

# Year 9 Music Knowledge Booklet

## Topic 2 Songwriting

Name:

Class:



# Year 9 Music

## Songwriting

This term you will be working in groups to produce a song. At this stage in Year 9, you are expected to be able to decide on a sensible group in which to work and to use all the skills you have developed over the last 2+ years.

Provided you are able to work sensibly, this project will be almost entirely student-led which means you can put your own stamp on the music you create, but will require your independent learning skills!

- ⇒ Your project can be in any style
- ⇒ You can work on your own or in groups up to 5
- ⇒ Certain elements are compulsory and will form your assessment criteria

## Big Questions

1. What elements make up a good song?
2. What is a song concept and how can this help to write lyrics?
3. Why is structure important in music?
4. What is a chord and how is it used?
5. How do I create a chord sequence?
6. How do I create a melody that fits with my chord sequence?
7. How do I use elements like texture, tempo and dynamics to enhance my song?
8. How can I improve my song ready for assessment?
9. How well can my group perform our song?

# Background Information

## What do we mean by popular music?

Popular music is used as a general term to cover lots of styles such as:

- rock
- pop
- Reggae
- hip-hop

Originally there was a clear distinction between popular and classical music. Nowadays the distinction can be more blurred with the two areas of music influencing each other.

## Origins of popular music

Modern pop music has been influenced by many styles.

European settlers began travelling to America in the 16th Century and brought with them all of their different musical and cultural experiences.

Slaves were brought from Africa to America in the 17th Century. Elements of black African music, such as rhythms and use of pentatonic scales, have played a major part in developing music in America along with European musical styles. The combination of African and European musical elements resulted in new styles of popular American music - including ragtime, blues and jazz.

## Blues

The blues is a style of music created by African Americans at the end of the 19th Century. It developed out of folk music, spiritual songs and work songs. Following the American Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, the blues spread throughout America as African American people were now free to travel. The blues became popular in cities such as Chicago and Detroit.

The blues would have been originally performed by a solo singer accompanied by guitar or banjo. The lyrics of a blues song would be full of emotion and would tell the story of life and longing for better days.

Blues in simple time with four beats in the bar and mostly follows a 12 bar blues chord structure. 8 and 16 bar blues can also sometimes be found.

Blues verses have a three line structure - AAB - where the first line is repeated. Originally this allowed time for the singer to make up the last line.

### Blues notes

Some notes used in blues music may be flattened by a semitone. These are normally the third, fifth or seventh notes of the scale. Guitarists can also 'bend' notes. This was originally used in blues music to make a sound like a human cry.

## Jazz

Jazz emerged as a new style of music in the early twentieth century in the African American communities of New Orleans. Jazz has its origins in blues and ragtime. Jazz features lots of improvisation, which requires musicians to:

- creatively explore and experiment with sound
- express themselves
- listening carefully to themselves and the people they make music with
- respond to the improvisation of people they are playing with

All of this is done spontaneously, with musicians having to react in real time to what is going on around them.

Syncopation is a common feature in the rhythm. This is where emphasis is put on rhythms that are off the beat.

There are many different styles of jazz, eg:

- trad, New Orleans or Dixieland jazz - style originating from music played in New Orleans in the early 20th Century
- bebop - style from the 1940s featuring fast tempo, complex harmonies and lots of improvisation
- cool jazz - a more laid back style from the late 1940s
- Latin jazz - jazz featuring rhythms from Latin American music
- jazz fusion - style from the late 1960s that mixes jazz with blues, funk, rock and other styles

The original New Orleans trad jazz style would have typical instrumentation of trumpet or cornet, trombone, clarinet, banjo, double bass or tuba and drum kit.

The texture in New Orleans, or Dixieland, jazz was very polyphonic and contained lots of improvisation. This means that there were lots of parts weaving in and out of each other.

Trombone glissando - sliding between notes - was a feature in this style of jazz and was known as 'tailgate trombone'.

Musicians playing jazz sometimes use pentatonic scales and blues scales to play improvisations.

Jazz music can be played by lots of different types of instruments and by different sizes of band. A twenty-piece big band is made up of trumpets, trombones, saxophones, rhythm section and sometimes a vocalist. A jazz trio often contains a piano or other instrument to play the melody, with double bass and drums providing the rhythm.

