



Pearson
Edexcel

A level Music

Series: Summer 2019

Exemplar: Component 3 Question 5

Mark: 20/20

NB: updates were made in April 2021 and these are highlighted in yellow



Set works: New Directions

Introduction

The following exemplar response is sourced from a candidate who completed the 2019 examination series. To support teachers in developing a greater understanding of the assessment process associated with Question 5, our senior examining team have compiled a detailed explanation of the assessment process that they apply to each level based candidate response.

This presentation includes the following:

- [The question](#)
- [The mark scheme](#)
- [An indicative content list](#)
- [General Level Based Mark Scheme Guidance](#)
- [The full candidate response](#)
- [A summary of the examiner commentary](#)
- [Detailed step by step analysis of the assessment process](#)

Question

Listen to Track 5 of the CD.

This piece was composed in the middle of the 20th century and suggests turbulent times in European history.

Discuss how the composer reflects this, giving musical reasons for your answer. Relate your discussion to other relevant works. These may include set works and other music.

Candidate Response

The middle of the twentieth century saw a turbulent mix of nationalism, post-war economic hardship following World War II, and violent rebellion. The composer reflects this in their treatment of musical elements in this piece. [1](#)

The melody is unclear in shape with disjointed angular intervals, emphatic repeated notes and short exciting scalar patterns making for a chaotic atmosphere. [2](#) Frequent scalar flourishes of woodwind are pushed aside by the melody on the strings. To me, these flourishes represent the crying out of the citizens oppressed by governments not willing to let their voices be heard, while the disjunct motif that returns several times, occasionally modified, represents the government's message. [3](#) The Introduction to Stravinsky's Rite of Spring uses disjunct flute flourishes with clarinet descending scales to achieve a similar chaotic atmosphere. [4](#)

The mood is unsettled with dissonant harmony featuring harsh homophonic cluster chords and sudden shifts of unrelated chords and keys. [5](#) There is a period of static harmony in a minor key like the mysterious start of Mistake of your life from The Duchess by Portman where it is in G minor with a sustained dominant chord. [6](#) This is followed by a major section in an unrelated key interjected by dissonant chords. The end has a chromatic ascending scale in all parts, perhaps representing the government's aspirations for growth and power. The frequent contrasts of dissonance and consonance are similar to these harmonies next to each other each bar at the start of movement 3 of Symphony No.5 by Shostakovich. [7](#)

The through composed episodic structure tells the story of a power struggle between people and governments with elements of the harsher beginning episodes permeating the peaceful episodes that follow. The recurring angular motif that opens the first section represents the government while the more tonal motif of the middle section represents the people, capturing the tensions of mid 20th century politics. There is an episodic structure in Batman Returns: Birth

of a Penguin Part 1 by Elfman where short episodes contain leitmotifs representing different characters. [8](#)

Sudden dynamic changes are typical of the time and genre as they give emphasis to extreme changes in European history. The use of fortissimo and extreme dynamics could represent the ever-growing military power of the countries involved in the conflict. Similar extremes of dynamics can be seen at the end of Schoenberg's *Peripetie* where *fff* tutti chords are followed by *ppp* chords, creating a dramatic impact. [9](#)

Insistent quavers represent marching of the military and the off beat syncopated entries symbolise the unsettling events, making it hard to keep track of where the beat lies. Similar techniques are used in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* *The Augurs of Spring* with continuous repeated string quavers and off beat chords to disturb the beat of the dancers. [10](#)

The composer's use of sonority is by far the strongest example of how they treated musical elements to tell a story. To me the screeching high strings (similar to the high pitched violins in *Psycho* *The Murder by Herrmann*) represent the government officials, the ominous low brass (similarly used in the theme of Mars from Holst's *Planets*) represent the military and the busy woodwind scales (like the flute scales in Smetana's *Vltava*) represent the people of the country. Percussion including timpani and cymbals add dramatic effect to the music with the cymbals representing the dissenters, it is used in a similar powerful way at the end of Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5* with repeated timpani notes and cymbal clashes. The large orchestra with a full brass section symbolises power and this can be compared to the size of orchestra and importance of brass in *Star Wars Imperial March* by John Williams. [11](#)

In all, the composer has used their treatment of musical elements to highlight the struggles of a country's citizens in turbulent times in mid 20th century Europe. In my opinion, this piece is likely to have been composed in relation to the mounting tension between countries before WWII or on the Soviet government's regime in a slightly later era. [12](#)

Examiner commentary

This is a very well written essay which is clearly organised by musical elements. This is usually the most successful approach to this question. *A wide range of elements* is covered with the most salient musical features identified, described and explained. *Though there is no separate section of the essay on Texture, there are oblique references to this element in the 3rd, 5th and 7th paragraphs.* There is excellent and fluent use of musical vocabulary with explanations of the effect of the musical element. The candidate connects with the question in a highly imaginative way, responding creatively to link musical features to the suggested mood of the question. Wider listening connections are well chosen and are used to fully justify the musical features. The candidate makes sure that they always reference the piece and composer precisely and *shows* musical understanding of that linked piece with a brief explanation. Essays of full marks are possible to achieve, but are rare, and the very best work allows for full differentiation. All work in Level 5 will be excellent and of A* quality.

