

MUSICAL CONTEXTS

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TRIED AND TESTED MUSIC RESOURCES - WRITTEN BY A TEACHER FOR TEACHERS

The Musical Contexts

Guide to

Programme Music

Starter Activity - Picture Matching









Scan the first QR code to the right and listen to the instructions - you will hear six short

extracts of Descriptive Music. As you listen, match each extract to the title and picture you think most appropriately describes the music you are listening to, by drawing a line linking

the extract number and its title and picture. Once you have completed this task, scan the second QR code to listen to a discussion of the answers.



| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| Extract 1 | |  A Night on the Bare Mountain |
| Extract 2 | |  The Swan of Tuonela |
| Extract 3 | |  A Ball |
| Extract 4 | |  Saturn, The Bringer of Old Age |
| Extract 5 | |  A Fox Hunt in Autumn |
| Extract 6 | |  The Sorcerer's Apprentice |

Scan the QR code to the right and listen to a discussion on **PROGRAMME MUSIC** including the difference between **ABSOLUTE** and **PROGRAMME MUSIC** and audio examples from a **PROGRAMME SYMPHONY** and **CONCERT OVERTURE** making notes in the box below.







PROGRAMME MUSIC



Four Pieces of Programme Music

Scan the first QR code and listen to another 4 pieces of **PROGRAMME MUSIC** completing the table below as you listen. Then, scan the second QR code to listen to a discussion of the answers.



| Piece Number | What INSTRUMENTS can you hear playing? | How would you describe the PITCH ? <i>(mainly high, mainly low, medium, a mixture?)</i> | What do you think of? How does the music make you feel? | What could the music be used for? | Which of the images and titles below best suits this piece? <i>(use numbers and letters if you like!)</i> |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| PICTURE | <div>1</div> | <div>2</div> | <div>3</div> | <div>4</div> | |
| TITLE | A. Funeral March | B. Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy | C. Aquarium | D. In the Hall of the Mountain King | |

Winter Rain



Scan the QR code to the right and

listen to two pieces of **PROGRAMME MUSIC** that describe the rain and rainfall. You can listen to the two different pieces as often as you like. Now think about how Vivaldi and Chopin have used the **ELEMENTS OF MUSIC** in their descriptive pieces of music. Select **AT LEAST**

FOUR of the elements of music listed below and try to explain **HOW** each of the composers have used them in their music. You can select different elements of music to write about for each piece.



“Largo” from *Winter – ‘The Four Seasons’* - Vivaldi

“Raindrop Prelude” – Prelude No.15 in D flat major, Op.28 – Chopin

How does this music describe the rain?

Think about:

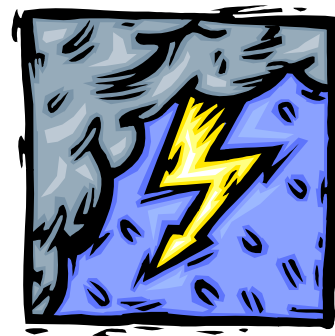
- *Pitch*
- *Dynamics*
- *Texture*
- *Tempo*
- *Timbre & Sonority*
- *Rhythm*
- *Form & Structure*



Composing Assignment - The Storm

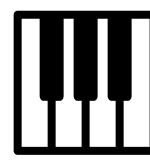
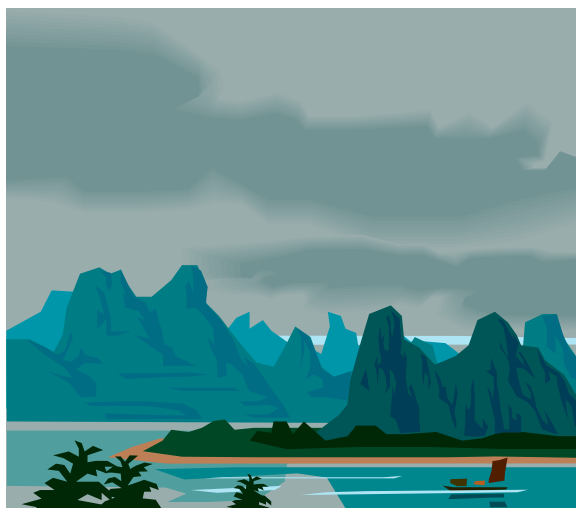


You are going to listen to and compose a piece of programme music entitled “**The Storm**”. To help you with ideas, we’re going to begin by listening to two pieces of



music by two different composers that describe a storm through **PROGRAMME MUSIC**. Scan the QR code above and listen to the two different extracts below, filling in the table as you listen.

| <p><u>Extract 1</u></p>  <p><i>“Storm” from Symphony No.6</i> <i>Beethoven</i></p> | <p><u>Extract 2</u></p>  <p><i>“Storm” from “4 Sea Interludes”</i> <i>Benjamin Britten</i></p> |
|---|---|
| <p>How would you describe the DYNAMICS at the beginning of the piece?</p> | <p>How would you describe the DYNAMICS at the beginning of the piece?</p> |
| <p>What happens to the DYNAMICS as the piece progresses?</p> | <p>What happens to the DYNAMICS as the piece progresses?</p> |
| <p>What INSTRUMENTS or TIMBRES can you hear in the music?</p> | <p>What INSTRUMENTS or TIMBRES can you hear in the music?</p> |
| <p>Do you think that this piece of music effectively portrays a storm? Why?</p> | <p>Do you think that this piece of music effectively portrays a storm? Why?</p> |



Composing Brief: Using whatever instruments you have available to you, your own instrument, a piano or keyboard or online music software or sequencing programmes such as BandLab® or MuseScore®, compose a piece of music in **TERNARY FORM** describing **STORM SEQUENCE** – Calm before the Storm (A) – The Storm (B) – Calm after the Storm (A). You could begin your composition as Chopin does

making up a short passage of music describing rain using scales moving by step and short repeated patterns. Think about how you will achieve musical **CONTRAST** in the “B” section and what instruments you will use to “paint” your storm picture in sound. You may like to use the table below to record your ideas.

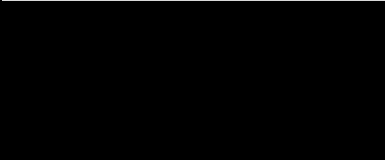

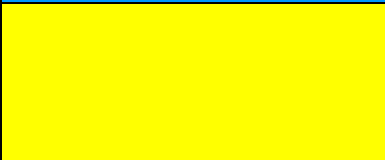
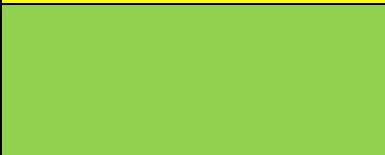
STORM SEQUENCE

| <u>Section A</u> <u>“Calm Before the Storm”</u> | <u>Section B</u> <u>“The Storm”</u> | <u>Section A</u> <u>“Calm After the Storm”</u> |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruments? • Dynamics? • Expression markings/Sustaining Pedal on Piano? • “Rain” motif? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruments? • Dynamics? • Expression markings? • Musical Contrast? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruments? • Dynamics? • Expression markings? • Smorzando/Coda? |
| <div data-bbox="494 1299 638 1377" style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; margin-right: 100px;"> </div> <div data-bbox="973 1299 1117 1377" style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> </div> | | |

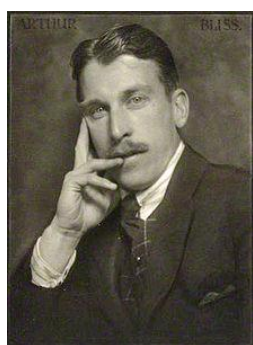
New Colours

Look at the colours in the table below and write down four or five **DESCRIPTIVE WORDS** that you believe match each colour. For example the colour **RED** might inspire words such as “hot, sunset, war, blood, rust, anger....etc”.





