Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

Traditional music: telling the four strands apart

Contents

1. The four strands (AQA)
2. Telling the strands apart
3. How to answer listening questions
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

The four strands (AQA)

- AQA's Traditional music has four separate **strands**, and each one has its own topic here: blues music from 1920 to 1950; fusion music incorporating African and/or Caribbean music; contemporary Latin music; and contemporary folk music of the British Isles.
- They come from different places and sound different, so in the listening exam the first job is to work out which **strand** you're hearing.

Telling the strands apart

- Blues: 12-bar chord pattern, **blue notes**, AAB lyrics, a singer answered by guitar or harmonica, swing rhythm.
- African music: layered **polyrhythms**, hand drums such as the djembe, a master drummer, call and response. Caribbean music: reggae's off-beat **skank** and heavy bass, or calypso's steel pans.
- Latin music: syncopated dance rhythms built on the **clave**, Latin percussion (congas, timbales, samba drums), brass riffs, Spanish or Portuguese words.
- British folk: **modal** melodies, strophic story songs, fiddle, accordion, tin whistle or pipes, jigs and reels.

How to answer listening questions

- Name the style, then give the evidence you can hear: instruments, rhythm, melody, harmony, texture and structure.
- Use the right words for each **strand**: "**blue notes**" for blues, "**polyrhythm**" for African music, "skank" for reggae, "clave" for Latin music, "modal" and "drone" for folk.
- Don't mix them up: blues is from the USA, reggae from Jamaica, samba from Brazil, salsa from Cuba and New York, and folk from the British Isles.

Key terms

Strand	One of the four styles in AQA's Traditional music area of study.
Blue note	A flattened third, fifth or seventh, used in blues.
Polyrhythm	Several different rhythms played at once, typical of African music.
Skank	Off-beat chords on beats 2 and 4 in reggae.
Clave	The two-bar rhythm Latin music is built around.
Modal	Using a mode instead of a major or minor key, typical of folk.

Quick questions

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

1. How many strands does AQA's Traditional music area of study have?
2. Which feature most clearly suggests blues?
3. Which feature most clearly suggests African music?
4. Which feature most clearly suggests reggae?
5. Which feature most clearly suggests Latin music?
6. Which feature most clearly suggests British folk music?
7. Where is samba from?
8. Where is reggae from?

Answers

1. Four
2. Blue notes over a 12-bar chord pattern
3. Layered polyrhythms led by a master drummer
4. Off-beat chords (the skank) and a heavy bass line
5. Syncopated rhythms built on the clave
6. A modal melody played on fiddle or tin whistle
7. Brazil
8. Jamaica

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.

Your notes