National 5 Music
Understanding Paper : Question by Question Help

This guide features questions from the National 5 2016 Understanding Music paper. A PDF of the entire paper can be downloaded from *https://www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/papers/papers/2016/N5_Music_QP_2016.pdf*

The coloured notes will give you some pointers as to what you should be thinking as you tackle each type of question.

Multiple-Choice

Before you hear the music, think about how you might recognise each concept. Look for clues in the question.

Hints:

- Double check how many ticks are required.
- When you are asked for two answers choose two boxes, even if the second is an educated guess!

This question features music in different styles. – No clues here, could be anything!
   (a) Listen to this excerpt and tick **one** box to describe what you hear.

     ☐ Reggae – Jamaican

     ☐ Ragtime – solo piano

     ☐ Rock 'n' roll – electric guitar, vocals

     ☐ Gospel – choir, Christian lyrics

SQA National 5 Understanding Paper Question 1a

Single Word

Before you hear the music, think about your possible answers.

Hints:

- Learn which category each concept belongs in.
- If you are unsure after hearing the music, write any one of the possible options.

The most likely questions are:

The tonality is major / minor / atonal.

The texture is homophonic / polyphonic (contrapuntal).

The final cadence is perfect / imperfect.

These ones will also come in handy:

Name the style: Gospel / Classical / pibroch / Celtic rock / bothy ballad / waulking song / Gaelic psalm / aria / chorus / minimalist / Indian / Baroque / ragtime / Romantic / swing / concerto / opera / Scots ballad / mouth music / reggae / African music / rapping / blues / jazz / rock / pop / rock 'n' roll / musical / Latin American.

The word setting is syllabic / melismatic.

The melody features a/an descending/ascending glissando / sequence / major scale / minor scale / pentatonic scale / chromatic scale / whole tone scale.

The string playing technique is arco / pizzicato.

The bassline featured is a/an walking bass / Alberti bass / ground bass.

The tempo is adagio / andante / moderato / allegro.

The tempo change is a/an rallentando / ritardando / accelerando.

A feature of the rhythm is anacrusis / syncopation / dotted rhythms / Scotch snap / ostinato / cross rhythms /dotted rhythms / accents / rallentando / ritardando / accelerando.

The ornament is a/an trill / grace note.

The effect is distortion / reverb.

Name the family of instruments playing con sordino: brass / woodwind

Name the keyboard instrument you hear: piano / organ / harpsichord.
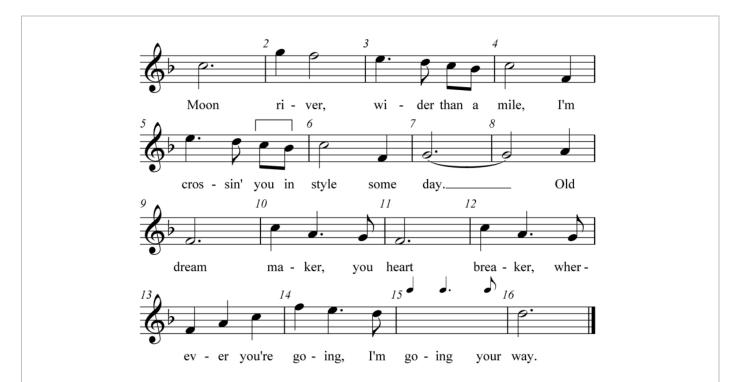

Literacy Question

Before you hear the music, read the questions thoroughly to identify which questions you need to answer as you listen.

Hints:

- Make sure you are confident with the questions that come up regularly: time signature, tempo etc.
- Always check and double check details like the key signature to avoid silly mistakes.

(a) Insert the time signature in the correct place. The two most common answers are 3/4 or 4/4. Count the beats as you listen. Write this beside the first treble clef. Do **not** put a line between the numbers.