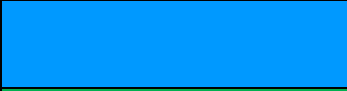

| Colour | Descriptive Words |
|---|-------------------|
|  | |
|  | |
|  | |
|  | |

A Colour Symphony



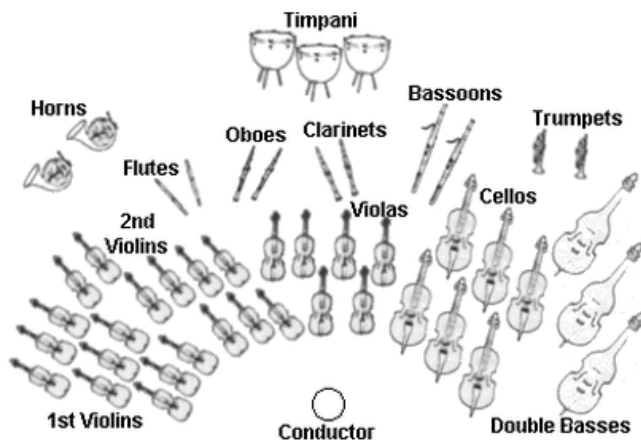
The composer Arthur Bliss (pictured left) used colours as an inspiration for his **DESCRIPTIVE** work “A Colour Symphony” written in 1921-22 for orchestra and he attempted to depict colours through sound. Scan the QR code above and listen to four extracts from movements of “A Colour Symphony” and see if you can identify which colour is being described in each extract. We’ve given you a brief analysis of the four extracts below.



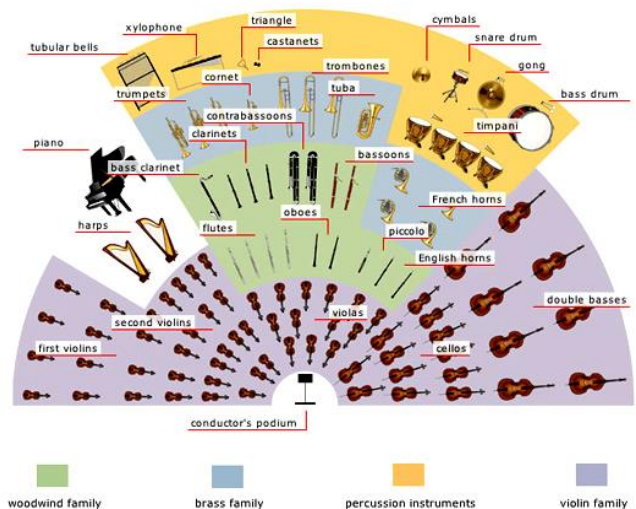
| Colour | Description | Analysis | Best Matches Extract..... |
|--|--|--|---------------------------|
|  | “Purple, the colour of Amethysts, Pageantry, Royalty and Death” | <i>Andante Maestoso</i> <i>Slow in pace and ceremonial in character</i> | |
|  | “Red, the colour of Rubies, Wine, Revelry, Furnaces, Courage and Magic” | <i>Allegro Vivace:</i> <i>Glittering, spiky and percussive Scherzo</i> | |
|  | “Blue, the colour of Sapphires, Deep Water, Skies, Loyalty and Melancholy” | <i>Gently Flowing:</i> <i>Slow, with chords used to depict the lapping of water</i> | |
|  | “Green, the colour of Emeralds, Hope, Youth, Joy, Spring and Victory” | <i>Moderato:</i> <i>A Double Fugue</i> | |

The Romantic Orchestra

PROGRAMME MUSIC was popular during the **ROMANTIC PERIOD** (1820-1900) because of the expansion of the orchestra from the **CLASSICAL PERIOD** (1750-1820) and allowed Romantic composers a greater number and range of instruments, allowing for new **COLOURS, TEXTURES** and **TIMBRES** and **SONORITIES** to use in their **DESCRIPTIVE MUSIC**. Look at the diagrams below showing a “Classical Orchestra” and a “Romantic Orchestra” and answer the questions below comparing the differences.



CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA (1750-1820)



ROMANTIC ORCHESTRA (1820-1900)

1. The **STRING SECTION** remains the “backbone” of the orchestra, but what has happened to the number of string instruments in the Romantic Orchestra?
2. What has happened to the **BRASS SECTION** in the Romantic Orchestra?
3. What new instruments have been added to the **WOODWIND SECTION** of the Romantic Orchestra?
4. How has the range of **PERCUSSION** instruments changed between the two types of Orchestras?
5. What other instruments have been added to the Romantic Orchestra (sometimes classed as “strings”, sometimes not classed as belonging to a particular section at all!)?

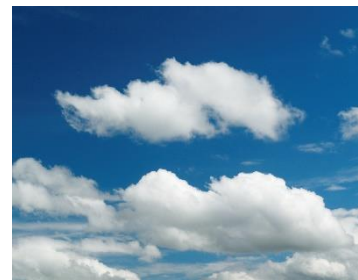


Listening to "Nuages" - Debussy

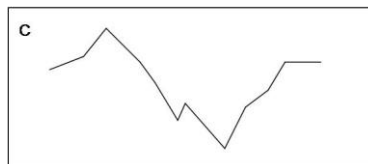
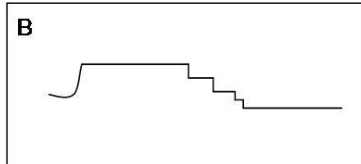
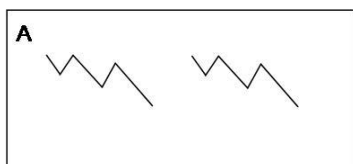


One composer who used the exciting new sounds and timbres of the Romantic Orchestra to write **PROGRAMME MUSIC** was

Claude Debussy (pictured below left). 'Nuages' is the first of a



'Nuages' means clouds and the piece describes the movement of clouds across the sky. In 'Nuages', Debussy carefully selects instrumental **TIMBRES** and **SONORITIES** from the orchestra to create different effects. These **MELODIES** have unusual shapes and his accompaniments often consists of either sustained, atmospheric **CHORDS** or chords that follow the **RHYTHM** and shape of the melodies, moving in parallel. Scan the QR code above and listen to three of the melodies from 'Nuages' and follow their graphic shapes below.



