Unit 4: Song Composition Through Form Study

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **Ongoing**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

This unit guides students to transition from instrumental performance to composing their own original songs while mastering foundational musical forms. Focusing closely on common pop, rock, and blues structures, students will analyze alternating verse-chorus patterns and classic AABA formats to explore the deep interplay between chord progressions, lyrics, and melodies. Throughout the unit, they cycle through the entire creative process by brainstorming ideas, drafting lyric sheets, organizing structural sections, and compiling professional chord charts or lead sheets. Ultimately, collaborative peer critiques and self-assessments help students refine their drafts, allowing them to find their unique artistic voice while solidifying core musical literacy.

Revised: August 2026

Standards

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.3D.12nov.Cr1a	Create melodic, rhythmic and harmonic ideas for simple melodies as well as chordal accompaniments for given melodies.
1.3D.12nov.Cr2a	Use standard notation or audio/video recording to document melodic, rhythmic and harmonic ideas for drafts of simple melodies as well as chordal accompaniments for given melodies.
1.3D.12nov.Cr3a	Apply teacher or student-provided criteria to critique, improve and refine drafts of simple melodies as well as chordal accompaniments for given melodies.
1.3D.12nov.Cr3b	Share final versions of simple melodies and chordal accompaniments for given melodies, demonstrating an understanding of how to develop and organize personal musical ideas.
1.3D.12nov.Pr4a	Describe and demonstrate how a varied collection of music that includes melodies, repertoire pieces, and chordal accompaniments is selected, based on personal interest, music reading skills, technical skill, and the performance context.
1.3D.12nov.Pr4b	Identify prominent melodic and harmonic characteristics in a varied collection of music that includes melodies, repertoire pieces and chordal accompaniments selected for performance, including some based on reading standard notation.
1.3D.12nov.Pr4c	Demonstrate and describe an understanding of the context and expressive intent in a varied collection of music selected for performance that includes melodies, repertoire pieces and chordal accompaniments.
1.3D.12nov.Pr5a	Apply teacher or student-provided criteria to critique individual performances of a varied collection of music that includes melodies, repertoire pieces and chordal accompaniments selected for performance. Apply practice strategies to address performance challenges

	and refine the performances.
1.3D.12nov.Pr6a	Perform with expression and technical accuracy a varied collection of music that includes melodies, repertoire pieces and chordal accompaniments, while demonstrating an understanding of the audience and the context.
1.3D.12nov.Re7a	Identify reasons for selecting music based on characteristics found in the music, connection to interest and purpose or context.
1.3D.12nov.Re7b	Identify and describe how interest, experiences and contexts (e.g., personal, social) effect the evaluation of music.
1.3D.12nov.Re8a	Identify interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical selections, referring to the elements of music, context (e.g., personal, social), and the setting of the text (when appropriate).
1.3D.12nov.Re9a	Identify how knowledge of context and the use of repetition, similarities and contrasts inform the response to music.
1.3C.12nov.Cn10a	Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.
1.3C.12nov.Cn11a	Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts and daily life.

Objectives

- ● Compose songs in common rock and pop forms.
- Analyze the relationship between lyrical themes and musical structures (e.g., verse, chorus, bridge, pre-chorus) to create expressive compositions.
- Evaluate and refine their original musical drafts using structured aesthetic and technical peer feedback.
- Utilize standard notation or recording tools to document their melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic drafts.

Essential Questions

- ● How do I write a chord chart/lead sheet?
- ● What chord progressions are commonly used in each style?
- ● What does form mean in relation to music and how are songs structured?
- ● What essential rhythms are commonly used in each style?
- ● What strumming and/or picking patterns are commonly used in each style?
- How can I use specific chord selections to evoke specific emotional responses that support my song's lyrics?

Enduring Understandings

- ● Creating a lead sheet/chord chart provides a map to the form of their composition.
- ● Styles of music have specific, recognizable characteristics.
- Musical form serves as a structural framework that organizes a songwriter’s ideas, guiding both the performers and the listener through the expressive arc of the piece.

- Songwriting is a process of experimentation, critique, and revision where technical constraints can be used to spark new creative ideas.

Students Will Know

- How to notate their creations to allow others to perform them.
- That there are many methods used in the creative process of composition.
- What a lead sheet/chord chart should look like and how to create one.
- Basic harmonic formulas (like the I-V-vi-IV progression) commonly used in contemporary popular music.
- The distinct purpose of standard song elements, such as the introduction, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, bridge, and outro.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- Creating their own songs by using common forms, progressions, and melodies.
- Writing their music down using conventional music notation/chord charts.
- Communicating feedback based on shared rubrics to help peers refine draft compositions.
- Structuring a lyric sheet with clear indications of song segments.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

- Advanced students will create a lead sheet for their composition.
- Criteria for these tasks will be visual and aural. All tasks will be evaluated for accuracy.
- Students will create a chord chart of their composition.
- The student will be required to compose original works that demonstrate aspects of music that are stylistically appropriate.

Learning Plan

- Song Intent clear
- Demonstrate how a chord chart is created over the lyrics.
- Discuss and demo how a song can be created from a chord progression, or set of lyrics, a melody.
- Have students create a chord chart over a familiar song.
- Have students create a visual map of form examples using the lyrics as a guide.
- Have students identify form of song and style attributions.
- Have students sketch out their song on paper, chords over lyrics.
- Introduce by example various song forms through styles of pop, rock and blues
- Provide time for students to experiment in the development of a chord progression, set of lyrics or melody.

- Provide visual maps for examples of forms through lyrics
- Song cohesiveness
- Students will develop rubric attributes for song analysis and performance (to be considered)
- Students will self-assess and peer assess composition and performance.
- Students with advanced notation skills will write their melodies down on staff paper in traditional notation.

Materials

- Access to basic keyboard or digital audio software (e.g., GarageBand, BandLab, or Flat.io) for students who wish to draft compositions digitally.
- Blank paper
- Blank staff paper
- Pencil or pen
- Recording device to remember and work with new ideas

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

- Extra time will be allowed for students to compose if needed.
- Gifted students could be given more advanced composition devices to work with and be required to create a lead sheet in traditional notation.
- The teacher will provide the student with a chord progression or melody to work from.