Examiner Analysis

1 This short opening paragraph is not a requirement but instantly engages the candidate with the question and this continues throughout the essay with the question referred to in every paragraph in a highly imaginative way which avoids simply repeating the words of the question. ([return to candidate response](#))

2 In this paragraph, dedicated to the element of melody, the adjectives 'disjointed', 'emphatic' and 'exciting' are added alongside the vocabulary to explain the effect of those musical features. ([return to candidate response](#))

3 The word 'flurries' explains the effect of the technical word 'scalic' and the candidate links that imaginatively to the crying of the oppressed citizens showing level 5 – "Elements explained will be clearly linked to the question". ([return to candidate response](#))

4 This is a very suitable example of other music from one of the set works that fully justifies the points made about the unfamiliar piece. The candidate precisely references the exact movement and shows knowledge of the piece as they explain how Stravinsky uses similar compositional techniques to create a similar effect. ([return to candidate response](#))

5. The opening sentence of this paragraph is full of musical vocabulary relating to the elements of harmony, texture and tonality. They are all linked to the unsettled mood to explain the effect. Other music is not given here, which is acceptable as the examiner does not expect every musical feature to be linked to relevant works. There is certainly sufficient other music throughout the essay. There are however many works which could have been very suitable choices and, for example, from the set works there are the dissonant homophonic

chords in The Augurs of Spring from Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring or the Prelude from Hermann's Psycho. ([return to candidate response](#))

6. The section of static harmony is first identified. The effect of the static harmony is explained as 'mysterious' by reference to a similar effect in one of the set works, The Duchess, citing the movement, and where this occurs and what is happening musically. This justifies the point. Each part of this sentence adds to the next, moving this response phrase by phrase from level 1 or 2 to level 5. *The slip at the end of this sentence ('dominant chord' – should be 'dominant pedal') is small enough not to detract from the holistic impression that this is work fully of Level 5 quality.* ([return to candidate response](#))

7. This is a well selected example of other music because it provides a full justification of the point being made. The best pieces of work will show a range of other music pieces from both within and beyond the course – this exemplifies 'relevant works' from the mark scheme. ([return to candidate response](#))

8. This is an effective paragraph on the element of structure where the most salient musical vocabulary is linked to the mood created and the question. This is connected to other music, one of the set works, giving the precise movement and briefly mentioning how Elfman constructed the episodes around the leitmotifs. The candidate might have gone on to explicitly explain how the use of motifs created a sense of unity. This example of other music is less successfully embedded into the response than some others in this essay. ([return to candidate response](#))

9. This paragraph very successfully compares extremes of dynamics with conflict in European history. They justify their point with other music taken from the previous Edexcel GCSE specification set work and show knowledge of how the composer used this technique.

Candidates should be encouraged to think broadly about other music and recall pieces that they have studied at GCSE or have encountered outside the A level course. ([return to candidate response](#))

10. This paragraph on the element of rhythm identifies the repeated quavers and syncopation, explaining the effect they create in connection with the question. They justify this point by referring to their set work, The Rite of Spring, with an explanation of the effect on the music.

([return to candidate response](#))

11. This is a highly effective paragraph on the element of sonority where the candidate cleverly links instruments to characters in their imaginative 'story' of turbulent times in history.

Adjectives such as 'screeching', 'ominous', 'busy' explain the effect of the musical features.

Other music is embedded into their writing as they use Psycho from the set works and two examples of orchestral pieces, by Holst and Smetana. They identify specific percussion instruments as being 'dramatic' and 'powerful' and compare this again to a different moment in Shostakovich Symphony No. 5. The large orchestra and brass section are linked to Star Wars by John Williams. ([return to candidate response](#))

12 A brief conclusion can successfully conclude the essay but a conclusion does not need to restate the points made in the essay itself.