Scan the QR codes and listen to two extracts from Debussy's 'Nuages' – the first is made up of four sections

and the second three sections. Each section begins with and repeats one of the three main melodies above. As you listen, match one of the graphic shapes (A, B or C) to the melody heard at the **BEGINNING** of each section and identify which instrument is playing the melody (some images are given below).



| 'Nuages' – Part 1 | Timing | Melody | Instrument |
|-------------------|---------------|--------|---|
| Section 1 | 00:00'-00:16' | | (There are two instruments to identify here!) |
| Section 2 | 00:17'-00:40' | | |
| Section 3 | 00:41'-01:26' | | |
| Section 4 | 01:27-02:01' | | |
| 'Nuages' – Part 2 | Timing | Melody | Instrument |
| Section 1 | 00:00'-00:31' | | |
| Section 2 | 00:32'-01:38' | | (There are two instruments to identify here!) |
| Section 3 | 01:39'-02:21' | | |

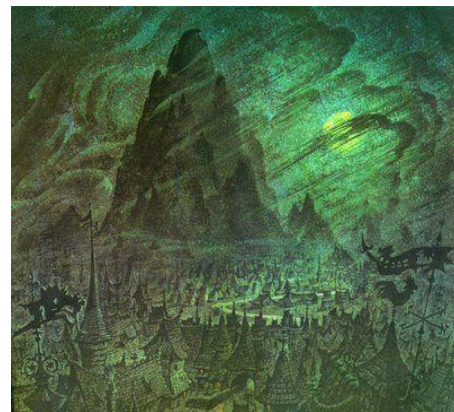


Exploring a Nationalist Symphonic Poem

Night on the Bare Mountain was written by the composer Mussorgsky (pictured below). Mussorgsky was one of a group of Romantic Russian



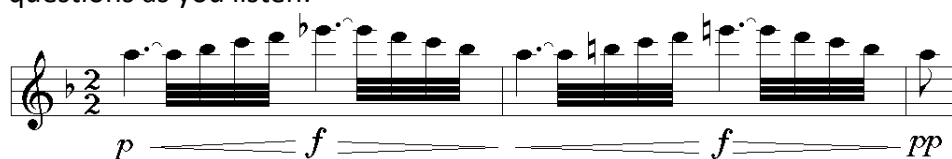
composers who became known as 'The Russian Five' and their aim was to break free from the powerful musical influences of German composers and to discover a distinctive musical style which would be expressive and characteristic of their own nationality. This led to a branch of Romanticism called **NATIONALISM**. The chief ways in which composers may give their works a nationalist flavour are:



- By using melodic and rhythmic features of their country's **FOLK MUSIC**
- By using scenes from their country's life, history, folktales and legends as a basis for operas, songs and **SYMPHONIC POEMS**

Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain* paints a vivid orchestral picture of a witches' sabbath which, in Russian folklore, takes place on Bare Mountain, near Kiev, on Midsummer's Eve. Scan the QR codes where shown and listen to extracts taken from *Night on the Bare Mountain* answering the questions as you listen.

Listen to the opening of *Night on the Bare Mountain* following the score below and answering the questions as you listen:



1. The piece begins with mysterious and ominous sounds from the strings before which section of the orchestra plays the above theme?
2. What do you notice about the **DYNAMICS** in this theme?



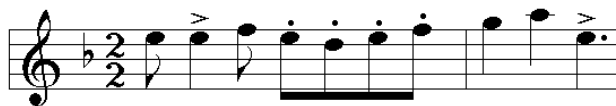
Spirits and demons then arrive described by this theme:



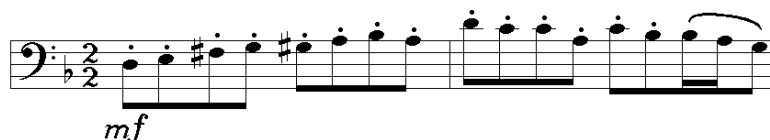
3. What section of the orchestra plays this theme?

Then there's a rumble of thunder and flashes of lightning.....

4. How are the effects of thunder and lightning portrayed in the music?

The demons begin a dance, which eventually becomes wilder

5. How would you describe the **RHYTHM** of this demon's dance?

A sudden pause – then witches arrive, to prepare for a Black Mass in homage to the Devil.

6. Which section of the orchestra plays this theme?

7. Do the **TEMPO** and **DYNAMICS** remain the same throughout this section or do they change?

**The Black Mass is celebrated.....**

8. How is excitement built up during the music of this excerpt?



A distant church clock strikes six and the piece ends with a calm melody suggesting a shepherd playing his pipe as dawn breaks on Bare Mountain.



9. Which percussion instrument is used to describe the chiming of the church clock?

10. Which **TWO** instruments in turn play the “shepherd’s pipe” theme shown above?

11. How are the first two bars of this melody different when the second instrument plays them?

12. Describe the mood of the music in this final section



If you'd like to listen to the whole of *Night on the Bare Mountain* (it's just over 11 minutes, then the QR code to the right contains a complete recording.



Descriptive Moods



Scan the QR code to the right and listen to three extracts of **PROGRAMME MUSIC**. Each of the composers is using the orchestra to create a different picture in sound. As you listen to each extract, select the best description from those given below and try to explain the reason for your choice mentioning musical instruments, devices and the elements of music where possible.



| Extract | Description | Reasons for choice |
|---------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | | |

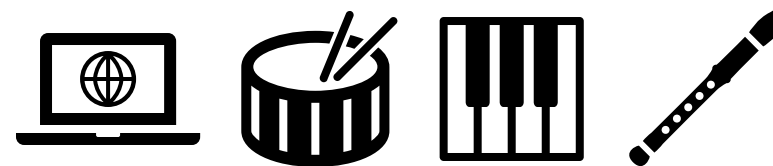
A Flock of Sheep

A Storm at Sea




Birdsong at Sunset



Creating a piece of Programme Music



Using whatever instruments you have available to you, your own instrument, a piano or keyboard or online music software or sequencing programmes such as BandLab® or MuseScore®, compose a piece of music using the **ELEMENTS OF MUSIC** and some **MUSICAL TECHNIQUES** shows below to match **ONE** of the following composing briefs. Your piece of descriptive music should last around 30 seconds.

