

This listening assignment may be of use for all sections of MUS 361. It can be given a few times over the course of a semester and conducted as a class discussion, with the teacher issuing questions on the music in a handout before hand. The basis for this assignment is a listening list comprising pieces of music laid out chronologically and streamed for easy access. These pieces are not among those slated for study in the syllabus (which I assume is also laid out chronologically). Students are required to listen to a specified number of works from the list for each assignment. Related to the aim of inculcating the practice of critical and thoughtful listening is the practice of critical thinking, and the questions below are posed with this in mind. Samples of the music may be played for the purpose of illustration and recall during discussion as need be.

Listening Assignment:

Among the essential skills that a trained musician should have is the ability to identify the stylistic traits and origins of a piece of music and to be able to explain the reasons for the identification. As you listen to this group of pieces in your own time in preparation for this assignment, I would like you to consider the following questions and be prepared to respond to them in class, from the notes that you have made if you like. You should listen to the music with the score, for then you can know exactly what is happening in the music as it is being played. Listening with the score will also help you to improve your musical memory, which is a valuable thing to have. The questions below are borrowed or adapted from the various Elements of Thought in the Paul-Elder framework for critical thinking that I have discussed previously.¹ They serve as a guide to help you to sort out your thinking. In answering them, remember to take into account not only the music itself, but also the historical and aesthetic contexts.

Purpose: What is the main aim of this exercise?

Question: What style is this piece of music written in? Is the style consistent throughout?

Information: What information from the music am I using to identify this style? Is there non-musical information that I can use as well in my identification?

Concepts: What are the main concepts that lie behind this information? Can I explain them?

Inferences/Conclusion: Is there another way to look at this information? Can this same information suggest something else?

Assumptions: What assumptions am I making when I use this information to arrive at my conclusion? What am I taking for granted?

Implications/Consequences: What am I implying when I make the connections between the information that I have gathered and the conclusions that I make?

Points of View: Is there another way of looking at my conclusion? Is there another way of looking at the aim of this exercise?

¹Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking* (Dillon Beach, CA: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2009), 6.