Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

Answering listening and study piece questions

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The exam

- (AQA) Component 1, Understanding music, is a listening and written exam of 1 hour 30 minutes, worth 96 marks and 40% of the GCSE.
- (AQA) Section A: listening questions on **unfamiliar music** from all four areas of study.
- (AQA) Section B: questions on the **study pieces** you have studied in class. Check AQA's website for the current list.

Answering listening questions

- Read each question before the extract plays, and underline what it asks: melody, rhythm, texture and so on.
- Use the elements (**DR SMITH** is a useful reminder: dynamics, rhythm, structure, melody, instruments, texture, harmony).
- Be precise: say "pizzicato strings" rather than "strings playing"; "a perfect cadence" rather than "it ends".
- For **dictation** questions, work out the rhythm first, then the pitch, using steps and leaps.

Study piece questions

- Know the **context** (composer, period and purpose) and the main features of each element in each piece.
- Longer answers should use specific examples from the music, linked to their effect.

Key terms

Unfamiliar music	Music you haven't studied, played in Section A. (AQA)

Study piece	A set piece of music studied in detail for Section B. (AQA)
DR SMITH	A reminder of the elements: dynamics, rhythm, structure, melody, instruments, texture and harmony.
Dictation	Writing down a melody or rhythm you hear.
Context	The background of a piece: who, when, where and why.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. How long is the AQA GCSE Music listening exam? (AQA)
2. What is in Section B of the listening exam? (AQA)
3. What does DR SMITH help you remember?
4. Which answer is more precise?
5. What should you do before an extract plays?
6. When doing dictation, what is a good first step?
7. What percentage of the GCSE is the listening exam?
8. What should longer answers on study pieces include? (AQA)

Answers

1. 1 hour 30 minutes
2. Questions on the study pieces
3. The musical elements
4. "Pizzicato strings"
5. Read the question and underline what it asks
6. Work out the rhythm
7. 40%
8. Specific examples from the music linked to their effect

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

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