| Programme Music Composing Brief 1 | Programme Music Composing Brief 2 | Programme Music Composing Brief 3 |
|--|---|--|
| <p>It's a cold and rainy night. A woman is walking home on her own. She senses danger. Suddenly, there is a flash of lightening and she is face to face with a vicious dog that starts to attack. Luckily, she manages to flee from the dog to the safety of her own home.</p>  | <p>You are slowly climbing up some stairs towards a large dark door. When you open the door, you discover a terrifying sight and run quickly down the stairs and away to safety.</p>  | <p>It is dark and late. You need to cross through an old graveyard. As you are walking through, you hear the bell toll slowly midnight. Birds are woken. Startled by this, you miss your footing and fall into an empty grave. The earth falls in on you.</p>  |
| <p><u>Elements of Music to think about....</u> Dynamics – can you use contrasting loud and soft dynamics? Tempo – can you use contrasting tempos – fast and slow?</p> <p><u>Musical Techniques to possibly use..</u> Leitmotif – to represent the woman Tremolo – note or notes played rapidly Staccato – notes played short and detached Accents – sudden strong emphasis played on certain notes</p> | <p><u>Elements of Music to think about....</u> Pitch – can you use ascending pitch to represent the climbing up the stairs? Timbre & Sonority – what sound or sounds could you use on the discovery of the 'terrifying sight'?</p> <p><u>Musical Techniques to possibly use..</u> Note Clusters – a group of notes (black and white) that lie closely together, often “clashing” Chromaticism – using semitones (black and white notes) – all of the black and white notes.</p> | <p><u>Elements of Music to think about....</u> Timbre & Sonority – this brief lends itself to careful use of sounds and instruments. Which sounds and instruments would create the best effect?</p> <p><u>Musical Techniques to possibly use..</u> Glissando – sliding up or down the keyboard Pedal Notes – a long, held note of long duration in the bass line Discords – a combination of notes that “clash” with each other.</p> |

Pictures of Sound

WITHOUT looking at any of the other pages in this Study Guide, scan the QR code to the right and listen to an extract of **PROGRAMME MUSIC** and, as you listen, draw any images or write any words that come to mind which you think the music is describing in the box below. You can use different colours if you wish and be creative as you like, completing this activity on a sheet of plain A4 paper with coloured pens if you prefer.



Exploring Symphonie Fantastique

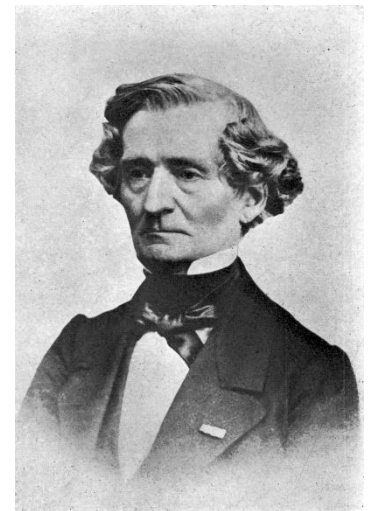


The three main types of **PROGRAMME MUSIC** are:

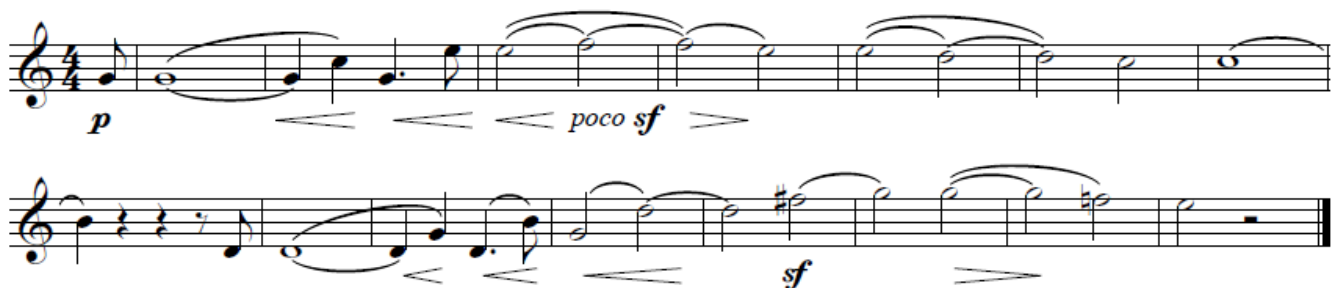
- The **SYMPHONIC POEM** (or **TONE POEM**) – A descriptive one movement piece *e.g.* “A Night on the Bare Mountain” by Mussorgsky
- The **CONCERT OVERTURE** – A descriptive one movement piece created purely for concert performance and sometimes (but not always!) in **SONATA FORM** as the first movement of a **SYMPHONY** would be
- The **PROGRAMME SYMPHONY** – A descriptive work in a number of contrasting **MOVEMENTS** (four or five) often accompanied with a ‘programme’ (notes by the composer giving details of his descriptive intents).

Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* (‘fantastic symphony’) is one of the most significant examples of the **PROGRAMME SYMPHONY**. It was composed in 1830 and is inspired by Berlioz’s unrequited love for the actress Harriet Smithson. The Symphony is subtitled ‘Episodes in the Life of an Artist’.

Berlioz wrote the original programme note that was given out to the audience on the first performance of the symphony. In it, he describes the background to the symphony: a young heartbroken musician has poisoned himself. Although the poison is too weak to kill him, it causes a series of visions in which his feelings and memories are represented by music. The programme note describes the different scenes and emotions that the artist dreams of in each of the five **MOVEMENTS**.



All of the artist’s visions are centred on the woman that he has fallen in love with. She is represented by a melody that starts as below:



Berlioz called this an **IDÉE FIXE**, literally meaning a ‘fixed idea’ or an ‘obsession’. It appears in each of the five movements in a different form, depending on what feelings or pictures are being portrayed by the music. Berlioz writes in the programme that the artist’s love ‘becomes for him a melody and like an **idée fixe** which he meets and hears everywhere’. Scan the QR code and listen to the *Idée Fixe* now following the score above as you listen.

Scan the QR code to hear the opening of “Dreams”.



Largo ($\text{♩} = 66$)

2 Flutes
I doubles on Piccolo

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets in B \flat

Horns I and II in E \flat

Horns III and IV in C

4 Bassoons

2 Cornets in G

2 Trumpets in C

Timpani

Violin I at least 15

Violin II at least 15

Viola at least 10

Cello at least 11

Bass at least 9

Largo ($\text{♩} = 66$)

7

Viol.

pizz.

arco

cresc.

pp

f

pizz.

arco

cresc.

pp

f

pizz.

arco

cresc.

pp

f

pizz.

arco

cresc.

pp

f

Solo



1. What do you notice about the number of string players which Berlioz lists on the score?
2. Berlioz adds a number of “effects” to the string players. What do each of the following terms mean? Use the internet to research these terms if they’re unfamiliar to you.
 - con sordino* (violins, violas and cellos bar 3 onward)
 - pizz* (violas and cellos bar 7)
 - arco* (violas bar 8)
 - Soli* (double basses bar 12)
3. Why do you think Berlioz requests such a wide range of effects in just 12 bars?



Scan the QR code to the right and listen to the **Idée Fixe** as it first appears in “Dreams” following the score below and answering the questions.



4. What instruments play the **Idée Fixe** during this first appearance?
5. How would you describe the **TEMPO**?
6. How would you describe the **MOOD** of the composer at this point in the piece?



