Student Listening Guide
Middle School Level

Listening is more than hearing music. Listening can be an active process where students receive, construct meaning from and respond to and about music. This way, listening is an integral part of understanding, comprehending and appreciating music. Listening comprehension embraces musical comprehension.

Every type of music, whether classical, contemporary or jazz, has its unique qualities but all stem from the same basic material and foundation. Teachers can help students become effective listeners by making them aware of the different kinds, purposes and qualities of listening. The first step is to understand the different approaches to listening as described here:

**Comprehensive (Informational) Listening:** Discerning the intent of the composition while considering the elements used to achieve the effect. Understanding the overall effect and synergy of the music.

**Critical (Evaluative) Listening:** The breaking down of the composition to a structural level. Examining each element of the composition and its role in the overall structure.

**Appreciative (Aesthetic) Listening:** Allowing the music to simply be in the room and part of the surroundings without consideration or analysis.

**Therapeutic (Empathetic) Listening:** Gaining an emotional understanding of the intent of the composition. Listening produces an emotional response that is individual to the person. No analyzing is required in this form of listening as the individual is drawn into the composition fully.

This Student Listening Guide can be utilized with activity guides or independently and encourages students to listen in all four ways. This is intended to allow for the complete understanding of the music while remaining rooted in a common musical foundation. Students are encouraged to listen as critically as possible in order to understand the music being studied.

**Wisconsin’s Model Academic Standards for Music:** This listening guide corresponds with the following Model Academic Standards for Music:

**Music Response:**
Analysis - F.8.1-3
Evaluation - G.8.1-4

**Music Connections:**
The Arts - H.8.1-3
History and Culture - I.8.1-3
Analysis and Evaluation: Students learn to appreciate music when he/she understands how the elements are organized. The ability to analyze music is the foundation for understanding. This ability enables listeners to make informed decisions and develop appreciation for the music he/she hears or performs.

- **Instrumentation:** Examine the combination and use of instrumentation (including voice) and how composers explore soundscapes. This exploration of sounds and contrasts while all using the same available source results in a wide variety of contrasts and textures.

Activity: Identify the instruments that you hear in the recording:

1. Brass: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. Woodwind: ______________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. Strings: _________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

4. Percussion: ______________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5. Other: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Identify the type of ensemble indicated by the combination of instruments:

_____ Concert Band  _____ Orchestra

_____ Choir  _____ Jazz Ensemble

_____ Other _______________________________________

- **Elements of Music:** The elements of music are common to all musical styles. Understanding the musical elements allows for a better understanding by the listener. This knowledge will allow the listener to think and hear as the composer thinks and hears.
  
  - Melody:
    
    a. Is it mostly ascending or descending?
b. Does it move mostly by steps or leaps?
c. Do different parts have different characteristics?

- **Harmony:**
  a. Is it major or minor?
  b. Is it consonant or dissonant?
  c. Is the harmonic progression logical or surprising?

- **Rhythm:**
  a. Is the song in duple or triple meter?
  b. Does the rhythm have any stylistic attributes?
  c. Is the clapping on the downbeat or the upbeat?

- **Tone Color:**
  a. What instruments are used?
  b. What are the names of the two vocal ranges?
  c. What are the four voice parts represented?
  d. Do the performers shape the music in any special way?

- **Form:**
  a. By using letters such as A and B, what is the structure?
  b. Is there a common name for the structure discovered?
  c. Is there a verse to the song?
  d. How does the structure move the song forward?

- **Expression:**
  a. What is the dynamic range of the performance?
  b. What other elements lend to the expression?
  c. Are there differences and similarities between sections?

**Activity:** Discuss the Six (6) Elements of Music and the relationship to this composition:

1. **Melody:**
   _____________________________________
   _____________________________________

2. **Harmony:**
   _____________________________________
   _____________________________________

3. **Rhythm:**
   _____________________________________
   _____________________________________

4. **Tone Color:**
   _____________________________________
   _____________________________________

5. **Form:**
   _____________________________________
   _____________________________________

6. **Expression:**
   _____________________________________
   _____________________________________
Activity: Consider the Overall Effect of the Music:

A. Consider dynamics and range by drawing the shape of the music. What is the overall shape?

B. Are there trends in the shape?

C. Are there multiple highpoints or just one?

D. How would you describe this selection to another person?

E. How does the music make you feel?

F. Does the selection sound like anything you have heard before?

G. What is the emotional impact of the music?

H. Does the music make a connection with you as the listener? Why or why not?

The Arts: Relating music to the other arts, as well as outside the arts, increases understanding. Building connections allows for the understanding of a culture as a whole and the relationships of the parts.

Activity: Discuss or Complete the Following:

A. Compare and contrast the musical composition to other art forms from the same time period. Consider art, theater, literature and/or fashion.

B. Compare and contrast the highlights of other disciplines from the same time as the musical composition. Draw a timeline for twenty years before and after the musical selection. Add highlights from art, theater, literature and/or fashion.

C. Research people from art, theater, literature and/or fashion working at the same time as the composer. Also consider people in science, math, politics, etc. Consider similarities and differences.

History and Culture: Music mirrors historical events and cultural relationships that are connected to the present and an indicator of the past. By relating music to history and culture there is greater understanding of the music.

Activity: Discuss or Complete the Following:

A. What historical events occurred when the music was composed?
B. Develop a timeline indicating historical and cultural events from the same time as the music was written. Does the music affect historical events or is it a reaction of historical events.

C. Is the selection programmatic in nature? If it is programmatic, what is the story behind the music? If it is not programmatic, is there another basis for the composition?

D. Research historical information on the composer.

E. If the composer is still alive, try to connect and see if he/she will share the thought process behind the music.

F. Compare and contrast other music from the same musical period.