(b) Write an Italian term at the correct place to indicate the tempo. There are four options: adagio, andante, moderato or allegro. Write it above the first note.
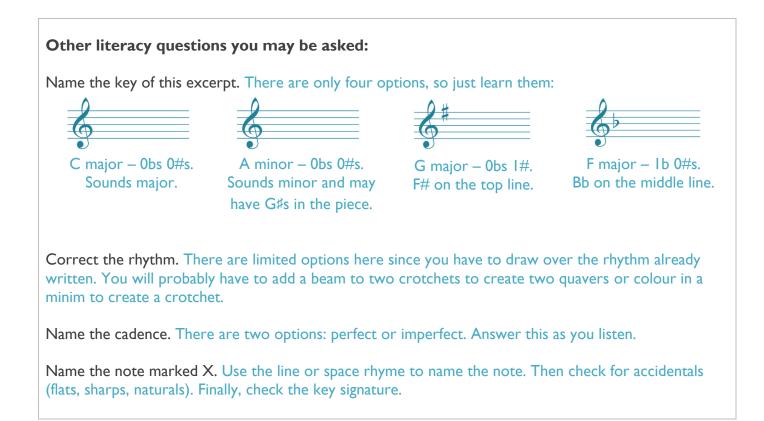
(c) Write V above the bar where violins are first heard. You need to answer this as you listen.

(d) The interval bracketed in bar 5 is a _____. There are two options: semitone or tone. Work out the names of the two notes, paying attention to the key signature. Here, the notes are C and B flat (because of the B flat in the key signature), which is a tone.

(e) The notes in bar 13 form the chord of _____ major. There are four options: C, F, G or A minor. Name the notes. Here, the notes are F, A and C, which forms the chord of F major.

(f) Insert the missing notes in bar 15 using the rhythm provided. Stay calm. Take three deep breaths. These notes will either be a repeat of another bar or will form a sequence.

SQA National 5 Understanding Paper Question 3

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Other literacy questions you may be asked:

Name the key of this excerpt. There are only four options, so just learn them:

C major – 0bs 0#s.
Sounds major.

A minor – 0bs 0#s.
Sounds minor and may
have G♯s in the piece.

G major – 0bs 1#.
F# on the top line.

F major – 1b 0#s.
Bb on the middle line.

Correct the rhythm. There are limited options here since you have to draw over the rhythm already written. You will probably have to add a beam to two crotchets to create two quavers or colour in a minim to create a crotchet.

Name the cadence. There are two options: perfect or imperfect. Answer this as you listen.

Name the note marked X. Use the line or space rhyme to name the note. Then check for accidentals (flats, sharps, naturals). Finally, check the key signature.

Chord Sequence

Before you listen to the music, compare each of the three choices.

Hints:

- Listen for the minor chord.
- Listen for the movement of the bassline.

Grid

Before you listen to the music, think about how you might recognise each concept.

Hints:

- Treat each section as its own multiple-choice section.
- Tick an answer in each section, even if one is an educated guess!

Reason

Before you listen, think about how you might recognise each concept. When you have chosen your box, think carefully about what features of the music helped you reach this decision.

Hints:

- Include some description of the concept in your reason.
- Focus on what makes the correct answer different from the others.

As you listen to the excerpt:
  i) tick **one** box to describe the style of Scottish dance, and
  ii) In the space below, give a reason to support your answer.

☐ Jig – Reason should include one of: compound time, 6/8 or 12/8, each beat divides into 3s.

☐ Strathspey – Reason should include Scotch snap.

☐ Reel – Reason should include one of: simple time, 2/4 or 4/4, running quavers.

☐ Waltz – Reason should include 3/4.

SQA National 5 Understanding Paper Question 7a

Paragraph (5 available marks)

Before you listen, check the four categories you will be marked on and think of possible answers for each one.

Common mistakes include:

- Writing lots of correct answers in rough work but not including them in your final answer.
- Writing lots of description in your final answer but not actually including any concepts.
- Limiting your chances of full marks by only including 5 concepts.

Remember… the SQA don't care what you think of the piece (sorry, not even a little bit). They just want to know which concepts you can identify correctly.

> **Hints**:
> - Write 3 – 4 concepts per category in rough work and copy every single one into your final answer.
> - Do not write any sentences in your final answer if they do not include at least one concept.

As you listen to this excerpt you are asked to identify the **prominent** features of the music. In your answer, **comment on at least three of the following:**
- Rhythm/tempo
- Melody/harmony
- Instruments/voices
- Dynamics (Italian terms)

You will hear the music three times, with a pause of 2 minutes at the end for you to complete your final answer. A warning tone will sound 30 seconds before the end of the question paper.

You may use the table below for rough working, but your **final answer must be written on the opposite page.**

Here is the music for the first time.
Here is the music for the second time.
Here is the music for the third time.