Part Two – A Ball

During this movement, the artist meets his love at a ball. Berlioz writes the following programme note: “At a ball, in the midst of a noisy, brilliant fête, he finds the loved one again.” Scan the QR code to the right and listen to the opening of “Un Bal” which begins with an introduction before the main waltz melody is heard and answer the following questions below.



7. What **PLAYING TECHNIQUE** is heard by the strings at the start of this extract?
8. How do the strings and harp help paint a picture of “*sparkling ball gowns and crystal chandeliers*”?
9. After the introduction, the main waltz melody is heard in the violins. How would you describe the **METRE** in this melody?



Now, scan the QR code to the right and listen to the complete movement “Un Bal”. The Idée Fixe appears at two points within this movement at 02:14 and 05:43.



10. Listen out for these two appearances of the Idée Fixe and see if you can identify the instrument(s) playing the Idée Fixe melody when it occurs. You'll see scores of the two appearances of the Idée Fixe in “Un Bal” below which may help you

a) The instruments playing the first appearance of the Idée Fixe are

b) The instrument playing the second appearance of the Idée Fixe is



11. How would you describe the **FORM AND STRUCTURE** of this entire movement? (*circle your answer from those given below*)

Theme & Variations

Binary

Ternary

Sonata Form

Example 1 – First appearance of Idée Fixe in “Un Bal” from *Symphonie Fantastique*

Example 2 – Second appearance of Idée Fixe in “Un Bal” from *Symphonie Fantastique*



Part Three – Scene in the Country

For the next movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, you're going to have a go at analysing the movement on your own. Think about (some) of the **ELEMENTS OF MUSIC** given below in your answer:

| | | |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Pitch | Timbre & Sonority | Rhythm |
| Tempo | Texture | Melody |
| Duration | Articulation | Harmony & Tonality |
| Dynamics | Silence | Metre |



Scan the QR code and you will hear this extract played **three times**. Berlioz's *programme notes* to accompany this movement are given below which you can refer to, supporting your answer with **MUSICAL** references. The question is worth **7 MARKS**.

“Out in the countryside the artist hears two shepherds playing a duet - their music, and the still summer evening, calm his heart and give him hope.”

12. Describe how the music conveys these feelings given in the above programme note.

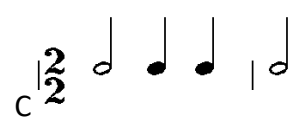


Part Four – March to the Scaffold

During this movement, the artist dreams that, insane with jealousy, he has murdered his beloved and is dragged to the scaffold. Scan the QR code to the right and listen to the opening of “March to the Scaffold” and answer the questions below as you listen.



13. This movement's opening with a repeated **MOTIF** played by muted horns, timpani and **PIZZICATO** low strings. Which of the following rhythms best matches the repeated **MOTIF** that you hear? (circle your answer)



14. Theme A is then heard as shown on the score below



a) What instruments play this theme the first time it is heard?

b) What instruments play this theme when it is repeated?

15. a) How would describe the **TONALITY** of Theme A?

b) How is the choice of **TONALITY** suitable to the descriptive nature of this movement?

16. Another theme is then heard by the Brass and Woodwind shown on the score below



a) How does the **TONALITY** of this theme compare with Theme A?

b) How would you describe the **RHYTHM** of this Theme?



Scan the QR code and listen to how the *Idée Fixe* is heard again at the end of the movement (“*a last thought of love*”) followed by loud chords that cuts off the melody (“*the fall of the blade*”).



Part Five – Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath

You listened to the opening of this final movement from *Symphonie Fantastique* during the “Pictures of Sound” activity. Here, the artist sees himself at a witches’ sabbath, in the midst of a hideous gathering of shades, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for his funeral. Strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter; distant shouts which seem to be answered by more shouts. Scan the QR code and listen to how the *Idée Fixe* has been transformed as shown below in this movement.



The *Idée Fixe* appears once more but has been transformed. It opens as shown in the score to the right:



17. How has Berlioz transformed the original *Idée Fixe* here to describe the scene and mood of this movement? (you can refer to the score and ideas from your listening)



A bell then tolls for the dead before Berlioz uses the melody of a famous plainchant used in the Mass for the Dead called *Dies Irae*. Scan the QR code and listen out for the *Dies Irae* chant following the score below and answer the questions as you listen.

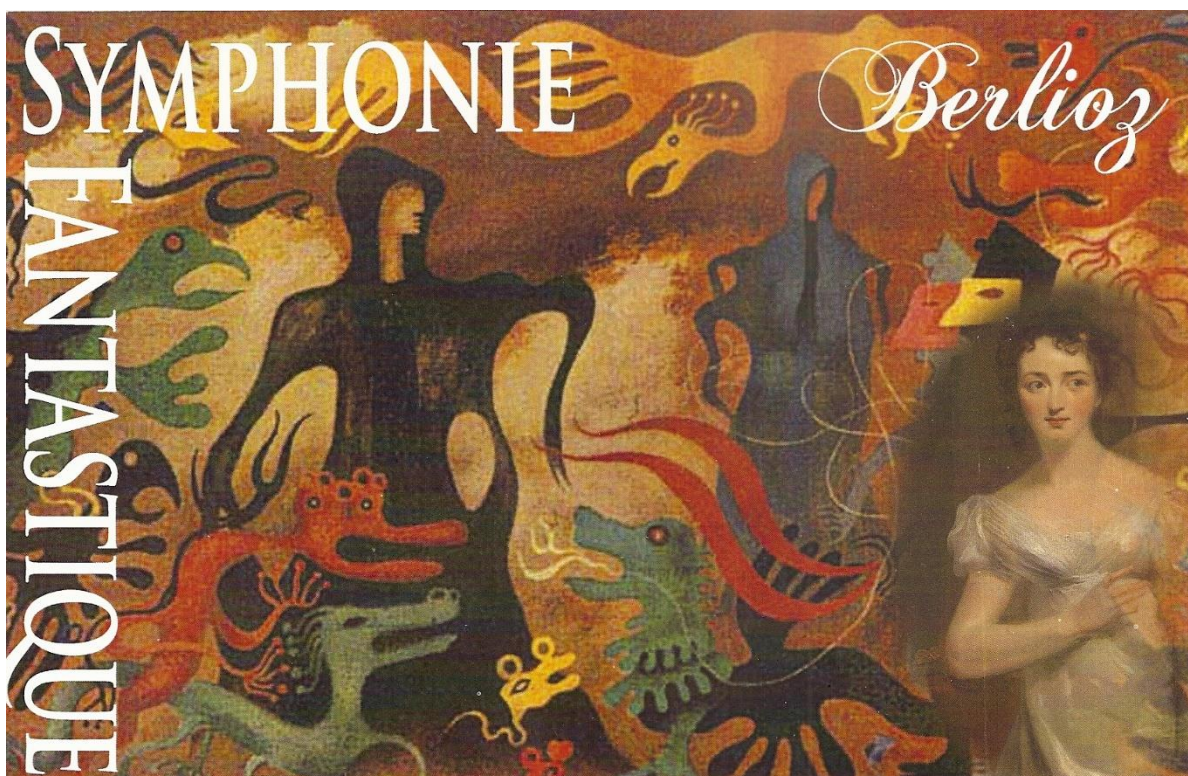


18. What instrument is playing the *Dies Irae* chant when you first hear it?

19. What section of the orchestra plays the *Dies Irae* chant next?

20. What is different about this second repetition of the melody?

PLENARY QUESTION – What effect does using an *Idée Fixe* have on a piece of music such as *Symphonie Fantastique* which is made up of different movements?