# Background Information

## Gospel

Gospel music has its origins in the hymns, spirituals and sacred songs found in Afro-American culture in the 18th and 19th Century.

Gospel songs were originally sung by African slaves. Lyrics related to escaping to freedom, with a religious element often in praise or giving thanks to God.

Today gospel music is performed by choirs made up of soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices. Often the music is a cappella. Sometimes choirs will clap to provide a rhythmic accompaniment to their singing.

Many gospel songs feature prominent sections for solo singers. The solo singer, or lead vocalist, may improvise around the melody while the rest of the choir sing backing vocals in harmony in a homophonic style. A common structure used in gospel music is question and answer, or call and response, sections.

## Rock 'n' roll

Rock 'n' roll is a style of popular music that emerged from America in the 1950s. It has its roots in various African-American styles of music, such as blues, jazz and gospel, and in country music. It was played by both African American and white musicians.

There were many technological developments during this era. Audiences could listen to rock 'n' roll music on the radio and increasingly watch them on television. Mass production of 45 rpm vinyl records, or singles, meant that music could be bought cheaply and easily.

The introduction of the electric guitar was a key development in the sound of rock 'n' roll.

Teenage culture started to develop in the 1950s. Rock 'n' roll was the first style of music to appeal to the new young audience. It was often disapproved of by the older generation, and so represented a sense of youthful rebellion.

Teenagers could identify with rock 'n' roll songs. Lyrics were about subjects such as young love, school, parents and cars. Rock 'n' roll songs allowed young people an opportunity to express their emotions and experiences.

Rock 'n' roll songs were meant for dancing to. They had fast tempos, simple time and syncopated rhythms in the melody.

Many rock 'n' roll songs followed the 12 bar blues chord structure.

## Pop

Many new styles of popular music have emerged since rock 'n' roll burst onto the scene in the 1950s.

Rock 'n' roll had a huge cultural impact that united teenagers in the 1950s. In today's world, however, there are many different teenage subcultures and a bigger variety of styles of pop music.

Structure is something that is common to all pop songs, no matter what style it is. Listen out for the verse and chorus in any of your favourite songs. The song may have an introduction and also a middle eight.

Contemporary artists are usually influenced by musicians from the past and will sometimes perform cover versions of songs that have been released in the past that they like.

## Rock

Today's rock music developed from rock 'n' roll. It can come in many different styles but usually features:

- electric guitar
- bass guitar
- drum kit

Most rock bands also feature a singer. The songs written by rock bands usually have powerful lyrics and the music underpinned by a heavy beat.

It is important to consider structure when listening to rock songs. They feature a verse and chorus structure and there will often be a middle eight.

Distortion is an effect frequently used on electric guitar in rock music. This means changing the normal sound of a guitar in order to make it more 'fuzzy'.

## Rap

Rapping is a style of vocal delivery that is key to rap and hip-hop music. A rapper, also known as an MC, must be able to rap in time with a steady beat.

Rap focuses on rhythm as opposed to melody or harmony. A rapper will improvise, or 'freestyle', lyrics in time with an accompaniment.

Rap originated in the Bronx in New York in the 1970s. Its vocal roots lie in a Jamaican technique called 'toasting' - a cross between chanting and talking performed by Jamaican MCs.

# Knowledge Organiser - Songwriting

## KEYWORDS

**Structure** How music is organised

**Verse** Repeating section with the same music but different words

**Chorus** Repeating section with the same music and words

**Intro** A section before the main body of the song

**Outro** A section that goes at the end of a song

**Instrumental** A section where voices drop out and only instruments play

**Hook** A short musical idea designed to catch the ear of the listener

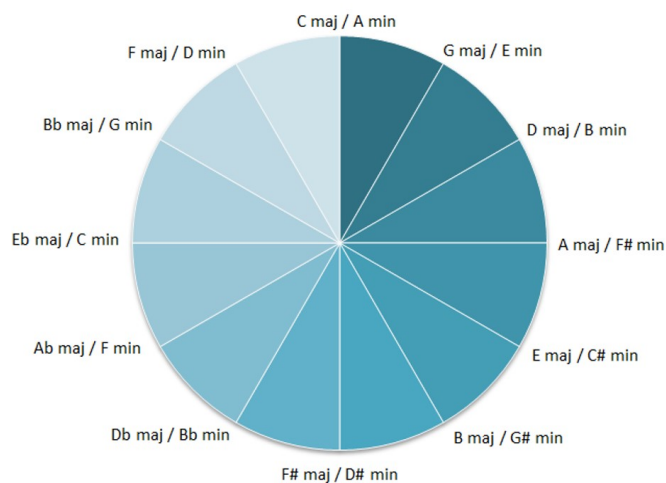
**Harmony** The chords and accompaniment to go with the main melody

