

Basic Musical Elements

Below is some information and guiding questions to help you and your students talk about music. Remember, you don't have to use technical language in order to describe the important features of the music. Start with what you notice and don't worry about covering every element.

A couple of preliminary questions:

- What words or phrases do you hear most clearly in the song?
- What is the overall mood conveyed?

Time to go deeper into the musical elements:

- **Loud / soft (dynamics)**
 - Where is the music loud? Soft? In between? How does it change from one to another? Are the changes sudden or gradual?
- **Fast / slow (tempo)**
 - Where is the text fast? Slow? In between? How does it change from one speed to another? Are the changes sudden or gradual?
- **Short / long (rhythm)**
 - What words have patterns of short and long syllables that are emphasized? Or are there places that the composer plays around with the text so that it goes against the way you would speak the text?
 - Is there an instrumental rhythm to accompany the voice(s)? If so, does it match or contrast the voice(s)?
- **Arrangement and repetition (form)**
 - Are there words or phrases that are repeated or rearranged? If there is a repeating word or phrase, does it sound the same each time?
- **Voice and instrument combinations (timbre)**
 - What voice(s) do you hear? Solo or group, male or female? Is that consistent throughout or does it change?
 - If there is an instrumental accompaniment, what does it consist of? Piano only? Or are there other instruments? If so, which ones stand out to you?
- **"The Notes" (melody and harmony)**
 - What kind of melody (tune) does the song have? Smooth or choppy? Easy or difficult to remember?
 - Is the melody or tune all by itself or are their supporting notes along with it (harmony)?