Teacher's Notes, Discussion and Answers**Picture Matching**

Extract 1 – A Ball

Extract 2 – A Night on the Bare Mountain

Extract 3 – The Swan of Tuonela

Extract 4 – A Fox Hunt in Autumn

Extract 5 – The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Extract 6 – Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age

Picture Matching Audio Transcript

Extract 1 was describing a ball. The sweeping harp glissandos at the opening of the extract created an almost magical, fairy-tale mood. This was followed by a characteristic oom-cha-cha waltz rhythm in three-four time. The lyrical melody, played by the violins, created an image of a busy, bustling ballroom as couples float elegantly across the dance floor. Listen again.

Extract 1 – “Un Bal” from Symphonie Fantastique - Berlioz

Extract 2 was in a completely different mood. Here, the music was describing a night on the bare mountain and this piece of programme music was by the Russian composer Mussorgsky. Mussorgsky originally called this piece “The Witches” and described this in a letter to one of his friends: “My Night on the Bare Mountain is in form and character, Russian and original. I want to feel sure that it is thoroughly in keeping with historic truth and Russian folk tradition”. Mussorgsky based this piece on a Russian legend, which tells of a witches Sabbath taking place on St. John's Night on the Lysa Hora, or “bare” mountain, near Kiev. The piece is made up of different sections – the assembly of the witches; their chatter and gossip, the cortege of Satan, the black mass and finally the Sabbath – from which the extract you heard here was taken. In the music, there is lots of percussion – crashing cymbals and booming drums – loud, discordant chords from the brass section and rushing violin scale passages. Listen again so you can see the way in which the music describes the evil and demonic creatures assembled for their gathering on the mountain.

Extract from “A Night on the Bare Mountain” - Mussorgsky

The peaceful and serene mood of extract 3 is again a complete contrast to the music in the previous extract. This time, the music was describing “The Swan of Tuonela”. The music here paints a mystical and dreamlike image of a mythical swan swimming around Tuonela – the island of the dead. Listen again for the sound of the Cor Anglais, an instrument popular in the Romantic period, which acts as the voice of the swan.

Extract from “The Swan of Tuonela” – Sibelius

It was back in time to the Baroque period for extract 4 and a piece taken from Vivaldi's “The Four Seasons”. This extract was taken from his “Autumn” concerto and is describing a Fox Hunt in Autumn. The trot of the horses is portrayed through the dotted, almost bouncy rhythm and the stately atmosphere of the hunt is characterised by the formal feel of the music. The dynamic contrasts between the loud and soft sections of this extract almost make you imagine the loud hunting party with horses and hounds against the soft, timid description of the fox. Listen again.

Extract from “Autumn” from “The Four Seasons” – Vivaldi

Extract 5 was similar in mood and character to extract 2 and was describing “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice”. Magic was a popular theme for Romantic composers to portray in music and this piece, by the composer Dukas, was based on a poem of the same name by the writer Goethe. This piece was made particularly famous by its use in the 1940 Walt-Disney animated film “Fantasia”. The music here portrays a young apprentice, left to his own devices, with his master’s potions, broomstick and magic wands. You can here the sound of potion bottles exploding with the sound of crashing cymbals, spells being cast with the sparkling sound of the wind chimes and the overall “rushing and bustling” mood is created by the scale passages in the string section, the fast tempo and bursting brass chords. Listen again, especially for the dramatic ending when the master returns!

Extract from “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” – Dukas

Our final extract, extract 6, was taken from a suite of pieces called “The Planets” by the English composer Gustav Holst. This extract was describing “Saturn, the bringer of old age”. The heavy and plodding character is shown in the music by Holst’s use of two chords, continually changing from one and then back to the other, almost to show the repetitiveness and strains of old age itself! The mood is serene and deliberate, created by a homophonic texture, with the very low-pitched theme in the cellos and double basses. Listen again how Holst’s use of texture, instruments and slow tempo create the feeling of old age

Extract from “Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age” from ‘The Planets’ – Holst.

Programme Music – Audio Transcript

So what exactly is “Programme Music”? You may like to make some notes in the box as you listen to the following discussion.

Programme music is a type of “art music” that attempts to tell a story or poem, paint a picture, or convey a mood or emotion, through sound. Apart from some relatively rare examples, such as “The Four Seasons” by Vivaldi, as you listened to in the starter activity, Programme Music was not a popular genre in the Baroque and Classical Periods. Here the word “absolute music” is used to describe music which is not programmatic and is more bound up with the complexities of form and structure, modulation and texture which were key features of Baroque and Classical Music. A somewhat simplistic description may be that if a piece of music is describing something then it can be considered “Programme Music”, if it’s not, and music for its own sake, then it can be called “Absolute Music”.

The composer Franz Liszt is said to have invented the term “Symphonic Poem” or “Tone Poem”. A symphonic poem is a piece of orchestral music in a single continuous movement in which the content of a poem, story, novel, painting, landscape, emotion or another non-musical source is illustrated. Some of the examples of Programme Music which you heard in the starter activity were taken from Symphonic or Tone Poems.

Other composers used the genre of the “Programme Symphony”. This is a work formed of different, shorter movements which portrayed a series of events. Let’s listen to an example from a Programme Symphony by the Composer, Berlioz. You listened to one of the movements from his “Symphonie Fantastique” - “a ball” - in the starter activity. There are five movements in this programme symphony describing daydreams, dancing, murder, execution and the torments of Hell. This extract comes from a movement called “March to the Scaffold”

Extract from “March to the Scaffold” from ‘Symphonie Fantastique’ – Berlioz

The Concert Overture was another popular form for Romantic composers. The overture was originally a piece performed at the beginning of operas, oratorios and ballets. However, during the romantic period, it was popular for these pieces to be performed out of context, as single stand-alone works without reference to their accompanying stage performances. Often these concert overtures would take on a programmatic feel as our next musical example shows. This is from a concert overture by the Romantic composer Mendelssohn called the “Hebrides Overture”. Following a visit to a cavern, known as “Fingal’s Cave”, on the Hebrides Islands, Mendelssohn was inspired to write a piece of descriptive music to describe his visit, through sound and music. The theme which we first hear is what Mendelssohn actually wrote while visiting the cave and is played by the violas, cellos and bassoons. Listen to how the music portrays the stunning beauty of the cave and its feelings of loneliness and solitude.

