

SUBJECT AREA: MUSIC

Music incorporates the elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and tone color. The examiner will be looking for you to:

(1) Develop and explore in a disciplined and imaginative way, a research question appropriate to the subject of music.

(2) Arrive at a particular and preferably personal conclusion.

The focus of the essay should be on one or more particular pieces of music. The “argument” section of your essay should present personal experience via recordings, live performances, or concerts. IB urges candidates to work seriously to strive for a coherent verbal analysis and interpretation of one or more pieces of music in relation to a chosen research question.

You will be graded on your ability to show the following four things:

1. Your choice of music, and the method you use to study your particular piece of music

2. Your use of primary and secondary sources:

The music itself is your primary source material, as are direct interviews with musicians, composers and performers of the specific music chosen.

Secondary source materials include: textbooks, specialized music magazines and comments or reviews by other musicians.

3. Your description and analysis of technical aspects of the music.

This relates to melody, harmony, rhythm, texture and tone color.

4. Your ability to explain your chosen music:

This should be done in terms of its historical, social and/or cultural context.

Choosing your topic:

A chosen topic may be inspired by: Your music classroom, a local concert or performance, a musical culture you may have encountered, personal contact with composers and/or performers, direct involvement in actually making music, recordings, -- (including the world of computers!-- However, such topics should be treated from both a musical and critical perspective).

IB suggests that whatever the topic you choose it must be distinctively musical. Whether it is classical or popular music, jazz, country, or blues, the primary focus should be on the music itself, not on the nature of instruments used, the lives of the performers, or the lyrics to songs.

The **choice of a research question** should be made in the form of articulation of a clear and probing inquiry regarding an idea.

IB tells us to avoid:

(1) Topics that are too broad:

i.e. *The trombone: its evolution and its music*

Gender in Music

(2) Topics that don't refer to specific musical examples

i.e. *A comparison of rhythmic, notational, and melodic experimentation in the middle ages and in the twentieth century*

(3) Analysis centering on lyrics from popular songs

(Lyrics themselves are not music, but they may in some cases be relevant to the music chosen for a particular essay. Where specific musical relevance can be shown, lyrics may be discussed.)

(4) Essays based on interviews with a local composer

(Here IB may be referring to a friend or acquaintance whose music may not be known by the general public, and therefore information may not be available for the examiner to evaluate your essay fairly.)

(5) Integrating more than one subject with music such as:

i.e. *Comparison between Pythagorean Theorem and "mean tone principles".*

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony-- as viewed through the eyes of Piaget's theory of mental development-- Is this an example of absolute or programmed music?

(6) General histories-- (Too complicated for the word length of this type of essay, and not necessarily focusing on specific piece of music)

i.e. *History of Jazz*

History of Opera

Examples of topics which have been used for previous essays :

** Elements of Tchaikovsky and the development of melodic line in Rachmaninov's 2nd Piano Concerto, First Movement-- an analysis*

**The use of contrapuntal techniques in Bach's Art of Fugue*

**Harmonic innovation in the bebop style of Dizzy Gillespie*

**The role of minimalist techniques in Balinese gamelan*

**The influence of Jazz in Gershwin's Porgy and Bess*

Range and variety of Sources:

Use a blend of **primary** and **secondary** sources. But make sure your sources are closely related to a specific piece of music.

Primary sources: Tapes, videos, live performances, sheet music and scores, interviews with musicians and composers directly involved in the performance of the music chosen for the essay.

Secondary source: Textbooks, musical journals and magazines, and comments or reviews of performances by other musicians not directly involved in music chosen for the essay.

* **Note:** Make sure your sources directly substantiate information extending to both sides of your argument.

Regarding information found online:

IBO warns us to use **online sources** sparingly. Though the Internet may seem more convenient, IBO stresses the importance of being careful about the quality of information found there. Frequently this information lacks accuracy, authenticity and reliability. Also occasional piracy exists in some websites. This could put your diploma at risk for malpractice penalties. Unless you are prepared to question and evaluate ideas found on the web as you present them in your essay, it is wise to stick with printed materials which respect copyrights and which have been examined for accuracy.

The following are some examples of titles, research questions, and approaches to a topic that have been used in the past:

Title: Jesus Christ Superstar and Opera

Research question: Is Jesus Christ Superstar a modern classical opera?

Approach to topic: An investigation is made exploring Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical language and structures in this work, and compared with that of other selected music from operas of the Western classical tradition.

Title: The naming of Mozart's music

Research question: What evidence is there to support the title of Mozart's divertimento Ein Musikalischer Spass (A Musical Joke) K. 522 (1787)?

