Unit 01: Listening to Music

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **2 weeks, then ongoing throughout the course**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Music is an aural art form. Those who study, practice, perform, or simply appreciate music should be able to critically listen to music. Critical listening goes beyond taste, fondness, and preference of certain music. Critical listening is a skill that when honed, allows the listener to consider the effects of specific elements of music and understand why music is appreciated and enjoyed, and consequently, why it elicits certain responses from an audience. Listening is an essential part of understanding how music is constructed and composed.

Revision Date: July 2026

Standards

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law

In accordance with New Jersey's Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including: economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance.

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

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1.3B.12prof.Cr1a	Describe how sounds and short musical ideas can be used to represent personal experiences, moods, visual images, and/or storylines.
1.3B.12prof.Cr3a	Identify, describe and apply teacher-provided criteria to assess and refine the technical and expressive aspects of evolving drafts leading to final versions.
1.3B.12prof.Cr3b	Share music through the use of notation, performance or technology, and demonstrate how the elements of music have been employed to realize expressive intent.
1.3E.12prof.Pr4a	Develop and explain the criteria used for selecting varied sound resources based on interest, music reading skills, and an understanding of the performer's musical and technological skill.
1.3B.12prof.Pr4a	Identify and select specific excerpts, passages, or sections in musical works that express a personal experience, mood, visual image, or storyline in simple forms (e.g., one-part, cyclical, binary).
1.3E.12prof.Pr4b	Describe how context, structural aspects of the music, and digital media/tools inform prepared and improvised performances.
1.3B.12prof.Pr4b	Analyze how the elements of music (including form) of selected works relate to style and mood and explain the implications for rehearsal or performance.
1.3E.12prof.Pr4c	Identify the context, expressive challenges, and use of digital tools in a varied repertoire of music influence prepared or improvised performances.
1.3B.12prof.Pr4c	Develop interpretations of works based on an understanding of the use of elements of music, style and mood, explaining how the interpretive choices reflect the creator's intent.
1.3B.12prof.Pr5a	Create rehearsal plans for works, identifying repetition and variation within the form.
1.3B.12prof.Pr5b	Using established criteria and feedback, identify the way(s) in which performances convey the elements of music, style and mood.
1.3B.12prof.Pr5c	Identify and implement strategies for improving the technical and expressive aspects of multiple works.
1.3B.12prof.Pr6a	Share live or recorded performances of works (both personal and others') and explain how the elements of music are used to convey intent.
1.3B.12prof.Pr6b	Identify how compositions are appropriate for an audience or context, and how this will shape future compositions.
1.3E.12prof.Re7a	Cite reasons for choosing music based on the use of the elements of music, digital and electronic aspects, and connections to interest or purpose.
1.3E.12prof.Re7b	Explain how knowledge of the structure (e.g., repetition, similarities, contrasts), technological aspects, and purpose of the music informs the response.
1.3B.12prof.Re7a	Apply teacher-provided criteria to select music that expresses a personal experience, mood, visual image, or storyline in simple forms (e.g., one-part, cyclical, binary), and describe the choices as models for composition.
1.3B.12prof.Re7b	Analyze aurally and/or by reading the elements of music (including form) of musical works, relating them to style, mood and context, and describe how the analysis provides models for personal growth as a composer, performer and/or listener.
1.3E.12prof.Re8a	Explain and support an interpretation of the expressive intent of musical selections based on treatment of the elements of music, digital and electronic features, and purpose.
1.3B.12prof.Re8a	Develop and explain interpretations of varied works, demonstrating an understanding of the composer's intent by citing technical and expressive aspects as well as the style/genre of each work.
1.3E.12prof.Re9a	Evaluate music using criteria based on analysis, interpretation, digital and electronic

	features, and personal interests.
1.3B.12prof.Re9a	Describe the effectiveness of the technical and expressive aspects of selected music and performances, demonstrating an understanding of the fundamentals of music theory.
1.3B.12prof.Cn10a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.
1.3B.12prof.Cn11	Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding.
1.3B.12prof.Cn10a	Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.
1.3B.12prof.Cn11a	Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts and daily life.
1.3B.12prof.Cn11	Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

Essential Questions

- How does a listener separate their personal musical tastes from a critical, objective evaluation of a piece?
- How does the historical, cultural, or social context of a piece of music shape how we hear and respond to it?
- What do I hear when I listen to music?
- What is music?
- Why does music often elicit an emotional response from the listener?

Enduring Understandings

- A listener's interpretation of a musical work is deeply enriched by examining its relationship to its historical, cultural, and social context.
- Critical listening that allows us to analyze how a piece of music is constructed and why it affects an audience.
- Music can be described as having objective qualities which allow us to think and speak about music in a critical way.

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- How to listen to music for the elements listed above.
- How to write about what they hear in music.
- Key terms and vocabulary, including pitch, rhythm, meter, tempo, dynamics, melody, harmony, tonality, texture, form, timbre, instrumentation.
- Understanding why they like a piece of music, or why they do not like a piece of music.

Learning Plan

- Periodically throughout the course teacher assigns listening assignments, with both live and recorded examples, and students describe the music/sounds they hear. Teacher provides both open-ended and specific, as well as objective and subjective questions for students to which students respond in narrative form.
- Preview the essential questions and return to them throughout the course, in discussion and written assignments.
- Students create/perform/bring in their own musical examples to discuss why they like them. The class practices critical listening and dissects the objective elements from which the piece is composed.
- Teacher and students define the elements of music and the terminology associated with each element, including pitch, rhythm, meter, tempo, dynamics, melody, harmony, tonality, texture, form, timbre, and instrumentation.
- Teacher leads discussion trying to answer the question, "what is music?" Students discuss and write reflections.
- Teacher provides guided listening examples in class, asking students "what do you hear?" Teacher and students begin to label and define the objective elements of music as they listen to a variety of musical examples from classical, popular, and folk traditions.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Performing Arts students demonstrate differentiated proficiency according to their ability to answer the essential questions through formative and summative assessments. Evidence of progression may be demonstrated in divergent ways through the Artistic Processes of Creating, Performing/Presenting/Producing, Connecting, and Responding.

- Create a personal, working definition of "music."
- Define and explain the basic elements of music.
- Identify the basic elements of music within heard music, using appropriate vocabulary, both in discussion and in written form through listening assignments.
- Listen to music with a critical ear.
- Understand and provide objective and subjective responses to heard music.

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, supplemental, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

- A wide variety of music recordings, including music from classical, popular, and folk traditions, found and shared by both teacher and students.

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations: Performing Arts Accommodations & Modifications