Extract from “Fingal’s Cave” (Hebrides Overture) – Mendelssohn

Four Pieces of Programme Music Audio Transcript

We’re going to examine four pieces of programme music in closer detail. As you listen to each piece, first think about what instruments you can hear playing and then, think about the pitch of the music. Write down what you think of and how the music makes you feel in the third column and what the piece could be used for in the fourth column. Finally, just as you did in the starter activity, choose one of the pictures and one of the titles from the selection at the bottom of the page, which you think most closely, matches the mood and character of the piece.

Extract from “Funeral March” – Chopin

Extract from “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” from ‘The Nutcracker’ – Tchaikovsky

Extract from “In the Hall of the Mountain King” from ‘Peer Gynt’ – Grieg

Extract from “Aquarium” from ‘Carnival of the Animals’ – Saint-Saens

Extract 1 was written by the composer of your third set work, Chopin. As with the majority of Chopin’s music, this piece was written for solo piano. This piece of music was taken from Chopin’s “Funeral March” and you probably selected the appropriate title and picture from the bottom of the page to match this. Chopin’s “Funeral March” has become well known in popular culture – you may have even recognised the piece yourself? It was used at the state funerals of John F. Kennedy and was played at the graveside during Chopin’s own burial at Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris. So what makes this piece of “Programme Music” suitable for a funeral?

The pitch of the music was low with a homophonic texture - alternating chords in the left hand part and a sonorous melody in the right hand. You probably noted that the music made you feel sad and this was due to the tonality of the music – in a minor key – often associated with sadness. The tempo was slow and the dynamics soft. The rhythm was smooth, or legato, with the occasional melodic decoration. These musical elements, used in this way, combine to form a piece of programme music suitable for the occasion – listen again to make sure you heard all of the features we’ve described.

Extract from “Funeral March” – Chopin

Extract 2 was taken from a piece of ballet music called “The Nutcracker”, by the romantic composer Tchaikovsky. The correct picture and title for this extract was “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy”. You

probably noted that this piece was written for orchestra – but which instruments, in particular were playing here? Well, the extract begins with a light accompaniment played “pizzicato” on the strings setting the mood for the piece. The melody is played on an instrument called the “celesta” with a bell-like and almost magical timbre and it is this unique tone, which gives this particular piece its programmatic character. The melody is played staccato, giving a light and airy feel. The pitch of the music is wide ranging – sometimes high, sometimes low and the dynamics begin softly but get slightly louder towards the end of the extract. Listen again to make sure you hear the unique timbre of the celesta, the homophonic “melody and accompaniment” texture, wide-ranging pitch and bouncy rhythms which characterise the “Sugar Plum Fairy”.

Extract from “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” from ‘The Nutcracker’ – Tchaikovsky

Extract 3 was a complete contrast to our previous extract. Here, the extract was taken from Edvard Grieg’s “Peer Gynt Suite” and the correct picture and title for this extract was “In the Hall of the Mountain King”. Grieg creates an atmosphere of anticipation and trepidation in this piece of programme music but did you manage to identify how he achieves this? Well, the pitch of the extract is wide-ranging and very high at the end! The entire extract formed part of a gradual crescendo with the dynamics gradually getting louder and the tempo gradually getting faster. Using both the musical elements of dynamics and tempo in this way has often been used by composers of programme music to create a sense of anticipation and excitement in their music. The full romantic symphony orchestra was used and you probably heard drums and the clashes of cymbals adding their own sounds to the thick and dense musical texture. This piece is based on a single melodic phrase, repeated over and over again, but with increasing tempo, dynamics and texture.

Putting this piece in context, the scene which the hero, Peer Gynt, is confronted with reads as follows – “there is a great crowd of troll creatures, gnomes and goblins. The Old Man of the Mountain sits on this throne, with crown and sceptre. There is a tremendous uproar in the hall” – did you have any similar thoughts when you were listening to this extract? Listen again.

Extract from “In the Hall of the Mountain King” from ‘Peer Gynt’ – Grieg

Our final piece of programme music uses the flute and the strings to bring us to a dimly lit underwater world, where fish weave through the water and become visible momentarily as they enter a beam of light. Air bubbles rise to the surface in the form of glissando-like runs on the piano. The piano also represents the swirling waters and a glockenspiel can be heard sparkling in the gloom. The correct picture and title to this piece was, of course, “Aquarium”. You may have recognised some of the instruments we’ve just described and the pitch of the music was predominantly high, often moving chromatically. The soft, subdued dynamics, “rippling” rhythms and the composer’s carefully choice of timbres, using the piano in addition to the orchestra, all added to create the feel of an aquarium. Listen again.

Extract from “Aquarium” from ‘Carnival of the Animals’ – Saint-Saens

Winter Rain

You’ll see we’re going to be comparing this with another piece of programme music which also describes rain, a piece from Vivaldi’s “Winter” movement from “The Four Seasons”. The question which you are required to think about as you listen to each extract and make some notes is given on the left in large print – “How does this music describe the rain?”

We’ve then given you a helpful list of musical elements and features you may like to think about as you listen to each of the pieces. Some of these may be relevant to both or just one of the pieces. You’ll hear

both pieces of music, starting with Vivaldi in their entirety. As you listen make some brief notes as to how each composer creates the atmosphere (or “programme”) of the rain.

Extract 1 – Audio 6 - “Largo” from “Winter” from ‘The Four Seasons’ – Vivaldi

Extract 2 – Audio 7- Prelude No.15 in D flat major, Op.28 – Chopin

The first extract, taken from Vivaldi’s “The Four Seasons” uses a characteristically homophonic “melody and accompaniment” texture to set the mood of the piece. The relatively high-pitch melody is played by a solo violin against a soft accompaniment of the strings which were plucked or played “pizzicato”. This “plucking” timbre, along with the harpsichord’s characteristic light and elegant timbre, both add to creating the feeling of falling rain. The tempo of the piece is slow, perhaps resembling a winter shower, rather than a storm! Some people say that this piece reminds them of sitting around a warm fire watching the rain fall slowly outside through the window. The solo violin part is decorated with melodic decoration – trills and musical ornaments – especially the long trill at the end, perhaps signifying the end of the rain shower and a return to the cold winter sun? The dynamics are consistently soft throughout and the rhythm is smooth and gentle.

The second extract also uses a homophonic “melody and accompaniment” texture. The higher-pitched melody in the right-hand with its motif falling in pitch could be said to describe the raindrops falling as could the dominant pedal in the right hand which persists through the piece. The dynamics of the first section are soft and the use of the sustaining pedal creates a smooth rhythm. Unlike the previous extract, this piece has a contrasting middle section, much darker in mood and perhaps indicating the increasing intensity of the rain. Here, the dynamics become much louder, the pitch lower, the tempo slightly faster and the texture thicker. Finally, the piece returns to the section first heard at the opening of the piece putting it into ternary form – A B A – as the rain shower dies away. The melody, as in the Vivaldi example, is decorated with acciaccaturas and septuplets perhaps showing the movement of the raindrops?