Approach to topic: An investigation is carried out to present aspects of this music that supports and refute's this premise.

Title: Emotional tension in traditional music East vs. West?

Research question: What specific musical examples from traditional Japan can be compared with appropriate examples from Western culture in order to present evidence that shows emotional tension in terms of melody, harmony, and tone color in selected performances?

Approach to topic: Using evidence from recordings and sheet music, research is done into the mechanisms of traditional Japanese music to present examples of this style as compared with selected examples of Western music.

Title: Musical continuity in Frederick Chopin's piano Preludes Op. 28

Research question: What similarities are there in Frederick Chopin's Preludes as measured by melodic patterns of musical phrases, intervals, and general structure of five selected Preludes?

Approach to topic: Using a series of recordings of five of Chopin's Preludes, a comparison is made according to appropriate musical elements to see what similarities exist among these pieces of work

Treatment of the topic:

The IB manual urges candidates to:

1. Include as many appropriate references to musical materials as possible such as: Music notations, audio tapes, and examples of pieces of music. (But make sure these things are directly supportive of and relevant to the argument and evaluation.)
2. Use local and/or primary sources as often as possible.
i.e. local conductors and performers of music chosen for the essay.
3. Though the IB music program includes components which require your performance and composition, this extended essay has a different purpose which involves a focus on your verbal response to a research question.
4. Remember to document and acknowledge all recordings, scores, etc. within your text as well as on the bibliography page.

5. IB urges you to **evaluate critically the resources** you use during the writing process. Which sources are vital to the support of your ideas? Which do not contribute to your analysis and why?

Following are some ways to approach a topic in music:

- * Use of primary sources, (sheet music and musicians) and secondary sources (materials written about music by critics and scholars) in order to compare and evaluate vary interpretations about selected compositions.
- * Analyzing sources, (primary and secondary) in order to explore and explain particular aspects of musical techniques either in composition or performance.
- * Collecting and analyzing orally transmitted and/ or written music live musicians and/or composers through recordings, possibly leading to a comparison of similar or different types of music.

Things to consider as you present your argument:

- * Show awareness of value and limitations of a piece of music
- * Analyze the origin and purpose of selected pieces of music
- * Show consistent musical understanding by referring frequently to your research question in light of each point made in the argument
- * Make sure you use cited evidence from experts to support your comments and conclusion

**FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA RELATIVE TO
THE MUSIC EXTENDED ESSAY:**

CRITERIA A: The research question

The research question should be specific and sharply focused, appropriate to the particular area of music being explored, centered on music and not on “peripheral issues such as biography or social discourses, and stated clearly early on in the essay.

Note that larger scale musical works may limit the possibility of effective treatment of your topic within the word limit.

CRITERIA B: The introduction

The introduction should explain succinctly the significance of the topic, why it is worthy of investigation and how the research question relates to the existing knowledge on the topic. The student's personal experience or particular opinion is rarely relevant here. Additionally, the introduction should focus on an analysis of the research question itself, the student's reasons for choosing it and, what things the student will do to conduct the investigation of it.

CRITERIA C: The investigation

Students should use, as a top priority primary, sources (sheet music, concert performances, and interviews with artists), with secondary sources (textbooks, and the comments of other musicians, and critics,) as evidential support. Proper planning of the essay should involve interrogating source material in light of the research question, so that the views of other musicians can be used to support the student's own argument, and not to substitute for it. It is important for a student to challenge a statement made by an musician or critic in reference to the music being studied, instead of simply agreeing with it or going on to another point without any making any response at all. All material used from sources must be acknowledged in references. If students make use of internet-based sources, they should do so critically demonstrating a full awareness of the source's potential unreliability.

CRITERIA D: Knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the music chosen for study, together with its historical, social and cultural, as well as academic, contexts. Wherever possible, this knowledge should be based at least partially on primary sources.

CRITERIA E: The reasoned argument

Students should use a sequence of well planned points relative to their chosen text to build the backbone for a developing argument. Embedded within this argument should be an understanding of the relevant and wider historical and sociocultural contexts. Personal views should not be stated without support by the cited quotations to persuade the reader of their validity. Straightforward descriptive or narrative accounts that lack analysis (for example a simple recounting of the artist's life) do not usually advance an argument and should be avoided. does not usually advance an argument and should generally be avoided.

CRITERIA F: Application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

Students should accurately and consistently analyze technical aspects of the music, (melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, phrasing, and tone color), demonstrating an understanding and a persuasive personal interpretation of the music being presented.