Mark Scheme

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of elements in the unfamiliar piece, although there are likely to be significant omissions in these. Elements will not be linked to the question. • Little attempt to link to other relevant works • Some basic musical vocabulary used with errors/inconsistency • Little justification/exemplification of the composer’s intentions
Level 2	5–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of elements in the unfamiliar piece. Links between the question and the element described are likely to be implicit • Attempts are made to refer to other works, with some errors/inconsistency • Musical vocabulary used, but with some errors/inconsistency • Basic musical points used as justification/exemplifications of the composer’s intentions
Level 3	9–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of elements in the unfamiliar piece. Elements described will be mostly linked to the question. • Relevant works are used to illustrate basic points • Satisfactory use of musical vocabulary • Inconsistent musical justification/exemplification of the composer’s intentions
Level 4	13–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of elements in the unfamiliar piece. Elements explained will be linked to the question. • Relevant works are used to justify points • Competent use of musical vocabulary • Musical justification/exemplification provided to support composer’s intentions with a few insignificant lapses
Level 5	17–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough explanation of a range of elements in the unfamiliar piece. Elements explained will be clearly linked to the question. • Relevant works are used to justify salient points • Excellent use of musical vocabulary • Full musical justification/exemplification provided to support composer’s intentions

Indicative Content List

Question Number	Indicative content	Mark
5	<p>AO4 (20 marks)</p> <p>Lutoslawski: Concerto for Orchestra</p> <p>Organisation of pitch - Melody Repetitive melodic ideas Repeated notes Short fragmentary motifs Angular / disjunct melody Contrasting legato lyrical cantabile melody in a major key Scalic (woodwind) Semitone / chromatic Melodic inversion</p> <p>Organisation of pitch - Harmony Non-functional harmony with lack of cadences Dissonance False relation Tritone Minor chords</p> <p>Tonality Dissonant tonality Non-functional tonality Sudden changes to unrelated keys Modal aspects Tonal centres</p> <p>Structure Through composed Episodic short sections Return of thematic material</p> <p>Sonority Large orchestra Prominent woodwind section Large brass section Prominent low brass High strings Emphatic multiple stopped pizzicato strings Harp Down bow repeated notes Wide range of percussion including cymbal and gong / tam tam Extremes of register</p> <p>Texture Widely varying textures Building / layering of texture Polyphonic / contrapuntal texture Countermelodies Homophonic chordal / homorhythmic moments Unison / monophonic Octaves</p>	(20)

	<p>Tempo, metre and rhythm Allegro Compound time Metre sometimes obscured by accents and syncopation Continuous repeated rhythms / driving rhythms / moto perpetuo / ostinato Syncopation Duplets against triplets / cross rhythms / polyrhythms Accented off beat notes Silence Accents / sforzando / stabs Dramatic rit towards the end</p> <p>Dynamics Extreme range of dynamics particularly at the fortissimo end Sudden changes</p> <p>Reference should be made to set works, wider-listening and other music and might include other works of the early to mid-twentieth century.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NB: Other valid points should be rewarded.</p>	
--	---	--

Marking guidance for levels-based mark schemes

The following marking instructions are produced for examiners to follow, and outline what rules they apply to award marks in a levels based mark scheme.

How to award marks

The indicative content provides examples of how students will meet each skill assessed in the question. The levels descriptors and indicative content reflect the relative weighting of each skill within each mark band.

Finding the right level

The first stage is to decide which level the answer should be placed in. To do this, use a 'best-fit' approach, deciding which level most closely describes the quality of the answer. Answers can display characteristics from more than one level, and where this happens markers must use the guidance below and their professional judgement to decide which level is most appropriate.

Placing a mark within a level

After a level has been decided on, the next stage is to decide on the mark within the level. The instructions below tell you how to reward responses within a level. However, where a level has specific guidance about how to place an answer within a level, always follow that guidance. Statements relating to the treatment of students who do not fully meet the requirements of the question are also shown in the indicative content section of each levels-based mark scheme. These statements should be considered alongside the levels descriptors.

Markers should be prepared to use the full range of marks available in a level and not restrict marks to the middle. Markers should start at the middle of the level (or the upper-middle mark if there is an even number of marks) and then move the mark up or down to find the best mark. To do this, they should take into account how far the answer meets the requirements of the level:

- If it meets the requirements fully, markers should be prepared to award full marks within the level. The top mark in the level is used for answers that are as good as can realistically be expected within that level
- If it only barely meets the requirements of the level, markers should consider awarding marks at the bottom of the level. The bottom mark in the level is used for answers that are the weakest that can be expected within that level
- The middle marks of the level are used for answers that have a reasonable match to the descriptor. This might represent a balance between some characteristics of the level that are fully met and others that are only barely met.