SQA National 5 Understanding Paper 2016 Question 8

Rough Work	
Rhythm/ tempo	**Always include** time signature: 2/4, 3/4 , 4/4, 6/8, 9/8, 12/8 **or** simple time / compound time. **Always include** tempo: adagio / andante / moderato / allegro. Changes of tempo: accelerando / rallentando / ritardando / a tempo. Rhythmic features: rubato / cross rhythms / syncopation / Scotch snap / anacrusis / dotted rhythms / accents / pause / drum fills ("fills" not accepted).
Melody/ harmony	**Always include** tonality: major / minor / atonal. **Always include** cadence: perfect / imperfect. **Usually** one of: repetition / sequence. Melody based on a particular scale: chromatic / whole-tone / pentatonic. Vocal concepts: syllabic / melismatic / descant / scat singing. Melodic features: cluster / inverted pedal / glissando / modulation / contrary motion / countermelody / pitch bend / drone or pedal / broken chord or arpeggio / octave leap / vamp / question and answer / improvisation / grace notes / trills.
Instruments/ voices	**First include** any group of instruments: orchestra / brass band / wind band / Scottish dance band / folk group / choir / steel band. **Then include any prominent solo instruments or voices.** These will be singular, for example "violin" or "mezzo soprano". **Lastly, include any accompanying instruments.** These will probably be plural, for example "French horns" or "clarinets". Certain terms do **not** gain marks. Watch out for: • "drum kit" ✓ but not "drums" ✗ • "acoustic guitar" ✓ but not "guitar" ✗ • "electric guitar" ✓ but not "guitar" ✗ • "bagpipes" ✓ but not "pipes" ✗
Dynamics (Italian terms)	**Always at least one** of: pp / p / mp / mf / f / ff. You do not need to write the Italian term in full (e.g. fortissimo) but you do **not** gain marks for writing the English equivalent (e.g. very loud). Probably one of: crescendo or cresc. or "<" / diminuendo or dim. or ">".

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Final answer
Good example, gained full marks.

This candidate has written the following final answer in response to question 8:

> The music has 4 beats in a bar and the tempo is moderato. The tonality is major and I heard a perfect cadence. The melody started with an anacrusis and had repetition. The bagpipes played grace notes. The electric guitar played a pitch bend. The drum kit played drum fills. The dynamics started mf then there was a crescendo and it ended ff.

The candidate has included the following concepts:

- **Rhythm/tempo**: 4 beats in a bar / moderato / anacrusis
- **Melody/harmony**: major / perfect cadence / repetition / grace notes / pitch bend
- **Instruments/voices**: bagpipes / electric guitar / drum kit
- **Dynamics**: mf / ff / crescendo

The marker then awards marks for the first 2 correct concepts from each category, up to a maximum of 5 marks in total:

> The music has 4 beats in a bar✔(rhythm) and the tempo is moderato✔ (rhythm). The tonality is major✔(melody) and I heard a perfect cadence✔ (melody). The melody started with an anacrusis and had repetition. The bagpipes✔(instruments) played grace notes. The electric guitar played a pitch bend. The drum kit played drum fills. The dynamics started mf then there was a crescendo and it ended ff.

This candidate gained full marks half way through their final answer. Even if several of their answers had been incorrect, they were still in with a good chance of gaining full marks. Remember that the question asks for "prominent features of the music", so not every concept that you hear will gain you a mark.

Final answer
Not quite so good example, gained 0 marks.

This is a lovely piece that begins with a really gentle section. It sounds like Celtic rock. The guitar plays a cool solo and then the drums come in playing a fill. In the middle section it gets louder because the pipes join in playing a beautiful tune. It started off quite loud and it ends loud as well. This piece is in binary form.

The candidate has included the following concepts:

- **Rhythm/tempo**:
- **Melody/harmony**:
- **Instruments/voices**:
- **Dynamics**:

The marker then awards marks for the first 2 correct concepts from each category, up to a maximum of 5 marks in total:

This is a lovely piece (no one cares!) that begins with a really gentle section. It sounds like Celtic rock (it is, but style isn't one of the categories). The guitar (must specify electric or acoustic) plays a cool solo and then the drums (bongos? If you mean drum kit, say drum kit!) come in playing a fill (must say "drum fill"). In the middle section it gets louder (must use Italian terms) because the pipes (pan pipes? If you mean bagpipes, say bagpipes!) join in playing a beautiful tune. It started off quite loud and it ends loud as well. This piece is in binary form (the excerpt is not long enough to tell this for sure and form isn't one of the categories).

This candidate gained 0 marks. Simple information like the time signature, tonality and tempo would have gained 3 marks. Providing further detail ("drum kit" rather than "drums") would have gained full marks.