CRITERIA G: Use of language appropriate to the subject

Students are expected to make effective use of musical terminology and, where appropriate, notation. Notation may take a variety of forms, depending on the type of music studied.

CRITERIA H: The conclusion

“Consistent” is the key word here: the conclusion should develop out of the argument and not introduce new or extraneous material. It should not simply repeat material from the introduction either; rather, it should present a new synthesis in light of the discussion.

CRITERIA I: The formal presentation

This criterion relates to the extent to which the essay conforms to academic standards for research papers. The presentation of essays that omit a bibliography or that do not give references for quotations is deemed unacceptable (level 0). Essays that omit one of the required elements - title page, abstract, table of contents, page numbers- are deemed no better than satisfactory, (maximum level 2), while essays that omit two of these elements are deemed poor at best (maximum level 1).

In music, discographies should be included where appropriate; musical examples, and tables and charts, if relevant, should appear in the body of the essay as close as possible to their first reference.

Precise recording of the relevant details of all quoted evidence significant to the research question is necessary so that complete references can be provided, including the author's name and page number for each in-text citation of a source. For bibliographies any particular accepted form of referencing can be used (but not more than one). References should include: Full details of the author, title of publication, publisher and date of publication must be provided in the bibliography, which should list all sources used in the essay in alphabetical order (by the author's family name). Any material that is not original must be acknowledged.

CRITERIA J: The abstract

The abstract must consist of three elements: the research question (or hypothesis); the scope of the essay (that is, the main points to be investigated and the sources used to research these points); and the findings or conclusion. Students should be reminded that the abstract is not a summary or precis of the topic. The abstract is judged on the clarity with which it presents the three above mentioned required elements, not on the quality of the research question itself, nor on the quality of the argument or conclusion.

CRITERIA K: Holistic judgement

Qualities that are rewarded under this criterion include the following:

Initiative: Ways of demonstrating this in Music essay include the choice of topic and **creativity and insight** as shown by the student's presentation of a personal judgment on the specific examples of the selected art work. Routene essays on well worn topics using objective factual information from textbook sources will not score well under this criterion.

Insight and depth of understanding: These are most likely to be demonstrated as a consequence of detailed research, reflection that is thorough and well informed, and a reasoned argument that consistently and effectively addresses the research question.

Creativity: In music essays, this includes qualities such as comparison of musical features, inventive approaches to musical analysis and new approaches to popular topics.

Problems demonstrated by students in past essays:

Following are problems reported by examiners relative to several important areas with respect to the Music extended essay--

Choice of music and method of study:

Expectation: The candidate has chosen music for study which involves extensive contact with music and musicians via recordings, or live performances and concerts, or personal contact with composers or performers, or fieldwork in a culture other than the candidate's own.

Problems in the past: Many candidates chose music for study which does not involve direct contact with musicians, as well as music which does not measure up to the quality expected for the extended essay.

In addition, IB warns you to avoid the pitfall of reproducing textbook musicology, without showing your own personal methods of study and personal points of view. Some essays were accompanied by cassettes which were not labeled, (or not helpful), and these essays did not always indicate clearly which parts were being illustrated by which items on the cassettes.

Use of appropriate primary and secondary resources:

Expectation: The candidate uses both secondary (textbooks and comments of other musicians) and primary resources, (scores, recordings, performances, interviews) with great skill, and the interpretation of these materials illustrates and justifies a personal point of view with sophistication and skill.

Problems in the past: Some essays relied solely upon secondary resources, or did not show a thorough interpretation of the resources used. Some candidates did not draw links between the resources used and personal points of view.

Description and analysis of the technical aspects of music (in terms of melody, harmony, texture, tone color, and lyrics, or text as appropriate):

Expectation: The candidate has described, analyzed, and evaluated the technical aspects of the music chosen, with sophistication and skill; the techniques used show an outstanding knowledge of the music chosen for study.

Problems in the past: Some candidates left out technical aspects of music, while others' analysis was inappropriate, or incorrectly applied.

Historical, social and cultural context:

Expectation: The music chosen for study is directly and clearly placed in its historical, social or cultural context with a sophisticated discussion of the music in its appropriate environment. These issues have been carefully, critically, and systematically analyzed, and most of the relevant links have been thoroughly explored.

Problems in the Past: Sometimes candidates did not attempt to include anything about historical, social or cultural context regarding a given piece of music. Other times, essays did not show an ability on the part of the candidate to interpret or analyze these relative links for their music.

*Remember to **cite, explain, interpret, and argue** with data from all sources.