**Chord** A group of three or more notes played together (triad)

**Major** A happy-sounding chord

**Minor** A sad-sounding chord

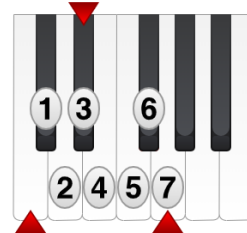
## Cycle of Fifths



**MAJOR CHORD**



**MINOR CHORD**



**Treble Clef Notes**

**Bass Clef Notes**

## Homework Tasks

### 1) Knowledge Organiser

Read and study the Knowledge Organiser page, especially the key terms. Be ready to be assessed on this during next lesson's Engage Task.

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2) Music Industry Careers Tasks

Research and create a job profile on one of the following roles in the music industry:

- ⇒ Arranger
- ⇒ Sound Engineer
- ⇒ Producer
- ⇒ Orchestra Manager
- ⇒ Editor

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3) Topic 2 Assessment Revision

Use your Knowledge Booklet to revise for your Topic 2 assessment, which will be based on your understanding of key terms and how to construct major and minor chords.

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Assessment (Written)

Written assessment on key terms and concepts studied.

⇒ Q: What is a verse?

A: A repeating section with the same music but different lyrics

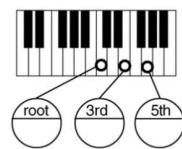
⇒ Q: Shade in the notes of a C minor chord



⇒ Q: Name this chord 1 : Chord of \_\_\_\_\_

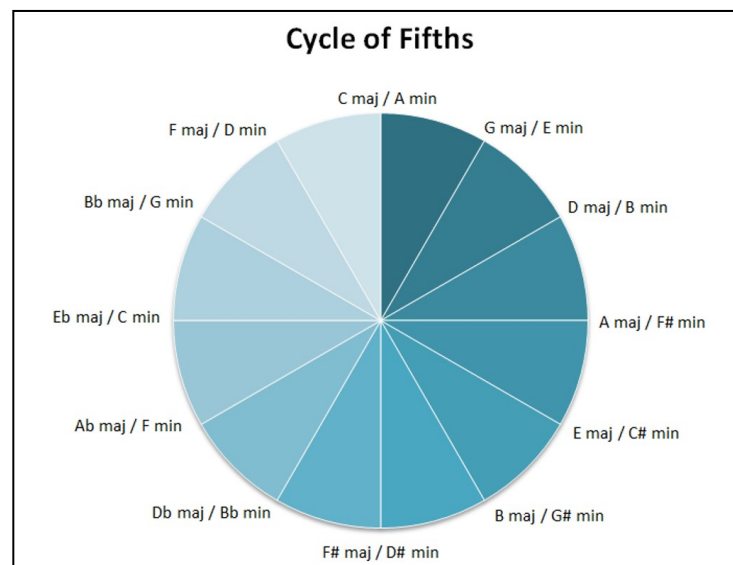
A: C E G

C major



## Sample Assessment (Practical)

You will be assessed on your ability to play a related four-chord sequence fluently, with extra marks available for interesting rhythms, a right-hand melody or other features.

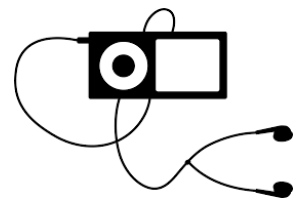




## Further Understanding

### WIDER LISTENING

Listen to as many different styles of music and artists as possible



### WIDER WATCHING

<https://youtu.be/A4dPIpX9JNY>



- What elements make up a good song? (used in lessons)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFIcLTqzIR8>

- Beginner's Guide to Garageband

<https://www.musictheory.net/lessons/40>

- Introduction to Chords

<https://www.song-lyrics-generator.org.uk/>

- Lyrics Generator

### WIDER READING

