements of an existing melody.
26. Name and describe two characteristic features of the vocal style heard in the extract.
27. What name and describe the electronic effects used in the following extract.
28. List the instruments that maintain the groove in this song.
29. What is the function of a rhythm section?
30. Describe the style of bass line used in this section.

Lastly...

Enjoy your opportunity to discover something new about a genre, or style, or what makes a particular work what it is.

*Developed by Lesley Duncan, 2006
(with thanks to the Support Materials on the SSABSA website)*