A Colour Symphony

Extract 1 – Blue

Extract 2 – Green

Extract 3 – Red

Extract 4 – Purple

Exploring the Romantic Orchestra

1. The number of string players has been increased (to maintain a balance of sound between the four orchestral sections)
2. The BRASS SECTION has become more ‘weighty’ and ‘sonorous’ – its range and flexibility greatly increased by the invention of the valve system – and now includes four horns, four trumpets, three trombones and a tuba
3. Bass Clarinet, Double/Contra Bassoon, Piccolo and English Horns/Cor Anglais have been added to the WOODWIND SECTION extending the section’s range in PITCH, volume and timbre
4. Timpani have been increased from three to four as well as a range of other instruments which have been added – Tubular Bells, Xylophone, Triangle, Castanets, Cymbals, Snare Drum, Gong and Bass Drum – providing more variety and orchestral colour
5. Piano and Two Harps.

Listening to “Nuages” – Debussy

| ‘Nuages’ – Part 1 | Timing | Melody | Instrument |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Section 1 | 00:00’-00:16’ | A | Clarinet and Bassoon |
| Section 2 | 00:17’-00:40’ | B | Cor Anglais |
| Section 3 | 00:41’-01:26’ | A | Vioins |
| Section 4 | 01:27-02:01’ | B | Cor Anglais |
| ‘Nuages’ – Part 2 | Timing | Melody | Instrument |
| Section 1 | 00:00’-00:31’ | A | Oboe |
| Section 2 | 00:32’-01:38’ | C | Flute and Harp |
| Section 3 | 01:39’-02:21’ | A | Cor Anglais |

Exploring a Nationalist Symphonic Poem

1. Woodwind (high-pitched)
2. Constantly changing **CRESCENDOS** and **DIMINUENDOS** in a short space of time
3. Brass Instruments
4. Rumbles of Thunder are portrayed by rolls on the Timpani/Kettle Drums and Lightning is portrayed by fast ascending scales on high-pitched woodwind and strings accompanied by clashes on the cymbals
5. The rhythm of the demon’s dance is **SYNCOPATED**
6. Woodwind
7. The **TEMPO** and **DYNAMICS** are constantly changing – fast and slow, loud and soft to create dramatic contrast and tension)
8. The music builds to a climax by a gradual **CRESCENDO** and the **TEXTURE** of the music increases and the **TEMPO** gets faster, Themes 3 and 4 are heard, in full and “snippets”
9. Tubular Bells
10. Clarinet then Flute
11. The Flute plays the melody an **OCTAVE LOWER** than heard on the Clarinet
12. The mood is calm and relaxed, the **TEMPO** is much slower, the **TEXTURE** is thinner and the **DYNAMICS** softer

Descriptive Moods

Extract 1 – A Storm at Sea – Ominous-sounding brass (trombones, then trumpets) with dissonant harmonies underpinned by rolls on the timpani and thumps on the bass drum suggesting the violent movements on the water; frantic high-pitched violins against wild-sounding horns and aggressive rhythmic motifs on kettle drums, a rising in pitch and increase in dynamics and a crash on the tam-tam at the climax suggesting the crash of a huge wave

Extract 2 – Birdsong at Sunset – The hour of sunset evoked by calm, serene mood, soft dynamics, fairly slow tempo; birdsong evoked by melodic figures such as woodwind trills (clarinet, then flute and later

piccolo), warm melodic figures on violins; trills on other muted strings suggest rustling leaves; evening bells (celesta, glockenspiel)

Extract 3 – A Flock of Sheep – Bleating and baaing sounds from a flock of sheep suggested by major and minor 2nds on two oboes against a crescendo on discordant muted brass (six horns, three trumpets and three trombones) and clarinets – all played with flutter-tonguing (the players roll the letter “R” as they blow).

Pictures of Sound

The audio extract that accompanies this activity is called “*Dream of a Witches’ Sabbath*” from Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* where the composer sees himself, after death, among witches and monsters. His beloved, transformed into an ugly old hag, dances and mocks at him with funeral bells and chants for the dead.

Exploring Symphonie Fantastique

Part 1 – Dreams

1. Berlioz is very precise about the number of string players giving “at least” quantities and these in themselves are large for a Romantic Orchestra
2. **CON SORDINO** – with a mute
PIZZ – short for **PIZZICATO** where the players ‘pluck’ the strings rather than using the bow
ARCO – ‘bowed’
SOLI – indicates that only one of the (at least 9!) double basses should play
3. Berlioz demands such a range of effects as this is **DESCRIPTIVE MUSIC** and he wants to capture as many different effects and timbres to create his “dream-like” mood
4. Flutes & Violins
5. Fast
6. The composer appears to be in a ‘happy’ mood at this point – fast tempo, major tonality

Part 2 – A Ball

7. The strings play **TREMOLO** – moving the bow rapidly back and forth across the strings
8. The Tremolo strings, together with the sweeping **GLISSANDO** harps and gradual **CRESCENDO** help create a shimmering sound with helps to paint the picture of the sparkling ball gowns and crystal chandeliers in the ballroom
9. The **METRE** is in triple time – 3/8 – although pupils will probably relate 3/4 to a waltz
- 10a – Flute and Oboe (and then Flute and Clarinet thereafter)
- 10b – Clarinet
11. The movement is in Ternary Form.

Part 3 – Scene in the Country

Sample mark scheme:

- The piece starts with an unaccompanied duet (1)
- by an Oboe (1)
- and Cor Anglais (1) creating the impression of the two shepherds.
- The rest of the orchestra is silent giving the impression of stillness (1).
- The Tempo is very slow and relaxed (1).

The Texture is thin (1).

The strings enter later playing Tremolo chords give a calm effect (1).

Part 4 – March to the Scaffold

13. Rhythm A

14. a) Low Strings (Cellos and Double Basses) first play Theme A followed by

b) Violins when it is repeated

15. a) The tonality is **MINOR**

b) This is suitable to describe the sad and menacing mood of a 'beheading'

16. a) The tonality of Theme B is **MAJOR** in contrast to Theme A which is minor

b) The Rhythm is like a March and is stately in character and opens with the rhythm (Rhythm A from question 13) from the beginning of the movement.)

Part 5 – Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

17. The key/tonality has been changed to a higher key than the original (C major to E flat major) giving the effect of higher pitch, the tempo has been increased to Allegro to match the gathering of the monsters in this scene, ornaments (acciaccaturas and trills) have been added as a form of melodic decoration, the metre has been changed from 4/4 to 6/8 giving it a dance-like feel, there is a loud orchestral fortissimo signalling a "howl of joy" as his beloved's arrival and the Idée Fixe continues in the woodwinds with bassoons with a "laughing feel".

18. Bassoons

19. Brass

20. It's repeated at double the tempo/speed

Plenary

Discuss responses but ensure the "unifying" feature, the fact that it brings familiarity to the listener each time it occurs and the fact that it is available for musical manipulation into a number of different moods and effects depending on the intents of the composer through different movements and sections of the music.