

Paper No. 1 Instructions

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Purpose

With this paper you will practice analyzing music. You will also work on your writing skills, specifically on transferring what you hear into accurate, descriptive prose.

Instructions

- Copy/paste the document titled **Paper #1 Template and Example** into your own new, blank document and delete everything that is not in bold print.
- Choose a song you would like to analyze (you must provide a YouTube link in your paper.)
- Review the relevant sections of the Terminological Starter.
- Write an 800-word paper broken into five sections as indicated below. (Note: the template itself does not contribute to the word count.) This paper will consist of filling in the categories on the template.

Grading

Paper 1 is worth 200 points, broken down as follows:

- Sections 1-5 are each worth 40 points:
 - 0-15 points: the terms in question are clearly understood (the key to scoring highly is not restating definitions, but rather using them in such a way that it is clear you have grasped their meaning).
 - 0-15 points: you cite specific moments in the song in support of your analytical observations, and, at least once in each section, link those observations to the expressive goals of the song (or explain that there are no expressive connections to be made in a given case).
 - 0-5 points: the grader can hear what you describe.
 - 0-5 points: your English is up to the task.
- Deductions:
 - Papers under the 800-word minimum will lose 30 points. (Why a standard deduction here rather than a sliding one? Because the shorter the paper, the more likely it will also lose points in the other categories described above.)

Template and Example

(Reminder: remove everything that is not in bold print.)

Name:

Song Title, Group, and Youtube Link:

Example:

“Marcie,” by *Joni Mitchell*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvxZSp1QN9I>

Section 1: Duple or Triple Meter (or both or something else): explain which you hear and how/where you can hear it. Locate at least one syncopation and one instance of dotted rhythms, or state unequivocally that there are no such instances.

Example:

This song is clearly in duple meter. I hear one measure of duple meter for each

line of the lyrics. In the first line the word “Marcie” comes just after beat one and “coats” lands on beat three; then in the second line, “stops” comes just after beat one, “candy” on beat three. Having said that, the vocal part is so fluid that it is sometimes hard to hear the meter there; it is the very regular guitar part that provides the accents necessary to identify the meter. I hear the guitar play the lowest note of the harmony on every first beat of the measure. There is constant syncopation in the vocal part as a result of the metrical fluidity mentioned earlier. For one example of many, listen to Mitchell’s delivery of “PEA-ches” at 1:27; “Pea” arrives just before the third beat, and is thus by definition syncopated. While the song contains no extended passages in dotted rhythms, isolated cases of the latter are scattered throughout. At :23, Joni Mitchell sings “Greens are sour” to the rhythm of long-short-long (plus another long), and in so doing repeats the guitar-melody first heard at :03.

Meter does not always function expressively in a song, but in the case of “Marcie” it is not hard to hear how it plays a role in advancing the meaning: the regularity of the beat as established by the guitar allows Joni Mitchell great freedom to declaim her poetry in the fluid style already mentioned. This fluidity in turn becomes her chief means of prioritizing the syllables of the text.

Sometimes she rushes, whereas other times she lingers, always according to the meaning. Once again, the expressive effect is dependent on the regularity of the meter.

Section 2: Major and/or Minor Harmonies: explain which you think you hear, where in the song, and why. Be sure to clarify if you're labeling the entire song as major and minor or simply a specific moment. &&Also Dissonance.

Example:

Despite the fact that this is a very sad song, it is usually in major harmonies. (We have learned that on rare occasions, major can be even sadder than minor; in this song the major harmonies create a bittersweet quality.) Every second line ends on the major tonic, in my opinion. An exception to this "major" orientation is the B section that begins "And summer goes..." Here Mitchell shifts briefly into minor, which seems to reveal most directly the sadness underlying the song.

If the song ultimately defines a major key, it is nevertheless ambiguous in its major/minor orientation; while lines end in a clear key, they seldom begin there. And then there is this B section with its different (and minor) key altogether. The song is about Marcie's uncertain waiting, and it seems to me that the way Mitchell hints at keys without firmly committing to them helps to express this uncertainty.

In class we learned that consonance tends to exude stability, while dissonance leans in the opposite direction. Mitchell uses dissonance very skillfully to keep us ill-at-ease, just like Marcie. For example, at the end of the B section, she holds the word "sea" on a single note over a series of harmonies, some of which are dissonant against that pitch.

Section 3: Conjunct and/or Disjunct melody: locate one or both of these melodic styles within the song (be specific about where), and explain why you think you're correct. Address melodic shape as well.

Example:

During most of the song the melody is very conjunct. It is as if Joni Mitchell lacks the energy to make big leaps. The first line, "Marcie in a coat of flowers," is entirely conjunct, in fact. Above I mentioned that "And summer goes" shifts the song temporarily from major into minor harmonies; likewise, it brings some temporary disjunct motion that has the similar effect of revealing the true pain behind the song. Listen for the big leaps at the words "brown paper." The melodic shape can be described as a) small rising lines that b) repeat ever lower. The opening seconds with the guitar solo define this motion, as do the verses that follow. This too is

expressive, for Marcie carries on her day-to-day activities with hope (hence the little rising lines) while ultimately leading a sad existence (conveyed by the slow drop in these rising melodic lines).

Section 4: Homophony and/or Polyphony: locate one or both of these textures within the song (be specific about where), and explain why you think you're correct.

Example:

“Marcie” is nearly entirely homophonic. The listener’s focus is on the words as delivered in the vocal melody. Everything else is purely accompanimental, with the exception of the little rising guitar melody that sometimes connects the end of one line of lyrics to the next. You can hear this at :28, and since the rising guitar melody is copying the vocal melody, you could call this imitative polyphony.

Section 5: Other: choose at least one term from the Terminological Starter and explain where you think you hear it in the song and why. You can also discuss musical traits not found on the Terminological Starter if you wish.

Example:

I will briefly discuss 1) rubato and 2) the chord progression behind the verses. Joni Mitchell infuses nearly the entire song with rubato. If you tap the beats, you can tell that she speeds up and slows down, sometimes falling behind the beat and sometimes rushing ahead of it. A good example of this comes at around :38 at the words, “Dust her tables.” The chord progression throughout most of the song descends; each harmony drops one step lower than the previous one. This conveys the depressing nature of the lyrics.